

Eggs, Bacon, and God:
Successful Men's Breakfasts and Male Spirituality

by
David Bruce Peer

A Graduate Project Submitted to
Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, Nova Scotia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Masters of Divinity

March, 2015, Halifax, Nova Scotia

© David B. Peer, 2015

Approved: Rev. Dr. Susan Willhauck
Associate Professor of
Pastoral Theology

Date: March 26, 2015

Eggs, Bacon, and God:
Successful Men's Breakfasts and Male Spirituality

By David Bruce Peer

Abstract: This qualitative research study explores the hypothesis that men's breakfasts can be a transformational opportunity in the lives of men by providing a space for relationship building, fellowship, spiritual growth and outreach. This research investigates the elements that lead to successful men's breakfasts by interviewing participants from two longstanding parish breakfasts in the Halifax region. Using grounded theory and the results of the investigation, the study identifies themes from the data, issues for the Church, and proposes elements for an effective men's breakfast ministry.

March 26, 2015

Research Ethics Board Certificate

Certificate of Ethical Acceptability for Research Involving Humans

This is to certify that the Research Ethics Board has examined the research proposal:

AST REB File number:	0112014
Title of Research Project:	“Eggs, Bacon and God: Successful Men’s Breakfasts and Male Spirituality”
Faculty Supervisor:	Dr. Susan Willhauck
Student Investigator	David Peer

and concludes that in all respects the proposed project meets appropriate standards of ethical acceptability and is in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) and Atlantic School of Theology’s relevant policies.

Approval Period: 3 November 2014 to 25 March 2015

Dated this 3rd day of November, 2014 at Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Dr. Alyda Faber
 Chair, Research Ethics Board
 Atlantic School of Theology
 660 Francklyn Street
 Halifax, Nova Scotia
 B3H 3B5

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Purpose and Research Question	5
Review of Literature.....	5
Method.....	10
Data Collection.....	12
Data Analysis.....	12
Social System Paradigm	32
Evaluation and Implications for Pastoral Theology.....	36
Evaluation and Implications for Ministry	48
Conclusions	52
Bibliography	54
Annex – Research Ethics Board Proposal.....	60

Introduction

When I lived in Bath England over fifteen years ago, a friend invited me to a community men's breakfast. The organizers had rented the kitchen facilities of a boy's school to hold a breakfast once a month. It was amazing; I looked forward to it every month. This meal was a feast. I certainly enjoyed the good food, and the event had some great speakers. I was always meeting new people. Men came from everywhere not just the local churches. It was an ecumenical men's gathering on a scale I have never seen since.

I have always wondered whether an Anglican parish in Canada could capture some of that energy in a breakfast and help more men encounter Christ. I am constantly asking myself what the Church can do to have more impact in the lives of men. Recent Canadian data says there are five men for every six women at religious services.¹ The Pew Research Centre published a Survey in 2013 that showed the number of adults attending religious services across Canada is dropping.² They counted anyone who attended at least one service a month. Here in Atlantic Canada it dropped from 57% to 31% over the past 25 years. The trend is discouraging, but it is also a call to action. What should the Church to do, especially for men?

¹ "Religion and Spirituality in Canada," Project Canada Surveys, University of Lethbridge, accessed February 15, 2015, http://www.reginaldbibby.com/images/PCS_Release_Religion_Spirituality_Remain_Pervasive_in_Canada_Easter_2012.pdf.

² "Canada's Changing Religious Landscape," Pew Research Centre Religion & Public Life Demographic Study, June 27, 2013, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/06/27/canadas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

Purpose and Research Question

Breakfasts are an important tool we can use to reach out to men. The form that the ministry can take varies, but eggs, bacon, and God are usually involved. My hypothesis is that a men's breakfast ministry can be a transformational event in the lives of men. My research grows out of this hypothesis. If a Church sets up the right men's breakfast ministry with the right elements in place, can it facilitate the transformational work of the Holy Spirit?

My research question is designed to test my hypothesis: what elements lead to a men's breakfast ministry that offers an opportunity for spiritual development, relationship building, and outreach? This report presents research, analysis, and conclusions to respond to this question.

Review of Literature

Men's spirituality and personal growth is a very popular topic in books and on the Internet. Sites devoted to personal fulfillment and spiritual authenticity speak of the importance of men's ministry to the Church and the opportunity offered by a men's breakfast as a foundational group for men's issues.³ Scholarly literature that supports this popular Christian men's topic is sparse, particularly on the application of men's groups to Christian faith, fellowship, and outreach, the context within which a Christian men's breakfast group would sit.

³ For an example see www.ransomedheart.com.

There is a large body of literature on men's groups dating back nearly 40 years. The men's movement is an aggregate of incompatible separate movements that share common components, ideas, and themes.⁴ Flood traced the growth of the men's movement from the political and social activism of the 1970s to the mythopoeic or spiritual movement that really achieved notoriety in the 1990s.⁵ The separate movements hold widely diverse and often contradictory views, usually related to the reasons that men join. Some men have political or ideological agendas, some are interested in personal growth, and yet others are seeking a response to a personal crisis.⁶ It is the research on men interested in personal growth, the mythopoeic motivation, which informs the question on breakfasts.

Robert Bly's 1990 bestseller *Iron John* and John Eldredge's popular *Wild at Heart*, revised in 2011, are but two examples of popular literature that appeals to men struggling for personal authenticity and a sense of spiritual fulfilment.⁷ Various researchers have noted the emphasis mythopoeic groups place on male spiritual development and intimacy.⁸ There is broad acceptance in the literature that intimate

⁴ Kenneth Clatterbaugh, *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity*, second edition (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1997), vii.

⁵ M. Flood, "Men's Movements," *Community Quarterly* 46 (June 1998): 62-71, accessed October 11, 2014, [www.xyonline.net/sites/default/files/Flood, Men's Movements.pdf](http://www.xyonline.net/sites/default/files/Flood_Men's_Movements.pdf).

⁶ Spase Karoski, "Men on the move: the politics of the men's movement," (PhD dissertation, University of Wollongong, 2007), 204, accessed October 7, 2014, <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/687>.

⁷ Robert Bly, *Iron John: A book about men* (New York: Random House, 1990) and John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul*, revised edition (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011).

⁸ See Peter Alexander Knopp, "Men in Support Groups: Why They Keep Coming Back," (MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1997), accessed October 5, 2014, <https://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/5958>; Andrew Singleton, "Men Getting Real? A Study of Relationship Change in Two Men's Groups," *Journal of Sociology* 39, no. 2 (2003): 131-147, accessed October 5, 2014, doi:10.1177/00048690030392002; and Robert A. Strikwerda and Larry May, "Male Friendship and Intimacy," *Hypatia* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 110-125, accessed October 11, 2014, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost.

relationships developed in these groups are countercultural but good for men.⁹ Singleton's 2003 work on relationship change in two Christian men's groups was the first to suggest that a legitimizing context is essential to create the space where intimate relationships can form and grow.¹⁰ Singleton does not specifically discuss men's breakfast groups, but he suggests that they could offer a social opportunity to work on relationships with Christian faith as a legitimizing context.¹¹

Russell presented results of an ethnographic study in 2009 on why white middle-class, middle-aged men seek the support of a men's group. The groups he investigated did not form to address oppressive experiences or personal crises. The men were interested in personal growth. His results indicated that the appeal of the groups was the opportunity for men to be themselves and to express themselves fully, to help feel good about being a man, and to escape from the pressures involved with playing a role associated with hegemonic masculinity.¹²

Russell noted a challenge with data collection in his thesis. When confidentiality is a group norm, it makes lived experiences invisible to researchers.

⁹ This is a consistent theme in research and literature. See Singleton, "Men Getting Real? A Study of Relationship Change in Two Men's Groups;" Strikwerda and May, "Male Friendship and Intimacy;" John S. Guarnaschelli, "Men's Support Groups and the Men's Movement: Their Role for Men and for Women," *Group* 18, no. 4 (1994): 197-211, accessed October 11, 2014, <http://link.springer.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/journal/10724/18/4>; J. D. Castellini et al., "Male Spirituality and the Men's Movement: a Factorial Examination of Motivations," *Journal Of Psychology & Theology* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 41-55, accessed October 9, 2014, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost; James E. Dittes, *The Male Predicament: On Being a Man Today* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985); and David C. James, *What Are They Saying About Masculine Spirituality?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Singleton, "Men Getting Real? A Study of Relationship Change in Two Men's Groups," 144.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 132, 144.

¹² Virgil E. Russell, "Grassroots of the Men's Movement: An Ethnographic Case Study of an Independent Men's Group," (Electronic Thesis, University of Akron, 2009), 48, accessed October 9, 2014, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>.

The more intimate the experience, the more difficult it becomes to validate.¹³ This could explain the large gap between the lived experience of men in groups and the literature that Karoski identified in his dissertation in 2007.¹⁴ It certainly leaves space for qualitative analysis on the lived experience of men in any group setting.

Castellini forged a link between the literature covering men and men's groups and men and spirituality in her 2001 dissertation when she investigated the religious dimensions of the men's movement. Her factorial study of 1520 Catholic men established relationships between men's spiritual needs and men's groups.¹⁵ Her research indicated that men come together to experience their common identity, to come to a fuller understanding of themselves and their own spiritual growth, and to support each other in discerning a deeper relationship with God.¹⁶ In a later study, Castellini et al. investigated men who gathered together to worship in groups. The authors cite polls and over 10,000 men's support groups in Canada and the US as evidence of a resurgence of spiritual interest and faith among men. The authors link male spirituality with the search for connection with something bigger than self and with the concerns of men that touch identity and relationship with other men and with God.¹⁷ Their study identified a number of important factors: male bonding, self awareness and affirmation, relationship with God, a sense of faith community, and a

¹³ Ibid., 51.

¹⁴ Karoski, "Men on the move: the politics of the men's movement."

¹⁵ J. D. Castellini, "Male Spirituality and the Men's Movement: A Factorial Study," (Electronic Dissertation, Xavier University, 2001), accessed October 9, 2014, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>.

¹⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹⁷ Castellini et al., "Male Spirituality and the Men's Movement: a Factorial Examination of Motivations," 42.

place to seek comfort and support in crises. The research is quantitative; the methodology does not associate meaning with the factors. Even without an assessment of meaning this research suggests that men's groups offer men spiritual fulfillment.¹⁸ This leaves considerable room for further qualitative research to confirm the links between spirituality and men's groups.

Hill and Pargament highlighted some of the advances in research linking spiritual concepts and measures to physical and mental health at the turn of the millennium. They concluded that the personal subjective aspects of spirituality were under-studied in psychology and related disciplines particularly since empirical studies have shown that aspects of religiousness and spirituality such as closeness to God, spiritual orientation and motivation, and spiritual support were significantly and positively linked to positive mental health outcomes.¹⁹

A review of the literature has revealed some important themes that will inform my research on Christian men's breakfast:

1. The context of a shared meal is a legitimizing context for groups seeking to create a space to work on relationships;
2. Intimate male-to-male relationships are a key element in personal growth;

¹⁸ Ibid., 54.

¹⁹ P.C. Hill and K.I. Pargament, "Advances in the Conceptualization and Measurement of Religion and Spirituality. Implications for Physical and Mental Health Research," *The American Psychologist* 58, no. 1 (2003): 64-65, accessed October 10, 2014, *PsycARTICLES*, EBSCOhost.

3. Male spirituality involves a search for connection and relationship with God and other men; and
4. Empirical measures of spirituality are significantly and positively linked to mental wellbeing.

Though considerable research exists that informs my research question, a men's breakfast group focused on spiritual development, relationship building and outreach has not been formally studied. Space exists for qualitative analysis on this topic.

Method

Grounded theory guided my research. Grounded theory is a good approach when a theory is not available to explain or understand a process."²⁰ It is inductive and tries to determine meaning from the data.²¹ Since all my respondents have experienced a men's breakfast, a grounded theory methodology offers a way to discover the key elements that will help make a men's breakfast better.²² Creswell suggests a sample size of between twenty and sixty people to ensure that data saturation is reached.²³ Saturation occurs when no new data is obtained in interviews.

²⁰ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, third edition (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 88.

²¹ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 29.

²² Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 83.

²³ *Ibid.*, 89.

I interviewed six people. It is a sample size insufficient to reach saturation, but large enough to understand the process that is men's breakfast and to suggest practical ways to improve it and make it better. My six participants offered a very rich source of data, certainly enough to discover clear themes that inform the research question, suggest a substantive theory, and challenge my hypothesis.

I wanted to minimize my bias on the data by selecting participants without my direct involvement. My research advisor selected two Anglican parish sites that had longstanding breakfasts. Three people were interviewed at each parish using a semi-structured approach – the rector, a breakfast leader, and a breakfast participant – for a total of six people. The experience of men in the breakfasts, those who lead and those who participate, and the experience of priests who pastorally support the ministry are both important.

I contacted the rectors of the parishes to request their participation and that of their breakfast leaderships. The Rector provided me the name of a lay leader, and the lay leader provided me the name of a participant. I contacted all the respondents by email or phone to formally request their participation.

My data collection approach helped to reduce my bias but it introduced another. The data in my study is from men who know each other well. The data is from the inside of an urban Anglican parish in Halifax. It is a valid lens, but it most assuredly does not represent the experience of all men at breakfasts. The context of my data collection will place limits on how far the conclusions may be generalized.

Data Collection

The six participants were from two different parishes: St. Jude's and St. Bart's. The Rector, lay leader, and breakfast participant from St. Jude's were ***Matthew, Paul,*** and ***Peter,*** respectively. The corresponding respondents from St. Bart's were ***Luke,*** ***John,*** and ***James.*** The names of the respondents and the parish sites have been changed to conceal identities.

All interviews took place in a public place selected by the respondent, a coffee shop, an office, a room in the parish Church with other people present in the building, and in the home with family present for one respondent with mobility issues. The interviews for each of my six respondents consisted of sixteen open-ended questions. All six interviews were transcribed and the data was coded and analyzed. The analysis developed categories and identified five themes. The categories were also used to create a social system paradigm to describe the process of men's breakfast. The themes and paradigm were used together to identify the key elements influencing the men's breakfast ministries studied.

Data Analysis

The two Anglican parishes forming part of this research host very different men's breakfasts. They are both longstanding breakfast ministries in the Halifax area. The following pictures of each breakfast are drawn from the interview data.

St. Jude's Breakfast

Matthew: "It's the road to Emmaus story... in the simplest of moments, a shared meal, that's where the presence of Christ was actually recognized, and, that for me is the beauty that's captured in the men's breakfast."

Paul: "Food's very important... you know... good quality food."

Peter: You go in there and if you just need a little uplifting, a little inspiration from someone, just getting it from the experience, from the people..."

St. Jude's breakfast starts and ends early. The core group of eight to ten men who prepare the meal arrives at 5:00 am. Food is ready by 7:30 am and the breakfast is all done and cleaned up by 9:00 am. The core group is very stable.

The breakfast is the only ministry dedicated to men in the parish. The men who attend are middle-aged and older. Guests are always welcome including children, grandchildren, and the occasional woman. The food is fantastic, both the quality and the quantity. The servers are warm and friendly. The core group prepares and serves breakfast to about forty people one Saturday a month. Not everyone comes every time; if everyone came there might be more than one hundred. The traditional eggs, bacon, hash browns, and coffee are always available, but special surprises, like fishcakes, show up on the menu from time to time.

For many men, the breakfast is their only connection to St. Jude. They are beginning to outnumber men who worship at St. Jude's on Sunday. There are two identifiable groups: firefighters and some men from the local Roman Catholic parish. There is no particular effort to reach out to these men; they just show up.

Reaching out to men outside the parish is not planned; it just happens. The size of the breakfast is a measure of its success. Men come to eat well, reconnect with friends, and enjoy casual conversation. It is a low-key event with no significant demands on participants. Men come expecting good food. They actively resist any speakers or programs. According to Paul, a lay leader at St. Jude's, "you gotta be careful [about] having an agenda ... I don't think most guys want to go to a singsong on Saturday morning."

St. Bart's Breakfast

Luke: "We're community, it's like family..."

John: "The key is a lot of good fellowship."

James: "People won't stay for the food... conversation is of primary importance..."

St. Bart's breakfast varies from ten to twenty men, all from the parish. They meet one Saturday a month. St. Bart's starts early too, but the cooking team might only be one person, depending on the Saturday. The meal starts at 8:30 am and lasts until cleanup is finished around 10:00 am. The core team at St. Bart's is about three to four people. It relies heavily on the vision and dedication of one man and a pair of men who phone around to announce breakfasts.

It started over a decade ago when a group of retired men decided the men of the parish needed a way to meet and share their Christian journey, so they started a breakfast. About two-thirds of the men are retired. They love discussion and debate. Sometimes this has led to a clash of opinions. All the men who attend the breakfast worship at St. Bart. The breakfast does not attract outsiders.

Food is not the highest priority for St. Bart's. The emphasis is on speakers and discussing topical issues from a Christian perspective. A good speaker seems to increase interest and participation. The breakfast provides a space for men in the parish to reconnect, to learn, to seek an intellectual challenge, and to grow in faith.

Overview of Themes

Five themes were derived from the data: fellowship, intimacy, intentionality, mission, and spirituality.

Fellowship

Fellowship was the most commonly used word used to describe men's breakfasts; every respondent used it. In the data it has the sense of both a noun and a verb; the fellowship theme includes categories that take on the sense of what the group was, what the group experienced, or the activity in which the men participated. The theme reveals the importance of the shared experience and the desire to gather together and share together.

John: *"Two or three of us got together and thought that it would be something to do and to have a lot more fellowship among the men."*

Peter: *"There's opportunity to make plans with guys... going to men's breakfast; getting ourselves all fuelled up and head out..."*

All respondents also used the words reconnect and over half used the phrases breaking bread, holy meal, or last supper to describe their experience.

Peter: *"My thoughts often go to the last supper."*

Matthew: *"We're here to eat, we're here to talk with each other and reconnect."*

Luke: *“Breaking bread is always good for your soul.”*

Matthew: *“... from a simple shared meal... in the simplest of acts we are making Christ known... whether they know it or not, whether they acknowledge it or not; there is a gracious beauty in that.”*

Breaking bread was a category that combined the occurrences of the phrases breaking of bread, holy meal, and last supper. These phrases are laced with meaning. Breaking bread, in particular, is a very Christian way of describing an intimate encounter over a meal; the words suggest the idea of sacrament. For any Anglican, “breaking bread” calls to mind Jesus actions at the Last Supper and the words of institution in the Eucharistic prayer. It is a sacred form of fellowship.

It is in the detail that nuance is found, where themes come alive with subtle twists and unexpected and revealing insights. It was surprising how often the word reconnect appeared by respondents at both breakfasts. It was regularly used to describe one of the activities at the breakfast. The word connect on the other hand was rarely used. Reconnect had the sense of meeting the known, while connect had the sense of meeting the unknown. There was an overwhelming preference to describe a key element of the men’s breakfast as reconnecting, which is a significant indicator of an inward focus to the fellowship for the respondents interviewed.

This inward focus to fellowship is not surprising since the methodology chosen to select respondents relied on a cascade from Rector to ministry leader to participant that all but guaranteed that insiders well known to each other were chosen for interviewing. In itself this is not a weakness in the data; it reflects the focus of the study and suggests that the applicability of the data may not be

generalized to all breakfasts. Even with the internal focus there were external effects, which are discussed more fully under the mission theme.

Lay and ordained respondents from both breakfasts considered fellowship as an important, even critical, dimension of their experience. Expressions of deep emotional connection are covered under the theme of intimacy.

Intimacy

Intimacy is linked to fellowship and expresses a desire for men to go deep and take a risk with their lives. The theme is expressed in the data with words like connectedness, trust, supporting, and family – and ideas like safe space, prayer, and invitation. Intimacy is all about a safe place to be authentic in relationship with others. Intimacy takes time and trust to develop. “Band of brothers” provides a useful metaphor for the sense of togetherness, connectedness, and family expressed by all respondents.

Peter: “*St. Jude, on a personal level is a second home... So much of my life has become so much better because of the family at Church, to spend even more time there seems natural, the right thing to do.*”

James: “*There certainly are individuals that come to men’s breakfast that I think people have built trust with and share with.*”

It is not surprising to find this desire for intimacy. God created human beings in the image and likeness of God; the capacity and the desire to experience the intimate perichoretic character of the triune God lies within us all.

Matthew: “*To sit down and share a meal with a group of friends is a very holy and sacred thing and it is very special.*”

Luke: *“As a community you’re supposed to be there for one another. As you know, as I know, life isn’t always good. People can be going through struggling times.”*

John: *“... being wide open to sharing, you can share troubles that you’re having...”*

The two themes of fellowship and intimacy express breadth and depth of relationship, respectively. While all respondents were able to express the importance of relationship in terms of fellowship, it was not the same with intimacy.

Only half of the respondents could articulate depth of relationship: the two ordained respondents and one lay leader. The data indicate the desire for intimacy through the respondents’ description of actions, but not all respondents were able to articulate emotions that would be associated with intimacy. For example, when respondents were asked what it feels like to be at a breakfast it was only the two priests Luke and Mathew and the participant Peter that provided a response that showed an ability to communicate feeling.

Luke: *“I feel like I’m in community... I don’t feel like I’m an invited guest ... that we’re community, it’s like family and that’s how I feel... that we are all in this together.”*

Matthew: *“I think it’s just a feeling of comfort, of sitting with good friends, and reconnecting.”*

Peter: *“Peaceful. My thoughts often go to the last supper. It’s a spiritual experience.”*

Two lay participants described the breakfast experience with rather generic responses.

James: *“How do I feel? [long pause] I never really thought much about that. There is a camaraderie there that’s enjoyable.”*

John: *“It feels very, very good.”*

And Paul was visibly moved in a sidebar discussion about administering communion but was left unable to express his feeling in words.

Paul: "I can't describe the feeling... it was like... I don't know I just can't describe the feeling."

Russell noted it was difficult collecting data when confidentiality is a group norm.²⁴ The inability to express emotion effectively may also be complicated by a reluctance to share because of confidentiality.

Aside from the challenges with describing feelings or expressions of intimacy, Paul and James made comparisons between a men's breakfast and a men's Cursillo weekend experience, which clearly indicated they experienced strong feeling. They were just not able to express it. Cursillo is an intense short course in Christianity over one weekend, and as James explains:

James: "I've been to Cursillo and that gets to be a very emotional kind of thing, but it's something that builds up over a weekend. It's not something you can duplicate for two hours on a Saturday morning. It's something that needs to build over a longer time when you're building trust."

The issue James raises is important; intimacy is something that is carefully built on a foundation of trust. As Singleton pointed out in his 2003 study on relationship change, a legitimizing context is essential to facilitate the space where intimacy can develop.²⁵ The faith of the men at the breakfast may not provide

²⁴ Russell, "Grassroots of the Men's Movement: An Ethnographic Case Study of an Independent Men's Group."

²⁵ Singleton, "Men Getting Real? A Study of Relationship Change in Two Men's Groups," 144.

sufficient context. Intimate experience is in tension with a desire to grow the breakfast numbers. It may be difficult to experience intimacy at a breakfast unless previously established and long-term relationships are already present, so the addition of lots of newcomers would reduce the effective expression of intimacy. Intimacy might be a goal, but not all men are well equipped to go there. This is important context for any parish planning a men's breakfast ministry.

It is clear that intimacy is important for these participants. The wider impact of the breakfast comes not from intimacy directly but from the strength that intimacy provides a band of brothers to reach out to other men. It is a delicate balance to create intimacy within a group, accept new men to fellowship, and still maintain the deepness in relationships.

Intentionality

The dimensions of this theme are significant and include strategies, situational factors, and expressions of outcomes that all relate to the idea of going on a purposeful intentional journey from one place to another as a group of Christian men. Intentionality juxtaposes many paradoxical ideas: the desire for structure and leadership and the freedom to choose, and the freedom from roles and expectation with the need for core leadership. The theme also expresses an acknowledgement that action must be guided by vision and purpose, and that life together is within the broader community of the parish Church. Intentionality is a collective concept of direction and focus that should never be concealed or hidden.

Matthew: *“We don’t want a Sermon, we don’t want meditation, we don’t want a reflection, we don’t want, you know, someone coming from Halifax to give us a presentation on a particular subject matter that we might all share. We’re here to eat. We’re here to talk with each other and reconnect.”*

Luke: *“It’s fine just to sit and eat and tell stories but I like to have a purpose to things... as long as we have a vision of what we want to do and where we want to move towards.”*

John: *“Two or three of us got together and thought that it would be something to do and to have a lot more fellowship among the men.”*

Peter: *“[I] go and enjoy an awesome breakfast whenever I can.”*

Paul: *“We come, we eat, we hangout, we chat, and that’s it... it’s as simple as that, so why make it complicated.”*

James: *“... to have the lively conversation around something. That’s my expectations, the main expectation. I probably prepare a better breakfast at home... food is not the motivating factor.”*

All the respondents were able to express their motivation for attending the breakfast. The men from each Church shared a similar vision and purpose, but it varied between sites. St. Jude’s was all about the food and a safe space to enjoy the company of friends. St. Bart’s rated conversation above food. Both parishes shared a common desire to meet and spend time together as men. The respondents from both breakfasts rebelled against the idea of an imposed “hidden agenda.” Paul was eloquent with his support for a transparent intentionality, a collective sense of direction, and his disdain for any hidden motive.

Paul: *“Guys don’t want a lot of agenda.” “Agenda is ... alternative motive.” “Agenda and purpose are two different things. I think [the breakfast] definitely has a purpose ... because if it didn’t have a purpose nobody would show up.”*

Intentionality also speaks to a collective desire for a safe space for the journey. Where the breakfasts differed was how that was expressed. The ordained

and lay leadership in both parishes were aware of the groups spoken, or in some cases unspoken, need for a safe space: St. Jude's offers freedom from role and control, St. Bart's provides space to explore life's issues from a male Christian perspective. The desire to escape the pressures involved in playing a role and to have a safe space for self expression is consistent with Russell's 2009 ethnographic study on men's groups.²⁶

***Paul:** "I just want to go and hang out and have some food and you know not have anybody telling me what I can or cannot do."*

***James:** "Just being with the other men is good, but then I would say we have a number of opinionated members [among] the regular people at men's breakfast and so it's never very... its usually a kind of dynamic kind of conversation... but that's an important part."*

Mission

Mission has two possible dimensions: internal, directed to people at the breakfast, and external, by the breakfast group to the world. Both breakfasts had a strong internal focus and measured success by numbers. This places the themes of mission and intimacy in tension. The pressure to add new men to an established group works against intimacy. This tension is important to consider when planning a men's breakfast ministry. It also means a breakfast targeting men of the parish who know each other should be somewhat easier to plan and execute.

The data show that outreach to men outside the parish was not the vision of either breakfast. The focus was inward.

²⁶ Russell, "Grassroots of the Men's Movement: An Ethnographic Case Study of an Independent Men's Group."

Paul: *"You know there's lots of people, they're just sitting at the fringes right... so I think this a way sort of for them to see, hey these guys are having fun because that's a big deal with us."*

James: *"A men's breakfast can be a good way of building right relationships between men in a faith community and with the potential benefit of men working together."*

Peter: *"We have a lot of people that go to men's breakfast who are not regulars at Church."*

Peter: *"I was invited the first time... I'd probably been going two or three years to St. Jude before I went to my first men's breakfast."*

The mission dimension is most obviously expressed by the core group who offer time and talent to other men of the parish. It is the nature of the Church to have a mission dimension in all that we do.

James: *"I guess it's really a credit to John and three men that call in terms of their persistence and commitment to continue bringing men together on a monthly basis."*

John: *"Two or three of us got together and thought that it would be something to do and to have a lot more fellowship among the men."*

Peter: *"[Breakfast] is also an opportunity for us to witness what others will do for us... I see that and I say: well, how can I serve others?"*

There was an interesting data point from St. Jude's where the breakfast attracts many men from outside the parish.

Paul: *"We have more people not from St. Jude than from St. Jude going right now. That's... It's sort of got us in a, not a quandary, but we're sort of wondering... they're outnumbering us now in the last six months"*

Peter: *"A really neat thing that happens there for me is to see how many people I don't know... the people that don't go to St. Jude to worship... it's pretty cool to say that St. Jude has that effect in the community."*

Outreach intention is not part of their vision. Yet there is clearly an outreach effect; the Spirit is working through the breakfast and the men involved in the ministry. Nevertheless, this experience is not universal:

Matthew: *“A few years ago there was a new guy to the parish who heard about men’s breakfast and he came and um he was a stranger in a strange land... not many people knew who he was and he felt very awkward and out of place because, you know, the families and friendships are already established.”*

Matthew’s story shows the mission-intimacy tension. Paul’s concern about outsiders at the breakfast implies that this group might be considering revisiting their mission and purpose. It is an important reminder to be open to the Spirit’s mission and God’s intent for a ministry.

Men’s breakfast is Church. For some of the men at St. Jude’s breakfast it is their only experience of Church. It is a door into the community of Christians and a lifeline keeping them connected.

Matthew: *“A lot of them, and I would say a lot, this is their only experience of the church. They don’t come on Sunday. ”*

Matthew: *“There is a father and son who are here every month in that kitchen cooking, enjoying a meal and cleaning and I don’t see them beyond that. And, yet they are faithful members of the congregation; this is their ministry. Um, they are unable to make it on a Sunday morning, but once a month they are here.”*

The data show that men’s breakfasts can be the face of the Christian community to men who do not go to Church. It is a place where men can welcome others and make Christ known. The challenge is that this theme is in tension with intimacy and poses a challenge for any men’s group seeking to kindle both depth and

breadth in relationships between men. The impact that a breakfast can have on a wider community is demonstrated by the data from St. Jude's. The strength and connectedness offered by the band of brothers provides a witness to others and can be the strength for the group to reach out.

Spirituality

The data from all respondents indicated that the breakfasts had a positive impact on their spirituality. Positive change is a significant element of a successful men's breakfast. The men were challenged to directly answer questions about spirituality, perhaps because spirituality is notoriously difficult to define today. Common cultural usage would be to use spirituality to describe a longing for something beyond the mere material. In Christian terms spirituality includes the life of the whole person, living as a Christian in response to God's gracious call to live in fellowship with God. Paul defines true spirituality in 1 Corinthians 2:13-16 where he insists that the essence of true spirituality is a genuine love for others. The presence of the Spirit in a person becomes apparent through behaviour and actions. The data indicates an active spirituality by their common desire for fellowship with other believers, the presence of fruit of the spirit, and the recognition that the simple act of sharing a meal carries both sacramental meaning and effect. This result supports Castellini's factorial study on reasons men come together in groups.²⁷

²⁷ Castellini, "Male Spirituality and the Men's Movement: A Factorial Study."

For John it is the deep sharing that touches him spiritually and stands out as a place to seek comfort and support. This corroborates the quantitative findings of Castellini et al.²⁸

John: “... to share the concerns we are dealing with, you know, somebody’s been sick or somebody’s got problems in their family then they’re very, very vocal and very open in terms of one another.”

John: “In terms of spirituality, when you’re doing prayers... there’s a lot of people in your prayers at night that are related to the men’s breakfast.”

Sharing time with other believers is a consistent spiritual theme

Luke: “... to be with other Christians... it impacts my spirituality.”

Paul: “Things like the breakfast kept me going to Church... I was sitting at the edges of the fire versus up close to the fire.”

James: “I take seriously vocation out in the community by the things that I work on and I find that certainly a number of the men that come to the men’s breakfast are helpful for me in terms of seeing that vocation.”

Matthew: “We can get forty people out at the men’s breakfast. The place is packed, and, all age groups.”

Presence of fruit of the spirit was apparent in the data from St. Jude’s.

Peter: “It’s witnessing what others will do for people.”

Peter: “... the whole positiveness you can get from others. You go in there and if you just need a little uplifting, a little inspiration from someone, just getting it from the experience, from the people.”

Matthew: “You walk out the door with a smile. That’s a successful breakfast... we’ve succeeded in living the good news.”

²⁸ Castellini et al., “Male Spirituality and the Men’s Movement: a Factorial Examination of Motivations.”

Paul: *"If you look at life in the Church, there's not a lot for men, specifically for men. There isn't. So I find if [the breakfast is] the one and only time they step through the doors of the Church. I'm fine with that. If it's their first step to maybe going... leading to other things. That's OK too..."*

Paul: *"There have been a few of us that wanted to do more outside the four walls of the church and it's been a challenge to try to get people to think... being a Christian is not doing it in the four walls of a building."*

The presence of fruit was apparent in a unique way in the data from St. Bart's; John indicated the presence of disagreements and tension that was brought into the breakfast from the wider parish community in one breakfast in the recent past.

John: *"Friction... it's a challenge when you're in a group trying to be intimate and people aren't getting along. Yes, there's one or two that are like bad kids in school... Well I try to make sure that I get somebody that's going to be happening on this, so there's some very good people that can help out in that regard."*

St. Bart's breakfast successfully navigated that conflict.

The breakfasts had a sacramental sense for the priests and one participant.

Luke: *"Breaking bread is always good for your soul."*

Matthew: *"In the simplest of acts we are making Christ known."*

Peter explained the significance of the breakfast as a link through time to the Last Supper:

Peter: *"I keep coming back to the last supper and the humbling experience that Jesus did what he did because he knew he had to do it, he knew why he was doing it, he knew who he was doing it for. And, I am one of who he was doing it for."*

A sacramental understanding of the breakfast was not consistent. Paul clearly identified the breakfast was different from participation in the Eucharist. This was just before saying,

***Paul:** "It's an awesome feeling; administering communion... it's like... I don't know it's phenomenal. It's an awesome thing to do that and share that with people."*

James was the lone respondent that reflected a neutral position when asked about the impact of the breakfast on his spirituality:

***James:** "I wouldn't say that it is particularly important... I don't know whether I am a particularly spiritual person... maybe I'm a bit too intellectual in my thinking, in terms of spirituality."*

Nevertheless, James was the most vocal about the importance of the men's breakfast being an outward sign of men's commitment to their faith community. James primarily expressed his spirituality through action, though he certainly reflected on his belief that a men's breakfast was a place where he should be able to ask important life questions.

***James:** "How do I live out my life in Christ in this kind of setting or that kind of setting?"*

The experience of a shared meal may be a simple act, but it has profound spiritual meaning. A breakfast brings the material and spiritual together in the act of eating. Both body and soul are nourished.

Significant Findings

Five significant findings came out of the data. First, the data are not saturated. Many of the valuable contributions to the research are lone points the contribution of which would be strengthened by corroborating data. Despite the lack of saturation, analysis reveals significant issues that can bear generalization and interesting points that provide insight. The two breakfasts are very different ministries. St. Jude's emphasis was on food, fellowship, and fun. St. Bart's was a more intellectual event; food was more of an enabler for the discussion. The focus on fellowship came via regular speakers, discussion, and debate. Personal experience with other men's breakfasts suggests that this variation lies on a spectrum, the complexity of which would need to be tested by more research.

Second, five clear themes were evident. Even with the small sample, it's clear that intentionality is very important. Well-articulated vision, purpose, and goals, certainly among the leaders and core team, help guide plans and actions. All participants identified the importance of authenticity in the vision and purpose. A hidden agenda is very off-putting and leaves men feeling tricked into participating in a ministry event. During the interviews the respondents most against a hidden agenda were ones that had previously experienced it. This suggests a hidden agenda is not a place that successful men's breakfasts should tread. It should come as no surprise that fellowship and intimacy, two dimensions of relationship, appear as themes. We are drawn to relationship because God created us in the image of the Trinity. We share a part of God's perichoretic character and the intense relationship

and giving that goes with it. Mission is in tension with intimacy. This will raise questions for any men's group seeking to kindle both depth and breadth in relationships. Tension can't be entirely resolved because intimate gatherings are difficult when men barely know one another. Striking a balance that supports a ministry's vision and purpose will be important. At the same time, men's breakfast ministries need to be open to the Spirit. When what we plan and what we do has unexpected consequences, it is worth discerning the reason.

Third, intimacy is a challenge. It is a stereotype that men have difficulty discussing feelings and emotions. It was difficult for some of the respondents to discuss feelings in the interview. Any ministry hoping to transform the lives of men must reach them at an emotional level. It will need the right conditions and a safe place. My data suggests that those conditions might not be possible in a parish breakfast setting – especially one that only brings men together for a couple of hours once a month.

Fourth, hints of a counter thesis and even an anti-thesis exist. The counter thesis is that a men's breakfast is an introductory ministry that holds men together in community in preparation for something else, another opportunity that will be transformational. An indicator supporting this conclusion is that the men had lower expectations for their lone breakfast ministry compared with all the women's ministries in the parish.

John: "We decided we better try to be something equivalent to the ACW."

Matthew: *“You know there is a variety of different programs that are women only... very few that are men only. And, men’s breakfast is a men’s only.”*

James: *“The dynamic groups within St. Bart’s congregation, I would say, are the Anglican Church Women groups and a number of the committees... like the pastoral committee and the spiritual committee [where] the leadership... is heavily influenced by the women.”*

The breakfasts seem to have set their sights on keeping men connected to the Christian community. There are hints that an anti-thesis could develop, a move to suppress activity that might lead to transformational change.

Matthew: *“For some it’s like, “I am not interested in studying the bible, I am not interested in coming for Sunday worship, I am not interested in a whole bunch of different – I don’t want to get involved, but it is nice to come here and share a meal and sit down with a bunch of good friends in the Church.”*

Fifth, my research is missing positive confirmation that a parish men’s breakfast could be a transformational event. What is not said is often more revealing than what is. Corroborating data might exist in another breakfast, because the data set is not saturated; but, in the end, my research cannot confirm my hypothesis. It suggests that transformation might be a goal too far to reach for a parish men’s breakfast, certainly the kind of transformational change that is discernable to the subject.

Matthew: *“I’ve been invited to other men’s breakfasts, I’ve been guest speaker at a few different men’s breakfasts over the years, and some... you come, you have a meal and there is the expectation that there is a purpose behind it, that we’re not simply having a meal together. But here [at St. Jude’s] they were very direct in their response, hey guys why don’t we try doing something? No!”*

The one man that described a transformational experience encountered it outside the men's breakfast ministry.

Paul: "Cursillo to me it's a phenomenal experience. You know my kids came and said what happened to Dad, he changed. I thought that was kind of funny. Um...but to see people grow and change and sort of move along in their spirituality and their faith journey, I think it is phenomenal."

The hope for any men's ministry should be to contribute to the transformation of the lives of men. One aspect of that transformation is spiritual growth. Men's breakfasts have a spiritual dimension, a dimension that can be measured, at least indirectly.

Jesus' ministry transformed lives; his disciples had a transformational ministry too. The proof is in the worldwide Church and the lives of the saints. A men's breakfast ministry can play a role in this, but the data indicates that the breakfasts act more as a holding ministry to keep men connected to the Christian community, and rely on other ministries to accomplish transformation.

Paul: "I think things like the breakfast kept me going to church and not sort of saying yeah I'm going to stay home and do something else or go do something else."

Paul: "I never left the church but did it mean that [I] was growing? No. I wouldn't say until I did Cursillo... I did take it to heart and I got a phenomenal... and I would say my spiritually and growth has gone... it leapfrogs because of going to Cursillo."

Social System Paradigm

The interview themes and the relationship between them provide valuable insight on men's breakfasts, but they may not be enough guidance for parish leadership considering setting up or changing the direction of a breakfast. For that a

system perspective is helpful. Figure 1 shows the research data organized visually into a social system paradigm, which I created based on the data. Both breakfasts follow this model.

The paradigm presents the research data as a real life event organized around a central phenomenon, “breaking bread together – sharing a meal and conversation.” This term was chosen purposefully from the data to emphasize the significance of the historical connection of the eating activity to the activity of Jesus and his disciples and emblematic of the link to the Eucharistic feast in worship.

The paradigm is a helpful tool to provide context on how the themes undergird and sustain the men’s breakfast phenomenon, which actually functions as a stable social system. Understanding the social system is critical if a parish leader intends to make an intervention to an existing breakfast or establish a new one.

As in all stable systems, inputs are acted upon and influenced creating outputs and a feedback loop provides the self-correcting mechanism for stability. The paradigm is a convenient way to present the data in a form that correlates with an actual event.

The data in the paradigm is drawn from the interviews. The causal conditions are the triggers or impetus to establish the phenomenon. In the case of St. Jude and St. Bart’s breakfasts there was an expressed desire for fellowship, for a place to meet apart from women, and there were men who were willing to make it happen.

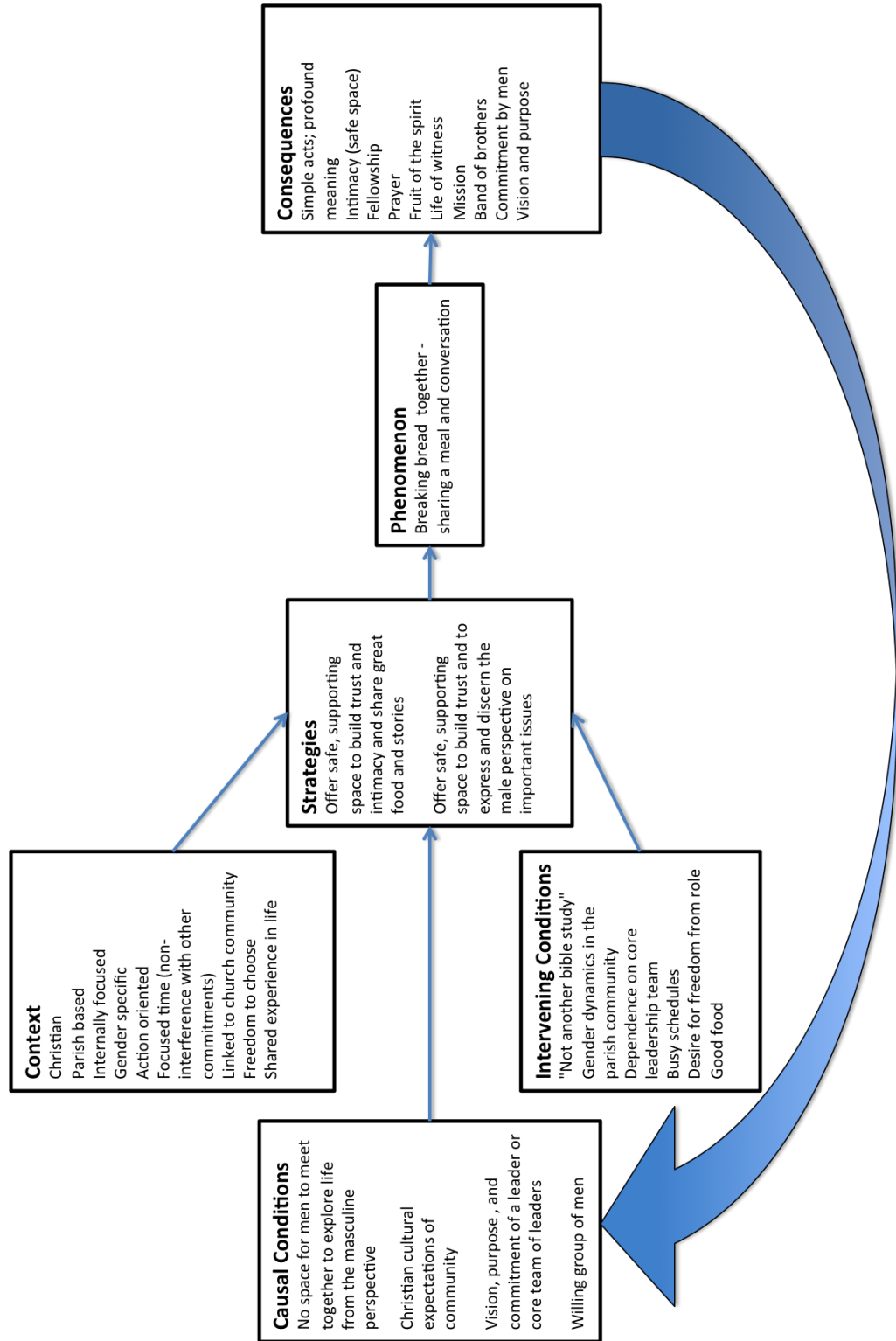


Figure 1 – Social system paradigm

The data showed that the two groups used different strategies to make the breakfast happen. St. Jude's offered a safe supporting space to build trust and intimacy and share great food and stories. St. Bart's established a clear intention to explore the male perspectives on important issues.

Both St. Jude's and St. Bart's have sustained a men's breakfast for many years; their apparent differences hide their underlying similarity. It is clear from the interviews that the visions of both breakfasts promote fellowship and a sense of community and shared purpose. They both bring men together to share a meal, to enter into dialogue, and to reconnect, but they do use different strategies. There could be as many strategies as there are breakfast ministries; the strategy is sensitive to the context and any intervening conditions.

The context for the two breakfasts was quite similar, they were both held in Anglican parishes, both are internally focused and action oriented with a dedicated time on Saturday morning. The intervening conditions are more parish-specific. The respondents from St. Jude's breakfast were clear that they did not want "another bible study." St. Bart's appears to be very dependent on the leader and his small team. All respondents expressed a desire to escape from roles and some level of gender dynamics in the parish community. The busy schedules of the men are the main reason that breakfasts are held on Saturday mornings.

Consequences can be seen throughout the data in statements about intimacy, fellowship, and fruit of the spirit. One important consequence is renewed vision,

purpose, and commitment, which feed back to reinvigorate the Causal Conditions from figure 1.

This model is built from the experience of participants and offers a theory of how the breakfasts might work as a stable social system. Parishes need to identify a vision and purpose and find a core team with a commitment to make the ministry happen. The strategy that the parish uses to encourage people to attend will depend very much on the lives of the men targeted. At this stage it is important to realize there are no right answers, just good questions. Answers to a few key questions can help identify the social system underlying a men's breakfast ministry.

What are the conditions that affect participation? If younger men with families are the targets, what can be done to respond to the busy schedule of the modern parent? What context is desired for the ministry? Is it primarily for Church members? Is there an age range? This will help identify a strategy to make the breakfast a reality. How will the leaders and participants judge the success or not of the breakfast? The data revealed some interesting categories that might offer a metric including fruit of the spirit, intimacy, and a sense of profound meaning. It is these outputs that act as the engine to keep the breakfast running and growing.

Evaluation and Implications for Pastoral Theology

The interviews identified three theological concepts deserving more reflection: Christian spirituality, κοινωνία, and mission. Each concept was derived from questions suggested by the data. What is the nature of Christian spirituality;

what is the significance of *κοινωνία* to the Christian journey; and, what role does a men's breakfast ministry play in the mission of the Church?

Spirituality

In Scripture and earliest tradition, spirituality and pneumatology are not distinguished. Most of what the Bible and the early Fathers have to say about spirituality is simply a working out of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's relationship to the Christian believer and community.²⁹ Spirituality is a common topic in popular literature today; the search for self-transcendence seems to be a universal human preoccupation. Christian spirituality is unique in this search for meaning because it "is grounded in the belief that human fulfillment can only be fully achieved through a deepened relationship with God."³⁰ Arthur Holder offered a simple working definition for Christian spirituality: "the lived experience of Christian faith and discipleship."³¹

Consideration of Christian spirituality must begin with the Bible because it is a witness to God's revelation and it reflects the Christian understanding of our collective experience with God. The good news involves the unique experience of Jesus Christ in the world and of human relationship with God in and through the

²⁹ Robert David Hughes, III, "The Holy Spirit in Christian Spirituality," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* ed. Arthur Holder (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 206.

³⁰ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 29, accessed November 17, 2014. www.amazon.ca/reader/0631212817?_encoding=UTF8&page=20#reader_0631212817.

³¹ Arthur Holder, "Introduction," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* ed. Arthur Holder (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 5.

person of Jesus Christ.³² The New Testament provides many examples of Christian faith and practice arising from the different religious experiences of disciples in community, even though Christians then and now experience the same risen Christ.³³

The theological consideration of spirituality presents some challenges. Pre-modern philosophers and theologians, including Dionysius, Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, identified the problem: language is inadequate in the face of God's infinity."³⁴ The problem gets no easier within the modern framework of knowing. Explaining lived experience, particularly experience of God, when God's infinity exceeds human knowledge requires careful consideration of the limits of language and a careful use of symbols and signs that point to God and do justice to the transcendent divine.³⁵

Christian spirituality, which requires a commitment to faith for full expression, does not fit comfortably within the western academic paradigm, a paradigm that demands scholarship be detached and disinterested for it to have integrity.³⁶ Thus, a tension exists between experience and detachment in any academic theological consideration.³⁷ The analysis of personal experiences at the

³² Bonnie Thurston, "The New Testament in Christian Spirituality," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* ed. Arthur Holder (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 55.

³³ Holder, "Introduction," 6, summarizing Thurston, "The New Testament in Christian Spirituality."

³⁴ James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁶ McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction*, 31.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

foundation of this research breaches academic convention to the extent that it does not assume what is visible, material, or measurable is all that there is.

Spirituality implies a life led in the power and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.³⁸ “The idea of a purely... [human defined] or ‘disinterested’ knowledge of God is always precluded.”³⁹ It is exactly lived experience that makes the study of Christian spirituality “immediate, transformative, compelling, self-implicating, and life changing.”⁴⁰ To truly know God, in the ontological sense, is to be changed by God.

Modern Christian experience is not so different from that of the New Testament disciples. Christian spirituality is found in the relationship between an individual and God, mediated by the risen and alive Jesus Christ. Authentic Christian spirituality is also concerned with our relationship with other people, who are created in God’s image.⁴¹ In the experience of friendships with another human being, we can experience the friendship of God.⁴² The spirituality of men can be nurtured and strengthened though an ongoing relationship with other men of faith, so that

³⁸ Hughes, “The Holy Spirit in Christian Spirituality,” 206.

³⁹ McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction*, 28.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Liebert, “The Role of Practice in the Study of Christian Spirituality,” *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 2, no. 1, (Spring 2002): 45, accessed November 17, 2014, doi:10.1353/scs.2002.0011.

⁴¹ James, *What Are They Saying About Masculine Spirituality?*, 15.

⁴² James B. Nelson, *The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 68.

through relationship a connection to God is maintained and transformation can occur.⁴³

Spirituality, while defined and nurtured through relationship with the Holy Spirit, is expressed by action, not simply devotional practices but action in the world.⁴⁴ Since a man's approach to life is rooted in doing, direction, and definition, action is important.⁴⁵ A men's breakfast is an opportunity for men to take action to enrich their lives, encountering God through the lives of other men in a believing community and through the Holy Spirit directly.

Κοινωνία – the breadth and depth of relationship

Acts 2:42-47 provides a picture into the daily life of the early Church, when it was still a small Christian community:

ἦσαν δὲ προσκατεροῦντες τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων

And they were devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles,

καὶ τῇ **κοινωνίᾳ**, τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς. (Acts 2:42-47)⁴⁶

*and to the **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to prayers.*

Luke portrays life in this community as a golden age. Prayer, teaching, fellowship and the breaking of bread were core activities.⁴⁷

⁴³ James, *What Are They Saying About Masculine Spirituality?*, 49.

⁴⁴ Philip Sheldrake, "Spirituality and the Integrity of Theology," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 7, no. 1, (Spring 2007): 96, accessed November 17, 2014, doi:10.1353/scs.2007.0018.

⁴⁵ James, *What Are They Saying About Masculine Spirituality?*, 48.

⁴⁶ All Greek Scripture references from the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* in Barbara Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, fourth revised edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 2010).

Life among the believers in the early Church serves as a model for life in community today. Devotion to the apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread and prayers are central parts of our modern Christian worship. The good news of the apostles was about Jesus birth, death, and resurrection. The breaking of bread by the time Luke wrote Acts is most likely the ritual meal Paul identifies in 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 11:24, which occurred in homes with gladness and sincerity.

The intimate fellowship, oneness, and sharing enjoyed in this early Christian community are a fruit of the Spirit.⁴⁸ Luke portrays the earliest Christian groups as idyllic, harmonious communities; a paradise where the group is in close intimate relationship with God and each other.⁴⁹

When Luke tells us these early Christians devoted themselves to fellowship, he was describing something much more profound than the social activity associated with the term in modern parlance. He was describing *κοινωνία*, intimate fellowship, the full breadth and depth of relationship. This was a priority and one of their prime objectives. Their focus was building relationships not just sharing social activities.⁵⁰ *Κοινωνία* built relationships, which facilitated learning, worshipping, and prayer.

This connection is important. It fosters a common life together, enabling the grace of

⁴⁷ "Commentary on Acts," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford Biblical Studies Online, accessed January 11, 2015, <http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com.ezproxy.astheology.ns.ca:2048/article/book/obso-9780198755005/obso-9780198755005-div1-843>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ "Commentary on Acts of the Apostles," in *The Oxford Study Bible*, Oxford Biblical Studies Online, accessed January 11, 2015, <http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com.ezproxy.astheology.ns.ca:2048/article/book/obso-9780195290004/obso-9780195290004-div1-3381>.

⁵⁰ J. Hampton Keathley, III, "Christian Fellowship," accessed January 4, 2015, <https://bible.org/article/christian-fellowship>, published June 15, 2004, reprint from Biblical Studies Press, 1997.

Jesus Christ to transform the community. Luke's early Christian community made κοινωνία a priority for a reason.

The first letter of John also discusses κοινωνία in the opening pericope in verse 3. It is part of a section where the author declares the revelation of God in Jesus:

ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ' ἡμῶν. καὶ ἡ **κοινωνία** δὲ ἡ **ἡμετέρα**
*so that you too may have **fellowship** with us and indeed **our fellowship***

μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. (1 Jn 1:3)
is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

“Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” The coming of the Son and the proclamation of God's Word is not an end in itself; the purpose is κοινωνία. True κοινωνία in all its aspects has its foundation in God and our relationship with Jesus Christ. It is more than just social activity. It is a deep intimate union. Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 1:9:

πιστὸς ὁ θεός, δι' οὗ ἐκλήθητε εἰς **κοινωνίαν**
*God is faithful by whom you were called into **fellowship***

τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. (1 Cor 1:9)
with his Son our Lord Jesus Christ

Believers are able to share κοινωνία because God first calls them into a common relationship with Jesus Christ.

Tertullian, in his work *Apologeticum*, offers insight on life in the early Church. In *Apology*, xxxix he explains the real meaning of *κοινωνία* is found among those “who have been led to the knowledge of God as their common Father, who have drunk in one spirit of holiness, who from the same womb of a common ignorance have agonized into the same light of truth!”⁵¹ The source and foundation of *κοινωνία* is God. In Chapter 67 of Justin Martyr’s *First Apology*, he describes the weekly act of fellowship of a shared meal “on the day called Sunday,”⁵² revealing the simplicity and warmth of this primitive Christian community.

The New Testament Christian communities show Christian *κοινωνία* is much more than a relationship founded upon common interests, likes, or dislikes. It is more than an expression of collegiality from similar personalities with shared opinions. The foundation lies with God; without God’s presence Christian *κοινωνία* is impossible.

Since Christian *κοινωνία* finds its origins with God and not human beings, intimate fellowship with one another in Christ transcends all social and ethnic barriers. Those people with whom we share *κοινωνία* are always determined by our common relationship with God; *κοινωνία* cannot be truly experienced apart from Jesus Christ and the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

⁵¹ Philip Schaff, ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed January 5, 2015, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03>, reprint of the Grand Rapids, 1885 edition, 90.

⁵² Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, trans. Marcus Dods and George Reith (Buffalo, 1885), revised and edited by Kevin Knight, accessed January 5, 2015, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm>.

Relationship with Jesus Christ and *κοινωνία* with believers are not options; our identity as images of the triune God makes our relationship with God and our fellow-Christians core to our being. It needs to be fed constantly for its own deepening and enrichment.⁵³

Mission

Each of the gospels places the foundation for mission in the context of their first reader's experience. Matthew's Great Commission highlights the importance of mission.

18 And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' (Mt 28:18-20)⁵⁴

Matthew's account of Jesus' life and ministry ends with this command to go and make disciples of all nations. The placement of the universal mission at the end of the gospel was purposeful; it needed the context of Jesus' life and ministry to reveal that the mission to the Jews was just the first stage of an ultimate world mission.⁵⁵

In Mark 13:10, persecution for the fledgling Church is foretold, yet in the last half of the verse we find that "the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations."

⁵³ Keathley, "Christian Fellowship," summarizing the Anglican theologian J. I. Packer.

⁵⁴ All English scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version Anglicized unless otherwise stated.

⁵⁵ David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*, New Foundations Theological Library (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 66.

Even though the missionary command in Mark 16:15 is part of a later addition to the gospel, it summarizes the Gospel's focus on the good news of salvation, "And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.'"⁵⁶

Concern for marginalized people influences Luke's version of the Great Commission. Luke places repentance and forgiveness at the centre:

⁴⁶ and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Lk 24:46-49)

For John, the Church is the foothold of God's kingdom in the World. John sees everything, including mission, from a Christological perspective: "As the father sent me, so I send you." (Jn 20:21)⁵⁷

The foundation for mission today must also be placed in context. The reign of God in our lives is central to Jesus' entire ministry and to Jesus' understanding of his own mission. The common aspect in all these accounts of the Great Commission is the unity of witness by the Church. God sends people not ideas. We are challenged to let Jesus inspire us to continue his ministry imaginatively and creatively in a twenty-first century context. It is as important today as it was 2000 years ago that believers

⁵⁶ Ibid., 69-70.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 70.

focus on the reality of God's reign, look for it to come, and take action to "proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."⁵⁸

David Bosch, an influential South African missiologist and theologian of the late twentieth century, derived four key characteristics of mission from Scripture.

1) God reveals God's self as a God of mercy and compassion in the Bible and as a God concerned with the disadvantaged, the marginalized, and the outcast. 2) The entire New Testament reveals a unity of witness; God sends people to the nations, not ideas or eternal truths. 3) The Christian community of the New Testament is missional; it is a Church with a mission resulting from an encounter with Christ. Any Church that is in Christ is involved in the mission. 4) God is the active agent. It is God's mission and God works in and through the Church to reveal it.⁵⁹

Lesslie Newbigin's reflection on the Great Commission in Matthew, Luke, and John led him to conclude three things about mission: 1) an inescapable element of obligation exists, not as a new Law, but "as a joy that cannot but communicate itself." 2) Word and action belong together in the communication of the Gospel; the message of Jesus needs action. 3) "Word and deed are related to each other through the shared life in the body of Christ."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, twentieth anniversary edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 35.

⁵⁹ Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*, 57-81.

⁶⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, "Cross-currents in ecumenical and evangelical understandings of mission," *International Bulletin Of Missionary Research* 6, no. 4 (October 1, 1982): 148, accessed January 7, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost*.

Mission describes the entirety of the Church's calling; mission activity does not always have an intention to proclaim the gospel through word and deed, but it will always have that dimension. "Words and deeds both point to the same reality – the presence of the reign of God."⁶¹ There is no dichotomy. The Church's entire nature is missionary, even though not every endeavour of the Church is explicitly a missionary activity.⁶² Nevertheless, words and deeds must be seen to belong together with a common source in a shared life in Christ.⁶³

Men's breakfasts share the missional dimension of the Church whether or not communities decide a breakfast will have a missional intention. Newbigin identified the importance of informal contacts in many of the great triumphs of the gospel; for example, the witness of persons of whom we know nothing began the great Christian communities in Alexandria and Rome.⁶⁴ Who knows what will result from a chance encounter at a breakfast? Men's breakfasts creates a space, an opportunity, within which communities can engage with purpose to change the lives of men.

Pastoral Implications

We are linked in a special relationship with our Creator. As creatures formed in God's image, we carry the innate need for fellowship, and, as believers, we share the motivation of the Holy Spirit within us to make this good news known to others. Christian spirituality, nurtured through a relationship with the Holy Spirit, is

⁶¹ Ibid., 146.

⁶² Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*, 199.

⁶³ Newbigin, "Cross-currents in ecumenical and evangelical understandings of mission," 148.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

expressed in action in the world. Men's breakfasts are excellent opportunities for this to occur, especially since they take place in a community setting within the life of the believing community. A breakfast can create a space to demonstrate common commitment and purpose, a space that can transcend all social and ethnic barriers, a space that leads to *κοινωνία* that builds up and transforms believers.

Our identity as images of the triune God makes our relationship with God and our fellowship with other believers a core part of our being. It needs to be fed constantly. Men's breakfasts enjoyed in the context of the believing community will always have a missional dimension; the Church's entire nature is missionary. A men's breakfast does not need to have this intention, but the missional dimension can never be denied because no separation exists between the gospel spoken and the gospel lived. Men's breakfasts are activities where communities of men can engage with purpose knowing that the men involved can encounter Christ directly and through the lives of other men.

Evaluation and Implications for Ministry

The data from my two research sites revealed six issues that parishes should consider when planning for a successful men's breakfast.

Importance of vision and purpose and a core leadership team

A men's breakfast ministry needs a vision and purpose and it needs a core leadership team to sustain it. The data show the importance of intentionality and at the root of intentionality are vision and a guiding purpose. With a clear and

articulated vision the ministry can be set on firm theological footing to address the needs of the worshiping community and those people it touches, whatever that vision might be. A guiding purpose helps with decisions when the path forward is not clear. Vision and purpose might change, as a ministry discerns the will of God. When the vision and purpose are not clear, it does not mean they do not exist. Assumptions about the vision and purpose in this situation may lead the ministry away from where God is calling. A clear articulation of a discerned vision and purpose ensures everyone is pulling together with the Spirit.

Handing tension between mission and intimacy

The data indicate a significant tension between mission and intimacy. We are all called as Christians to spread the good news. Yet this call to mission can conflict with a desire for *κοινωνία*, intimacy in fellowship. Being clear about the vision and purpose of the men's breakfast as but one ministry of a Christian community can help resolve this tension. The Christian Church has been a missional organization from the very beginning. Jesus' Great Commission is clear that Christians have a responsibility to participate in spreading the good news. Not every activity of a Christian community needs a missional intention. It is entirely acceptable for a men's breakfast ministry to have an internal focus toward men of the community, especially if that focus helps foster a missional effort by men or within the wider community in which men participate. A breakfast may have a missional focus or an intimacy focus; but it would be an exceptional breakfast that could achieve both at the same time. It takes time to build the trust and safe environment for close and

intimate relationships to form and build; that is just a difficult goal when new people keep showing up all the time.

Be aware of the antithesis

The research question grew out of a conviction that men's breakfasts could be a place where men's lives are radically transformed, where the opportunity for growing authentic and intimate relationships, an environment to learn about the Christian faith, and a focus on outreach might lead to some level of group and individual transformation. A key finding from the data is that the two breakfasts are not transformational for the respondents interviewed. It could be that the breakfast settings in the groups studied were just not conducive to a transformational experience. It can be deduced from the interviews that transformation was not a stated purpose of the breakfasts or part of anyone's vision. The surprising finding was suggestions of an anti-thesis: a resistance to the elements that might lead to transformation, growing new relationships, learning, and outreach.

Transformation may be a bar too high

Expecting a men's breakfast to be a ministry of transformation may be a bar too high to reach. The data clearly indicate that the breakfasts studied were important ministries, but as a place to share meals and conversation and to reconnect with friends and acquaintances. One respondent with experience of Cursillo was clear that the length of time and frequency of a breakfast are not conducive to a transformative experience. Considered more broadly, however, the men's breakfast could work with another ministry, like Cursillo, to facilitate

transformation. A breakfast could draw men in and encourage the conditions where a man might consider taking the step to participate in a Cursillo weekend. Christian communities looking for opportunities to affect the lives of men should consider situating a breakfast within a stable of ministries that builds discipleship.

Context and the local situation will influence the best strategy

The two breakfasts investigated are stable systems, they fit within the same social system paradigm, but they are not the same. The data certainly shows that a parish searching for the best strategy for a breakfast will need to consider the local context and conditions. They play a large part in shaping how a men's breakfast can meet a perceived need, expressed by a vision and a purpose, and with the commitment of a core group of men.

The strategies used to encourage breakfasts may be different, but the goal of breaking bread and sharing a meal and conversation together in a shared journey of Christian life is the same. The context and local conditions will determine the best strategies to apply to make a breakfast work. Leaders will need to be attentive to what happens as a result of the activity and to use the feedback to adjust the strategy. Think of breakfasts as living social systems that need to adapt to survive in different environments; a good knowledge of the environment is important.

Understand men's breakfast as a social system

A men's breakfast is not just a breakfast; it is a ministry opportunity. A systems approach to understanding the dynamics of the event is helpful. Within a general social environment set by context and intervening conditions, something

happens while sharing a meal that affects participants, and the change manifests in the lives of men. If the experience is positive, the system is reinforced; if the experience is negative, the system changes or dies. A men's breakfast, seen as a social system, helps leaders assess the event and its impact and if necessary introduce feedback that will lead to change.

Conclusions

Elements of a successful men's breakfast:

- guiding vision and purpose;
- dedicated leader and core team;
- good understanding of the local context and environment;
- κοινωνία, depth and breadth in relationship;
- openness to the Spirit's mission; and
- awareness that simple acts that have profound spiritual meaning.

Figure 2 – Response to the question

The response to my research question in figure 2 is drawn from the themes and influenced by the social system paradigm that shows how the breakfast dynamic functions. Intentionality is important, particularly led by a guiding vision and purpose, supported by a dedicated leader and core team with a good understanding of the local context and environment. Intimacy and fellowship work together to help foster κοινωνία, the depth and breadth of relationship in community. The men's breakfast ministry must always be open to the Spirit's mission because the breakfast mission comes from God. Finally, we should never forget that our spirituality can be affected by simple acts that have profound meaning.

Bibliography

Aland, Barbara, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martine, and Bruce

Meltzer, eds. *The Greek New Testament*, fourth revised edition. Stuttgart:

Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 2010.

Bly, Robert. *Iron John: A Book About Men*. New York: Random House, 1990.

Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission*, twentieth anniversary edition. Maryknoll, NY:

Orbis Books, 2011.

—. *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*. New

Foundations Theological Library. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980.

“Canada’s Changing Religious Landscape.” Pew Research Centre Religion & Public

Life Demographic Study. June 27, 2013. Accessed February 15, 2015.

[http://www.pewforum.org/2013/06/27/canadas-changing-religious-](http://www.pewforum.org/2013/06/27/canadas-changing-religious-landscape/)

[landscape/](http://www.pewforum.org/2013/06/27/canadas-changing-religious-landscape/).

Castellini, J. D. “Male Spirituality and the Men’s Movement: A Factorial Study.”

Electronic Dissertation, Xavier University, 2001. Accessed October 9, 2014.

<https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>.

Castellini, J. D., W. M. Nelson III, J. J. Barret, Mark S. Nagy, and G. L. Quatman. “Male

Spirituality and the Men’s Movement: a Factorial Examination of Motivations.”

Journal of Psychology & Theology 33, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 41-55. Accessed

October 9, 2014. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost.

Clatterbaugh, Kenneth. *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity*, second edition.

Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997.

“Commentary on Acts.” In *The Oxford Bible Commentary*. Oxford Biblical Studies

Online. Accessed January 11, 2015. <http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com>.

[ezproxy.astheology.ns.ca:2048/article/book/obso-9780198755005/obso-](http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com.ezproxy.astheology.ns.ca:2048/article/book/obso-9780198755005/obso-9780198755005-div1-843)

[9780198755005-div1-843](http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com.ezproxy.astheology.ns.ca:2048/article/book/obso-9780198755005/obso-9780198755005-div1-843).

“Commentary on Acts of the Apostles.” In *The Oxford Study Bible*, Oxford Biblical

Studies Online. Accessed January 11, 2015.

<http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com.ezproxy.astheology.ns.ca:2048/article>

[/book/obso-9780195290004/obso-9780195290004-div1-3381](http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com.ezproxy.astheology.ns.ca:2048/article/book/obso-9780195290004/obso-9780195290004-div1-3381).

Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, third edition. Los Angeles:

Sage, 2013.

Dittes, James E. *The Male Predicament: On Being a Man Today*. San Francisco: Harper

& Row, 1985.

Eldredge, John. *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Mans Soul*, revised edition.

Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011.

Flood, M. “Men’s Movements.” *Community Quarterly* 46 (June 1998): 62-71. Accessed

October 11, 2014. [www.xyonline.net/sites/default/files/Flood, Men’s](http://www.xyonline.net/sites/default/files/Flood%2C%20Men%27s%20Movements.pdf)

[Movements.pdf](http://www.xyonline.net/sites/default/files/Flood%2C%20Men%27s%20Movements.pdf).

- Guarnaschelli, John S. "Men's Support Groups and the Men's Movement: Their Role for Men and for Women." *Group* 18, no. 4 (1994): 197-211. Accessed October 11, 2014. <http://link.springer.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/journal/10724/18/4>.
- Hill, P.C. and K.I. Pargament. "Advances in the Conceptualization and Measurement of Religion and Spirituality. Implications for Physical and Mental Health Research." *The American Psychologist* 58, no. 1 (2003): 64-74. Accessed October 10, 2014. *PsycARTICLES*, EBSCOhost.
- Holder, Arthur. "Introduction." In *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* edited by Arthur Holder, 1-12. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- Hughes, Robert David, III. "The Holy Spirit in Christian Spirituality." In *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* edited by Arthur Holder, 207-222. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- James, David C. *What Are They Saying About Masculine Spirituality?*. New York: Paulist Press, 1996.
- Karoski, Spase. "Men on the move: the politics of the men's movement." PhD Dissertation, University of Wollongong, 2007. Accessed October 7, 2014. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/687>.

Keathley, J. Hampton, III. "Christian Fellowship." Accessed January 4, 2015.

<https://bible.org/article/christian-fellowship>. Published June 15th, 2004.

Reprint from Biblical Studies Press, 1997.

Knopp, Peter Alexander. "Men in Support Groups: Why They Keep Coming Back." MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1997. Accessed October 5, 2014.

<https://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/5958>.

Liebert, Elizabeth. "The Role of Practice in the Study of Christian Spirituality."

Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality 2, no. 1, (Spring 2002): 30-49.

Accessed November 17, 2014. doi:10.1353/scs.2002.0011.

Merriam, Sharan B. *Qualitative Research*. San Francisco: Josset-Bass, 2009.

McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell

Publishers, 1999. Accessed November 17, 2014. www.amazon.ca/reader/0631212817?_encoding=UTF8&page=20#reader_0631212817.

Nelson, James B. *The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality*.

Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988.

Newbigin, Lesslie. "Cross-currents in ecumenical and evangelical understandings of

mission." *International Bulletin Of Missionary Research* 6, no. 4 (October 1,

1982): 146-151. Accessed January 7, 2015. *ATLA Religion Database with*

ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

The NIV Study Bible. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985.

“Religion and Spirituality in Canada.” Project Canada Surveys. University of Lethbridge. April 8, 2012. Accessed February 15, 2015.
http://www.reginaldbibby.com/images/PCS_Release_Religion_Spirituality_Main_Pervasive_in_Canada_Easter_2012.pdf.

Roberts, Alexander, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1. Translated by Marcus Dods and George Reith. Buffalo, 1885. Revised and edited by Kevin Knight. Accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm>.

Russell, Virgil E. “Grassroots of the Men’s Movement: An Ethnographic Case Study of an Independent Men’s Group.” Electronic Thesis, University of Akron, 2009. Accessed October 9, 2014. <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>.

Schaff, Philip, ed. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Accessed January 5, 2015. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03>. Reprint of the Grand Rapids, 1885 edition.

Sheldrake, Philip. “Spirituality and the Integrity of Theology.” *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 7, no. 1, (Spring 2007): 93-98. Accessed November 17, 2014. doi:10.1353/scs.2007.0018.

Singleton, Andrew. “Men Getting Real? A Study of Relationship Change in Two Men’s Groups.” *Journal of Sociology* 39 no. 2 (2003): 131-147. Accessed October 5, 2014. doi:10.1177/00048690030392002.

Smith, James K. A. *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Strikwerda, Robert A. and Larry May. "Male Friendship and Intimacy." *Hypatia* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 110-125. Accessed October 11, 2014. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost.

Thurston, Bonnie. "The New Testament in Christian Spirituality." In *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* edited by Arthur Holder, 55-70. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Annex**Research Ethics Board Proposal**

Name of Student Investigator: David Peer

Title of Research Project: Eggs, Bacon and God: Successful Men's Breakfasts and Male Spirituality.

*Summary of Proposed Research***Description**

Many parishes with an active men's ministry have a periodic men's breakfast meeting as an important component of the ministry. The form that men's breakfast ministries can take varies, but eggs, bacon, and God is usually involved. My research question is, "what elements lead to a men's breakfast ministry that offers an opportunity for spiritual development, relationship building, and outreach?"

The priest who wants to start or encourage an existing men's breakfast ministry can find lots of recipes for food, but what are the elements that lead to a successful ministry? The priests, participants, and organizers of two large and long-standing breakfasts may provide data that could answer my research question: what elements lead to a men's breakfast ministry that offers an opportunity for spiritual development, relationship building, and outreach? The answer could help inform some simple guidelines for starting this ministry or keeping or transforming an existing one.

Relationships are what make life work. James (1996) identifies the mythology of masculinity and masculine spirituality in contemporary western culture as a barrier to recognizing the quagmire of contemporary men's relationships.⁶⁵ The inability of men to form authentic relationships is the secret behind the myth. Reaching the richness of masculine spirituality means tackling the need for authentic relationships. Authentic spirituality is real, genuine, and dependable. It is grounded in a relationship with God and in relationships with other people.

⁶⁵ James, *What Are They Saying About Masculine Spirituality?*, 29.

A men's breakfast often provides a prime opportunity in a parish to address the needs of masculine spirituality and God's call to live as a man. Men are not taught to have a spiritual life, reducing spirituality to religious practice. Men's Breakfasts offer a way to connect men to God so that transformation can occur.

According to James, fostering masculine spirituality is ideally undertaken apart from the direct influence of women because masculine spirituality is grounded in symbols, stories, and the reflections of men. Creating and nurturing a space for men to be together with men is important for priests looking to foster masculine spirituality in a congregation, whether they are male or female. James suggests that the socialization that men receive growing up is deficient and that many men lead lonely and disconnected lives with no real sense of identity as a result.⁶⁶ The chief relationship that suffers is a man's relationship with God.

I have participated in many men's breakfasts. Some were good and some were awful. I am interested in exploring the reality of men's breakfast by interviewing parish priests, men's breakfast leadership, and breakfast participants about their lived experience and what they believe leads to a successful men's breakfast ministry.

Proposed Research Field Sites

I propose to interview six people involved with two different and active men's breakfast ministries in Anglican parishes in the Halifax area. The interviews will include a priest, a breakfast leader, and a breakfast participant from each site for a total of six participants. I am concerned with the lived experience of leaders and participants, with a particular interest in developing guidelines for priests and leaders. The lived experience of men that participate, lead, and the priests that pastorally support the ministry will be important.

Principle Research Consultants

I will consult with the Rev. Canon Dr. Jody Clarke, Dean of the Atlantic School of Theology and with the Rev Ed Trevors, Rector of Christ Church Shelburne. Dr. Clarke is familiar with the issues of masculine spirituality and with men's breakfasts as a parish priest and parish member. The Rev Ed Trevors started a very successful men's breakfast ministry in St. Luke's Dartmouth, one that is still active today.

Methodology

Based on my research question, "what elements lead to a men's breakfast ministry that offers an opportunity for spiritual development, relationship building, and outreach," a grounded theory is the best-suited method of inquiry for the project.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 15.

“Grounded theory is a good approach when a theory is not available to explain or understand a process.”⁶⁷ It uses an inductive approach and tries to determine meaning from the data.⁶⁸ Since all participants would have experienced a men’s breakfast, a grounded theory methodology offers a way to discover an explanation of the key elements of a men’s breakfast.⁶⁹

The intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and experience to generate a substantive theory from an appropriate sample size. Creswell suggests a sample size of between 20 and 30 people for a grounded theory study to ensure that data saturation is reached. Saturation occurs when no new data is obtained in interviews. Six participants will allow enough data to discover themes that suggest a theory about men’s breakfast ministry, recognizing that the themes may not be comprehensive nor the data necessarily saturated.

See Appendix A for an outline of proposed interview questions. I will make audio recordings and field notes of each interview. I will interview a parish priest, a breakfast ministry leader, and a breakfast ministry participant in two different Halifax area men’s breakfast ministries. I will interview people who have some experience with the ministry, either as leader, priest, or participant. I will confirm two parishes or churches with active men’s breakfast ministries with Dr. Clarke and contact the priest by email or letter seeking his or her support and participation in the study and permission to place a notice in the parish bulletin asking for volunteers for my study. A copy of the generic bulletin announcement is in Appendix B. I will contact volunteer participants and leaders in the parish ministry and invite them to participate by letter. A copy of the letter is in Appendix C.

I will conduct interviews in a public place, a library or the parish Church with other people present in the building. I will offer an interview by telephone if a face-to-face meeting in a public place is impossible to arrange.

An electronic copy of the summary Research Report will be made available to my interview subjects. The summary will be presented publically on March 11th or 12th, 2015. The complete Research Report will be made available to my research subjects on request.

Potential Benefits from Study

The lived experience with men’s breakfasts in the study will be of value to all Christian communities looking for ways to reach out to men. The themes that arise from the study will inform theory about how best to start and maintain a men’s breakfast ministry. The results of the research will help inform churches interested in starting or strengthening ministry to men through a men’s breakfast. If good

⁶⁷ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 88.

⁶⁸ Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 29.

⁶⁹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 83.

men's breakfasts are established, men may come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour or deepen and strengthen an existing relationship with God. It will allow priests, leaders, and breakfast participants interviewed in the study to reflect on the ministry and share lessons learned with other Christians from their lived experience.

Potential Risks from Study

Risk is a product of the probability of occurrence of a harmful event and the harmful consequences. The participants share the primary risks from the study and must feel free to share as much or as little as they wish. I will reduce the probability of a harmful event to a participant by making it clear to everyone, in writing and in person, that participants are free to share as much or as little as they are comfortable to contribute. If an incident occurs, I will react with empathy and offer to pair the participant with pastoral support. I will refer breakfast leaders or participants to their parish priest and if the incident occurs with a parish priest I will refer him or her to the Archdeacon. . During the interview I will be attentive to signs that indicate hesitation or anxiety with sharing and will respond sensitively to these indicators, including terminating the interview if appropriate. At every stage of my research I will do my utmost to protect the identity of participants and parishes and to guard the confidentiality of all research data.

Process for Obtaining Informed Consent

After I have identified potential participants, I will telephone or email them to ask if they are willing, in principle, to participate. If their answer is affirmative, I will arrange an interview place and time. At the beginning of the meeting and before the interview begins, I will share the background of my project, answer questions they might have, and ask them to sign a consent form (see Appendix D). They will be able to end the interview at any point and I will delete the recording if they decide to withdraw from the study.

Process for Protecting Identity of Participants and Confidentiality of Data

Protecting Identity of Participants and Storage and Destruction of Data:

1. Upon receiving a signed Informed Consent from research participants (by December 31, 2014), I will:
 - a) provide one copy for the participants
 - b) keep one copy for myself which I will place in an envelope separate from all other materials and store in a locked file cabinet in my home office.
 - c) provide one copy for my supervisor (Dr. Willhauck), also placed in a separate envelope, who will store it in a locked file cabinet in her office at AST.

2. Participants will be given code names. Audiotapes of interviews will be recorded on a digital recording device. These digital recording devices will be kept in locked brief cases or safes and secured at all times during data collection from the time of Informed Consent through the public Grad Project presentations (March 11, 12) and until deleted permanently from my device (no later than March 26, 2015).
3. Within two weeks of each interview, I will transcribe the interviews onto a Word document. The Word Document transcripts will be kept on a password protected computer from the time of data collection until the final Grad Project paper is due on March 26, 2015.
4. The public Grad Project Presentations will take place on March 11 and 12. On March 26, 2015 I will bring my recording device to my supervisor who will check to make sure all interviews have been deleted.
5. When the final Graduate Research paper is submitted to my supervisor on March 26, 2015, the Word Document transcripts of interviews will also be submitted to her, either printed as hard copies or disposable CDs and deleted from my computer and trash bin.
6. Dr. Willhauck will store transcripts of interviews in a locked file cabinet in her office at AST for one year and all data materials will be destroyed by shredding or crushing on March 26, 2016.

Appendix A: Proposed Questions

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate – Bulletin Announcement

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate – Participant Letter

Appendix D: Informed Consent

Appendix A: Proposed Questions

Tell me about your involvement in the men's breakfast.

How did you become involved in the men's breakfast?

Tell me why you go to the men's breakfast?

Do you think it is important for men to meet for breakfast without women?

What do you like most about the men's breakfast?

What do you like least about the men's breakfast?

Tell me about a typical men's breakfast.

What stands out about the breakfast for you?

What in your opinion are the most important marks of a successful men's breakfast?

How do you feel when you are at a men's breakfast?

What are your expectations when you attend a men's breakfast?

Suppose some people wanted to start a men's breakfast at a church, what would you recommend they do?

Describe what you think the ideal men's breakfast would be like.

What does your experience of the men's breakfast tell you about the church?

Is there anything I have missed that you would like to say about the men's breakfast?

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate – Bulletin Announcement

David Peer, an Anglican graduate student at the Atlantic School of Theology is conducting a study on men's breakfasts to find out what elements lead to a men's breakfast ministry that offers an opportunity for spiritual development, relationship building, and outreach. David is interested in interviewing a men's breakfast participant and a men's breakfast ministry leader from the parish. If you are interested in participating and contributing to this research, please contact the Rector/church office.

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate – Participant Letter

David Peer
Atlantic School of Theology
660 Francklyn Street
Halifax, NS B3H 3B5
902.835.5768 dbpeer@gmail.com

Dear [name]

My name is David Peer and I am a student enrolled in the Master of Divinity Degree Program at the Atlantic School of Theology (AST). I am finishing my formal education for ministry as a priest in the Anglican Church of Canada.

As part of my final year project I wish to explore men's ministry, and in particular men's breakfasts by interviewing people who are involved in a parish's men's breakfast. With my research I would like to identify the elements of a men's breakfast ministry that make this ministry an opportunity for spiritual development, relationship building, and outreach.

I am inviting you to participate in this study. Participation will include an audio-recorded interview, during which I will also make field notes. I am willing to meet you in a public place of your choosing. If a face-to-face meeting does not prove possible we could explore the possibility of a telephone or video conversation.

I will analyze the information gathered during interviews and present my findings in a public event at AST on March 11th and 12th, 2015. At all stages of my research the identities of participants and men's breakfasts will be kept strictly confidential. An electronic copy of the summary Research Report will be made available to you. A written report of my findings will be available at the AST library following the public presentation. The complete Research Report will be made available to my research subjects on request.

If you are willing to participate in this study I will be in touch to arrange a date and place for an interview. Also, I will forward a detailed statement of informed consent outlining my methods of research and data storage, a statement approved by the Research Ethics Board of AST.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 902.835.5768 or dbpeer@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Yours truly,

David Peer
Final Year Masters of Divinity Student (Anglican Church of Canada)

Appendix D: Informed Consent

David Peer
Atlantic School of Theology
660 Francklyn Street
Halifax, NS B3H 3B5
902.835.5768 dbpeer@gmail.com

As a student enrolled in the Master of Divinity Degree Program at the Atlantic School of Theology (AST), part of my course work under the supervision of Dr. Susan Willhauck, is to conduct a study on men's breakfasts by interviewing people who participate in this ministry. The purpose of this work is to determine what elements lead to a men's breakfast ministry that offers an opportunity for spiritual development, relationship building, and outreach.

I appreciate your participation in an interview for this study. The interview questions are designed to explore your experience with men's breakfasts. I will take notes during the interview and an audio recording of the conversation

The recordings and transcript will be held in a secure environment on a password-protected computer until the completion of this study on March 26, 2015. Data is stored by my supervisor for one year and will be destroyed on March 26, 2016.

All the information collected in this study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. At all stages of the data analysis and presentation, names and revealing facts about you, your worshipping community, and your men's breakfast will be changed to protect your identity. To further protect identities, this consent form will be sealed in an envelope and stored separately from data and the presentation.

If you are willing to participate in my project, please read the following and indicate your willingness to be involved by signing at the bottom of the consent form.

I acknowledge that the research procedures outline, of which I have a copy, have been outlined to me. Any questions that I had were answered to my satisfaction. I know that I may contact the researcher at any time should I have further questions. I am aware that my participation in this study is voluntary and I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time. I understand that personal records relating to this study will be kept confidential.

I know that the researcher will make every effort to keep all information obtained in this study as **confidential and anonymous** as possible. Names and potentially revealing facts will be changed, thus affording me anonymity. To further protect individual identities, this consent form will be sealed in an envelope and stored separately. Furthermore, the results of this study will be aggregated and no individual participant will be identified.

The following is a time line for the storage and destruction of data:

1. Upon receiving a signed Informed Consent from research participants, I will:
 - a) provide one copy for the participants
 - b) keep one copy for myself which I will place in a envelope separate from all other materials and store in a locked file cabinet in my home office.
 - c) provide one copy for my supervisor (Dr. Willhauck), also placed in a separate envelope, who will store it in a locked file cabinet in her office at AST.
2. Audio tapes of interviews will be recorded on a digital recording device. The digital recording device will be kept in locked brief cases or safes and secured at all times during data collection from the time of Informed Consent through the public Grad Project presentations (March 11th and 12th, 2015) and until deleted permanently from my device (no later than March 26th, 2015).
3. Within two weeks of each interview, I will transcribe the interviews onto a Word document. The Word Document transcripts will be kept on a password protected computer from the time of data collection until the final Grad Project paper is due on March 26th, 2015.
4. The public Grad Project Presentations take place on March 11th and 12th, 2015. On March 26th, 2015 I will bring my recording device to my supervisor who will check to make sure the interviews have been deleted.
5. When the final Graduate Research paper is submitted to my supervisor on March 26th, 2015, the Word Document transcripts of interviews will also be submitted to her, either printed as hard copies or disposable CDs and deleted from my computer and trash bin.
6. Dr. Willhauck will store transcripts of interviews in a locked file cabinet in her office at AST for one year and all data materials will be destroyed by shredding or crushing on March 26th, 2016.

If you have any questions, please contact the principal researcher, David Peer at 902-835-5768 & dbpeer@gmail.com.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board of the Atlantic School of Theology. If you have any questions or concerns about the study

you may contact the Chair of the AST Research Ethics Board, Dr. Alyda Faber at afaber@astheology.ns.ca,

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Please keep one copy of this form for your records.