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INTERFAITH CLINICAL EDUCATION FOR PASTORAL MINISTRY DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAM

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Drawing Insight on Aging:
The Stories of Elders

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DEDICATION

This project was inspired by a woman whom I have admired and looked up to my whole life. She raised me into the *womyn* I am today. She instilled some very valuable gifts: perseverance, tenacity, compassion, determination, and dignity. She was my “poto mintan” (pillar) during the past twenty-five years. I dedicate this research project to my mother who passed away on September 3, 2015 at the age of 85. She always encouraged me to be my best self. To my one and only son, Zachary, who was patient with me and gave me the space to do my work. To Renee Rose whose words helped me to get this project off the ground.

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"Beautiful young people are accidents of nature, but beautiful old people are a work of art."

Eleanor Roosevelt

INTRODUCTION

This Doctor of Ministry Demonstration Project (D.min-DP) explores spirituality in the lives of older adults within different faith-based institutions. The process includes collecting the personal oral histories of older adults who are age 70 and older, which I will refer to henceforth, as super seniors. This experimental ministry project hopes to elicit from the older adults their lived experiences in the context of their spiritual life and psychosocial development. The (D.min-DP) will record their responses on how they find meaning in their lives through spiritual experiences.

This experimental ministry project was undertaken to explore the intersection of spirituality and aging. It intends to look at the issue from both the clinical and theological perspectives. The focus will be on the impact of the meta-trend of societal aging on the needs, participation, and spiritual wisdom of the elder population in different faith-based institutions. This demonstration project will utilize face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, and various assessment tools to discover how spiritual engagement impacts graceful aging and well being in older adults. The theological aspect of the study is to explore the spiritual wisdom that emerges when super seniors share their life stories within congregational settings, which can enhance intergenerational relationships, and can also lead to spiritual growth. The

clinical aspect of this study will use Butler's Life Review, Hodges's spiritual assessment tools (spiritual life map) and Erikson's Matured Stage of psychosocial development, Ego Integrity versus Despair, to assess how much the super seniors define their lives as having meaning and purpose. The work challenges us to expand our current clinical understanding of what is possible in the latter stages of human development.

Aging is a multidimensional process of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual changes. The historical psychological understandings of aging we have inherited are extremely limited (Elledge-Volker, 2011). Today, we are being asked to redefine what is aging? Who is aging? And how is aging impacting our society in the twenty first century? Our baby boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964) are coming of age in the twenty-first century and this changing demographic creates a demand for new ways of responding to emerging needs, which this ministry project will explore within faith-based institutions.

The concept of Population Aging is described as the increase in the number and proportion of older people in a society (United Nations Population Fund, 2012). According to the U.S Census Bureau, the number of Americans aged (baby boomers) 65 and older is projected to be 88.5 million, in 2050, more than double its projected population of 40.2 million in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). These baby boomers who began turning 65 in 2011, will be the reason for this increase in older population by one quarter. The U.S. National population is projected to grow from 310 million to 439 million between 2010 and 2050, an increase of 42 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 National Population Projection). It is projected that the senior population in 2030 will be twice as large as in 2000, growing from 35 million to 72

million and representing nearly 20 percent of the total U.S. population. (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005)

We need to respond to the opportunities and challenges of aging needs in the twenty-first century. Presently, the shift in the baby boomer generation in America will bring important developments in family, social, and economic aspects of our society. Baby boomers represent huge opportunities, because older people who live healthy lives can continue to be productive for longer. Our understanding of aging needs to be reconsidered, reconstructed and reviewed (Elledge-Volker, 2011).

The concept of aging has been changing rapidly over the last 50 years. There is a need to be sensitive to the likelihood that our inner images, expectations and categories of aging may be inaccurate. Researchers, like Clements, continue to point out that we have been misinformed (Clements, 2001). For example, the three pillars of developmental psychology have offered us perspectives that are no longer defensible. In 1907, Freud theorized that after age 50 people are no longer educable (Cohen 2005). Similarly, Piaget stated that as soon as we reached young adulthood, our development ceases and human beings begin to decline until death. Erikson postulated that Ego Integrity is the central developing task of the aging adult (Whiting & Bradley, 2007).

These leading theorists enabled us to see how their ideas reflected the social norms of their time. The concept of aging needs an updated definition in the twenty-first century. It requires a new approach to address key issues to respond to the opportunities and challenges of aging, and to learn about the experience of being old in our changing world.

Let us think outside of the framework we have inherited about aging from psychology, biology, and theology. Let us recall Psalm 90:10, it declares “The days of our lives are seventy years, perhaps eighty if we are strong. Even the best will only labor and sorrow”. Many seventy-year olds, eighty-year olds and ninety-year olds have surpassed these psychological, biological, and theological expectations. (Elledge-Volker, 2011)

Recent evidence indicates that for many aging individuals, spiritual capacity gradually increases, especially with regard to self-acceptance and perceptions of one’s life having integrity (Atchley, 2000; Idler, Kasl, & Hays, 2001; Koenig, 2006; Moberg, 2001; Tornstam, 2005). Scholars argue the natural process of aging, or the passage of chronological time with a finite and foreseeable end, creates a context where older adults can become more self-reflective and self-accepting, opening the mind/body/spirit to an expansion and deeper sense of knowing (Atchley, 2000; McFadden, 2005).

Within the field of aging, there is evidence that as individuals grow closer to the natural end of their lives, the spiritual dimension gains in prominence (Johnson, 2009; Moberg, 2005; Tornstam, 2005). Recognizing that spirituality is an important aspect of the meaning-making and developmental process in later life, it is vital that older adults are afforded the opportunity to share their spiritual experiences. Explorations of their spiritual lives provide researchers with insight (Atchley, 2000).

The White House Conference on Aging (1971) included specific policy recommendations that recognized spiritual well-being as essential and fundamental to healthy aging (Damianakis, 2001; Derezotes, 2006; Griffin, 2005; Moberg,

1984). In his pastoral work with elders, Seicol (2005) found older adults between 70 to 113 years of age capable of dealing with a multitude of life challenges due to their spiritual wellbeing. Emery and Pargament (2004) report findings from recent Gallup poll data indicating that more than 70% of older adults (65+) identify religion/ spirituality as a top priority in their life. Recognizing and nurturing the spiritual aspects of older adults is a fundamental value of the strengths perspective in social work (Collins et al., 2007).

CHAPTER 1.

Background

This ministry project has evolved organically from a series of conversations and events at First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn (FPC), and was fueled by the enthusiasm of mixed age members and some wonderful seniors. The one commonality that became apparent was the level of engagement that both these younger and senior members had with life, their community and their faith-based institution.

These pertinent conversations became a catalyst for investigation, as members from FPC began inquiries about how to create a platform, which included the younger members with the older members from FPC to support our aging population seventy-years and older to be escorted or transported to their doctor's appointments, to go shopping and how to share referrals or known resources from within our church community and within our neighborhood. The Village Movement was identified as a blueprint of our idea.

The Village Movement is an international development of a unique model that supports aging and independence. It has redefined aging in place, the ideas of the Village Movement are simple: according to Sherri Snelling (2015), instead of an older person leaving their homes for senior housing or assisted living, a group of residents in a given community, typically age 50 and older, form a non-profit membership organization to provide access to services that support their goal of remaining at home as long as possible. The village could typically be a few blocks in an urban or suburban neighborhood to a rural area within a 20-mile radius.

It was apparent that during these meetings there were daunting questions and concerns for the congregants over fifty years old as well. Hence, I have identified that there was a hidden role that fear and isolation played in the aging process. As congregants grew older, their fear of isolation and of growing older became ever-present. Thus, the underlying themes that were being voiced or echoed by the members at these meetings were the challenges of accessing resources, remaining independent, building support, and connecting with the younger generations.

THE NEED

Coincidentally, the fifty-year old plus group was interested in knowing what the seventy-year old plus adults were confronting and how had they been managing their lives within the context of aging. The fifty-year old plus group wanted to know what they could learn from the older members and how to begin preparing for their futures. They wanted to know how they could do things differently and how they could age gracefully and successfully in the twenty-first century. Thus, the fifty-year old asked the older members to look back on their life experiences and decisions and relate it to their current life circumstances. In essence, this led to a discussion on finding meaning and purpose in one's life through reviewing past events in later life, and how this process is often attached to an individual's spirituality. This became pivotal and ground breaking ministry to garner the older adults perspective of their lived experience within the concept of their spirituality. These conversations between the fifty-year olds and the older adults highlighted how the shared experiences of the older adults (seventy-years and older) can help to engage and to inspire the

sixty-years old, the fifty-year old and the younger generation. Evidence suggests that important spiritual needs emerge in the later life cycle of aging, such as the need for meaning and purpose, for love and relatedness, for forgiveness, and spiritual integration (Reed, 1991; Staude, 2005; Steinhäuser et al., 2008). Lastly, the lessons to be learned can be used to engage and inspire a new generation to continue the seniors' legacy.

This ministry project intends to encapsulate, through the spiritual assessment tool of Life Review, more about the super senior's own perception of what it means to age successfully. It will allow us to gain insights on aging, to assess how a spiritual life review inspires others and acknowledge the level of satisfaction within one's own life by collecting the oral history of the seventy-year old plus super seniors. Their stories on aging will be documented within the context of families, culture, race, ethnicity, religious expression and identity.

The aim of this project is to offer a new way of understanding the needs of the aging by reconsidering, reconstructing and reviewing the historical, psychological and theological understanding we have inherited, by which we are narrowly confined (Elledge-Volker, 2011). In other words, a new narrative is needed for our elders as we move forward in the twenty-first-century. This is paramount on several levels because there will be an increase of the number of older adults, specifically the baby boomer generation, who are expected to live longer than previous elder generations.

The focus of this experimental ministry project is to explore spiritual life reviews with super seniors and to understand how they find meaning in their lives through spiritual experiences, and to assess how a spiritual life review influences individual's level of ego integrity.

Lastly, the project's aim is to explore the spiritual wisdom that emerges when super seniors share their life stories within their congregation and how this sharing can enhance intergenerational relationships, and this can lead to spiritual growth for members of different age group.

Relevance of Demonstration Project to Ministry in a Wider Context

The purpose of this experimental ministry project is to find a pastoral care or pastoral counseling response to our aging population, specifically the baby boomers and their unmet needs at the start of the 21st Century. Pastoral counselors must utilize a new lens to redefine how to provide spiritual nourishment, to sustain our baby boomers' spiritual needs, spiritual thirst and spiritual awareness. A new model of pastoral counseling is needed. The development of effective therapeutic interventions that are capable of eliminating psychosocial problems in old age will be required. Most of the literature reviewed agrees that Life Review (LR) is connected with elderly health benefits.

This ministry project will be conducted dyadically and will engage super seniors using open-ended unstructured questions to talk about their lived experiences in the context of their spiritual life. This life review will hopefully be a process that allows an opportunity to learn about and appreciate the life of the super seniors as well as to gather information regarding psychological factors, [psycho-spiritual], health beliefs, coping skills, and cultural perspectives (Shellman, 2006). Furthermore, this experimental ministry project could be replicated in all types of faith-based institutions and the 500 plus Presbyterian Churches in the Northeastern,

United States and beyond, since the same dynamics presented at First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn (FPC) exist in other churches. These same dynamics are also occurring in our aging population. They are perhaps also occurring nationally, trans-continentially, and globally. The sad fact is that our super seniors are often overlooked and marginalized. Super seniors should be engaged and visible. Faith-based institutions can do this through pastoral care, pastoral counseling, and innovative ministry for super seniors.

CHAPTER 2.

“...have you ever found God in church? I never did. I just found a bunch of folks hoping for him to show. Any God I ever felt in church I brought in with me. And I think all the other folks did too. They come to church to share God, not find God.”

— Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

A. Theological Principles

The entire process of aging begins at birth. Along this path begins the process we think of as spiritual maturing. Researchers have shown that older adults increase their spiritual development in later stages of adulthood when they are more likely to explore greater meaning in their life and existence. According to Hodges (2005), “spirituality has been recognized as a positive factor in the lives of older adults, especially as it influences their emotional, mental, and physical well-being”. There are numerous Bible verses that remind us that God still has purpose for the elderly. The following are verses that speak of the gift of aging, and the wisdom of listening carefully to our elders.

Scriptures Relevant to Aging

We are called to care for one another and are especially challenged to care for the elderly, the weak, the orphaned, the needy and the widowed. This ethical perspective is found across several religions, Christianity, Muslims, Orisha, Vodum Seventh Day Adventist and Jewish. The following texts are examples from the scriptures referring to old age, and the elderly.

Leviticus 19:32
(NIV)

Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.

Deuteronomy 32:7 (ESVUK)	Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations. Ask your father and he will tell you; your elders, and they will explain to you.
1 Kings 12:6 (ESV)	And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men...and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?"
1 Chronicles 29:28 (KJV)	"a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor"
Job 12:12 (NASB)	Wisdom is with aged men, with long life is understanding.
Job 32:7 (NIV)	Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.
Psalms 71:1; 9 (ESV)	In you, O Lord I take refuge; Do not cast me not off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength is spent.
Psalms 71:17-18 (NRSV)	O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and grey hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the generation to come.
Psalms 91:14-16 (NRSV)	With long life I will satisfy them and show them my salvation.
Psalms 92:14 (NRSV)	"In old age they still produce fruit..."
Psalms 143:5 (NRSV)	I remember the days of old, I think about all your deeds, I meditate on the works of your hands. I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.
Psalms 148:12-13 (ISV)	Young men and women alike, old and young together! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted.
Proverbs 16:31 (ESV)	Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.
Proverbs 20:29 (KJV)	The glory of youths is their strength, but the beauty of the aged is their grey hair.
Proverbs 23:22 (NIV)	Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Isaiah 46:3b-4a (The Living Bible)	I have created you and cared for you since you were born. I will be your God through all your lifetime, Yes, even when your hair is white with age. I made you and I will care for you.
Joel 2:28 (Also Acts 2:17)	"...I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh;...and your old men shall dream dreams...."
I Timothy 5:1-2 (NRVS)	Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sister-with absolute purity.

A basic philosophical question is the theology of suffering, which is a critical principle applicable in this ministry project. It asks about the nature of God, the cause of suffering, the human existence, and about death itself. Why did God create a world in which there was the potential for suffering in the first place? If s/he is all good and all-powerful, why s/he has not eliminated the possibility of suffering all together? Theodicy is the study of the problem of evil in the world. [Theodicy in its most common form, attempts to answer the question of why a good God permits the manifestation of evil.] The issue is raised in light of the sovereignty of God. How could a holy and loving God, who is in control and all knowing permit evil?

Gillman (1992) stated that "the problem of unjust suffering is the supreme theological-or religious-issue, the issue par excellence, the issue that threatens to undermine one's entire theological and religious structure" (Gillman, Pg. 189). I will speak of my theology of suffering and unpack the issue in terms of my belief or understanding of suffering. My theology of suffering comes from a personal perspective, and a lived experience. My infant was born pre-maturely, lived only sixty-five days. My personal conviction is that no one is exempted from suffering; God doesn't discriminate. Suffering happens to all people, it is an equal opportunist.

Thus, my formulation of theodicy coupled with my over-arching theology of suffering would look like this: “Don’t Ask Why”. We do not need to justify or vindicate God. There is no explanation to be given. We aren’t here to explain suffering.

The most traditional Judeo Christian understanding of theodicy goes back to the Torah, which has to do with “the doctrine of divine retribution—where the Bible applies it to the fate of the community as a whole, rather than to individuals. In the book of Deuteronomy 28:1-68 “set forth the equation: If we obey God, we will be blessed; if we rebel, we will be punished by all kinds of suffering—military defeat or exile, plague or famine” (Gilman, 1992, p. 190). Suffering, as retribution is the basic explanation for suffering throughout the bible, except, in the book of Job where it completely breaks with the doctrine of suffering as divine retribution.

On the other hand, we cannot always understand why suffering happens in our lives or in the lives of others. In the Bible, Job never learns the true cause of his suffering, even after God had restored him. When Job encounters God and God speaks regarding Job’s suffering in Job 38–41, God basically says: *Hey, Job, I am God. You are not. You just have to trust me on this.* At the end, Job emerges with a reassurance that God is in everything, both the natural and moral order. Gillman (1992) stated, “Job has acquired the kind of wisdom that emerges out of a profound personal experience, possibly the wisdom that pain alone can teach” (p. 190).

Another pertinent theological principle is wisdom. Our elders are called to share their wisdom with the younger generations. Wisdom can be defined as living long enough to gain experience and practice good judgment. The Psalmist (Psalm 90:12) tells us that wisdom takes a long time to acquire: “So teach us to number our days that we may get us a heart of wisdom.” We read in Job 32:7 “age should

“speak, and advance years should teach wisdom.” Long life is a blessing, yet we are expected to learn as we age. Ecclesiastes 12 is valid although a theology of despair, its wisdom is still as true today as it was when King Solomon wrote about it 3,000 years ago. Ecclesiastes 12:1 “Keep your creator in mind while you are young! In years to come, you will be burdened down with troubles and say, “I don’t enjoy life anymore” (Verse 1, Contemporary English Version). This suggests to the elderly that their emotional, physical and intellectual strengths will weaken.

When does wisdom emerge? According to Lionel Corbett (2013), wisdom has many facets and it is not measurable. In his article, “Successful Aging” he compares how different researchers have attributed different meaning to wisdom; he noted, that for researcher like Kohut (1966), “...wisdom means that we accept the limitation of our physical, intellectual, and emotional powers; we renounce unmodified narcissism and develop an attitude toward life comprised of intellect, humor, and acceptance of our transience; and we develop a firm sense of values” (p.161). He further illuminated that Erikson (1982), believed that wisdom is being detached while actively being involved with life and waiting to face death. Corbett himself stated that wisdom emerges “when development succeeds, and one has gained wisdom about human nature based on life experience, a process which helps with adaptation in later life” (Corbett, 2013, p. 161). While, other researchers include components of cognitive skills that are necessary for the discovery of truth.

According to Ardelt (2000), wisdom is a successful human development because it comprises such positive qualities as ego integrity and maturity, judgment and interpersonal skills, and an exceptional understanding of life (Clayton 1982; Erikson 1963, 1964; Erikson and Kivnick 1986). Moreover, wisdom is a personal strength that is believed to increase rather than decline with age. (Assam 1994; Baltes and Smith 1990; Holliday and Chandler 1986; Kekes 1983) Based on the theoretical literature, wisdom was defined and

operationalized as a combination of cognitive, reflective, and affective qualities of a person (Clayton and Birren 1980; Kramer 1990). The cognitive component of wisdom refers to the ability to see the truth, that is, to perceive reality as it is and not as one wants it to be (Hart 1987; Maslow 1970). However, one can only arrive at this stage through the development of the reflective component of wisdom. That is, one needs to learn to become aware and ultimately transcend one's subjectivity and projections (Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde 1990; Kramer 1990; Orwoll and Perlmutter 1990) by observing phenomena and events objectively from different perspectives without reacting to these events (Hart 1987). Reflective thinking decreases one's self-centeredness and enables one to see reality and oneself more clearly including the negative aspects of life and the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of human behavior (Clayton 1982; Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde 1990; Labouvie-Vief 1990)... The three dimensions of wisdom are not independent but, rather, reinforce each other, with the reflective component as the essential element. Conceptually, however, they are not identical. For instance, being able to see the truth is not the same as being compassionate. One realizes the truth after taking all possible perspectives into account, and one develops genuine sympathy and compassion for others after overcoming one's own projections, acknowledging other people's point of view, and realizing the deeper truth of the situation. Wisdom is a combination of all three components. If, for example, the affective component were missing, the construct would measure advanced cognitive functioning, not wisdom. As Vaillant (1993:158) remarks, "We can all imagine care without wisdom, but not wisdom without care." Similarly, without the cognitive component, the rational, analytical insights of a wise person would be missing, and without the reflective aspect, we might describe a sympathetic counselor who is unable to help him-or-herself (Schmidbauer 1977, p. 330-362)

According to Erikson's psychosocial theory, the effect of wisdom on old age is connected when a person finds the resolution of the last crisis, known as the ego integrity versus despair. In fact, Erikson's psychosocial stage of development was the first theory to even look at the effect of wisdom in old age by observing at how a person finds the resolution of the last crisis. Erikson (1982) argued that everyone must master the eight developmental challenges, or 'crises', in order to develop an identity in senescence (old age) that is based on wisdom and maturity.

B. Clinical Principles

The two underlying clinical principles for this ministry project are Erick Erikson's Epigenetic stages of life theory and Butler's Life Review process. Erikson posits that ego integrity is the central developmental task of the aging adult. Thus, the conceptual framework for this ministry project focuses on the final stage known as *ego integrity versus despair*.

1) Psychosocial Development

Erick Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is one of the best-known theories of personality in psychology. Erikson believed that personality develops in a series of stages and describes the impact of social experience across the whole lifespan, from infancy to late adulthood. One of the main elements of Erikson's psychosocial stage theory is the development of ego identity. Ego identity is the conscious sense of self that we develop through social interaction. According to Erikson, ego identity is constantly changing due to new experience and information we acquire in our daily interaction with others. As we face each new stage of development, we face new challenges that can help further develop or hinder the development of ego identity. For the purpose of this ministry project the focus will be on the eight stage known as integrity versus despair. This stage is considered late adulthood, from age sixty plus. This stage is when the individual is believed to have achieved successful ego integrity when s/he is able to look back on his/her life with overall satisfaction versus complaints about regrets, not having enough time, and not finding a meaningful purpose throughout life. However, if an individual is dissatisfied with his/her current circumstance, or is unable to reconcile unresolved regrets and conflicts, and cannot find hope for future experiences he/she will feel a

sense of despair (Brown & Lewis, 2003). This is a time when an individual may question their overview of their entire life. This ministry project is to understand if completing a spiritual life review assists older adults in looking back at their lives with satisfaction or regrets. A pre and post-test measure of the Ego-Integrity Scale (EIS) will be administered and compared after the study. (See "Appendix C")

2) Life Review

The ministry project will also explore how well the super seniors were integrated, an indication of coping, dealing with their physical ailments, connecting with their family, community and not resentful or despairing. For this reason Spiritual Life Review will be used as an unstructured process. The components of a spiritual life review may afford these seniors a therapeutic intervention that encompasses not merely reliving their past but also discovering the meaning and purpose of their lived experiences.

Research findings have suggested and offered ideas about how a spiritual life review is useful in addressing important aspects of aging. It is well known in the field of aging that spirituality is an important factor that promotes and contributes to the overall well being of older adults (Hodge, 2010; Nelson-Becker, Nakashima, & Canda, 2007; Turesky & Schultz 2010). Additionally, as spiritual needs and commitments increase with aging so do the needs for clinical assessment and interventions that foster positive spiritual attributes in older adults (Gotterer, 2001; Mattes, 2008; Moberg, 2005).

Life review originated from the work of Robert Butler more than four decades ago when he studied *vibrant and healthy* older adults (65+) at the National Institute

of Health. Butler (1963) noted that older adults naturally reviewed their life events in an attempt to make sense of what they have experienced in the past. Butler (1963) also recognized the influence of mortality on the mental process when an older adult expressed vulnerability about the finality of his/her life. Choi & Jun (2009) used life review as the conceptual framework to examine the effects of life regrets and pride among low-income older adults on mental health outcomes (e.g., depression), hypothesizing that older adults would experience less regret and better mental health if they fully accept responsibility of personal losses (e.g., failures and mistakes) and have a sense of satisfaction from life successes (e.g., personal and professional).

Additionally, empirical findings of a longitudinal study (e.g. one year) show that life review interventions with older adults promote and sustain greater sense of purpose in life, self-acceptance, relationships with others, pride and autonomy (Lewis, 2001; Haight, Michel, & Hendrix, 1998). For the purpose of this study the life review structure is used as a method to facilitate in-depth interviews with each participant from childhood to the present.

OTHER SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- 3) The Social Construction of Emotion: A New Direction in the Pastoral Work of Healing.

Emotions are important in pastoral work, to recognize and respond to the social and cultural factors that may contribute to some of the super seniors' silent suffering, which will be referred to as *hidden constructs*. Given that most of the

participants were Black, it was discovered that there was a historical theme that was being highlighted in the re-telling of their stories. Some of the super seniors were raised after World War II and during the civil rights era. Therefore, taking into account the social context of the time in which their lived experiences occurred was required to develop empathy and to listen with what Barbara McClure (2010) refers to as two interpretive frames.

Barbara McClure (2010) in her paper, *The Social Construction of Emotions: A New Direction in Pastoral Work of Healing* states that human feelings or emotions have been informing theories, practices of care, clinical training and interpersonal relationship with ourselves, parents and loved ones. She contends that these emotions are tools that can be used to understand that our emotions are culturally and socially constructed, as well as to understand our current position in the social order, and to motivate the transformative engagement of that social order.

Social constructivism informs us to treat people as individuals who cannot be separated from their social position, cultural context and life experiences. Social factors are things that can affect our existences as a society. Some of these factors could be religion, economic status, education, family, and politics. Practitioners should be sensitive to how the effect of the social order can impact the individual based on where he is placed in that social context. A key aspect in providing pastoral care is to listen to the elders and to the meaning they attach to what happened to them. Pastoral care requires the skill and understanding, to sense how they hold on to their stories, and how their story reveals itself in a social cultural context. Hind's (2010) statement was insightful and cautionary to those providing counseling, pastoral care, "The counseling room is to be one of the spaces in our

(Western) society where people from various cultural backgrounds can expect to have their unique experiences validated and their sense of self affirmed" (p. 793).

CHAPTER 3

Methodology:

A. Approach and Procedure

This experimental ministry project will be conducted using a qualitative research approach. The original undertaking for this ministry project will be piloted specifically for the congregants at First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn (FPC), an all inclusive and racially diverse church in Brooklyn Heights, New York. However, the ministry project will be broadened to include adherents or practitioners from other religious faith such as: Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist, Yoruba and Vodum. The target group for this ministry project will be older adults over seventy-years of age and who are active and involved in their faith-based institution. This project seeks to explore how older adults find meaning in their lived spiritual experiences.

B. Ministry Approach:

A multidisciplinary approach including storytelling, spiritual assessment tools such as a spiritual lifemap, spiritual life review questions, and an ego integrity scale questionnaire will be administered before and after the interview. This approach will be used to assess how the super seniors defined their lives as having meaning and purpose. The data analysis of the spiritual life interview questions will be interpreted and translated into descriptive anecdotal accounts of eight semi-structured open-ended questions. The participant responses will be analyzed and organized according to themes.

Spiritual Lifemap:

Participants will be asked to complete a spiritual lifemap (Hodge, 2005) during the spiritual life review. A spiritual lifemap is a client directed pictorial representation of an individual's spiritual journey and relationship with God (or transcendence) from childhood and ending at their current age. This is to allow the participants to shift the focus to the spiritual life events and away from the participants directly. Participants will be directed to draw a line; a path on a piece of paper and then that path will be broken into sections by years or decades. The participants will be asked to fill the path with spiritually significant life events with whatever symbols best represent the events.

Spiritual Life Review:

A series of exploratory questions will be asked during the in-depth interview to clarify their experience with spirituality across their lifetime. Participants will be guided to reflect on both positive life event as well as negative life events.

Procedure:

Participant Eligibility: Participants who are willing to take part in this qualitative ministry project will be eligible if they meet the following criteria: (1) they are active members of a faith-based institution; (2) they are seventy-years or older; (3) they speak English or Creole fluently; and (4) they answered 4 or more correct on the Short Portable Mental Status Questionnaire (SPSMQ) (Appendix A).

Ministry Setting: The participants' homes will be identified as the most conducive setting to have the face-to-face interview. This approach is to ensure that participants will be in familiar surroundings. Their home is considered a safe environment in which to maximize participant's opportunity to engage in speaking and sharing their life stories.

Data Collection: The initial face-to-face meetings will take place between November – December 2015 and on average will last approximately 90-120 minutes. At the initial meeting participant's will first sign the informed consent to be audiotaped for the purpose of the ministry project. Methods, contact information, expected time commitment, and all matters related to privacy and confidentiality will be reviewed.

Second, the Short Portable Mental Status Questionnaire- SPMSQ (Pfeiffer, 1975) will be administered, and will be immediately scored to demonstrate normal mental functioning for those participants who will be eligible to participate. The SPMSQ will be used as a screening tool for identifying issues with cognitive impairment. Each participant will be required to complete the questionnaire and to answer at least 5 questions correctly. The researcher chose 5 errors as the cutoff score (e.g., indicating moderate intellectual impairment) because participation will require memory recall of life events back to childhood up to current age for the Spiritual Life Review segment. The SPMSQ is one of the 15 original brief screening instruments developed for testing cognitive dysfunction in older adults (Gruber, Varner, Chen, & Lesser, 1997). Eight or more errors reflect severe intellectual impairment, which will make results less reliable.

Third, participants will complete a brief demographic questionnaire about age, gender, race/ethnicity, highest level of education completed, marital status, current living arrangements, religious affiliation, group/church organization involvement, and a self-report of how religious/spiritual on a scale of 1 to 5 the participant considers himself/herself (See Appendix B).

Fourth, participants will be asked to complete the Ryff and Heinicke's (1983) Ego Integrity Scale (EIS) as a pre-test at the beginning of the research project and a second time after completing the spiritual life interview (See Appendix C). The Ego Integrity scale will be used in this ministry project to gauge participants' positions with regards to Erikson's last psychosocial stage of integrity versus despair. The scale consists of 16 items measured on a 6 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

Fifth, the participants will be instructed on how to trace/draw a spiritual lifemap (Hodge, 2005) depicting their own personal history of spiritual experiences (positive and negative) from birth until current age (Appendix H). During the instructional time of the meeting the participants will receive supplies (e.g., a regular 8½ X 11 sheet of unlined paper and colored pencils) and typed instructions on how to create a spiritual life map.

Six, participants will be engaged in informal conversation about their life through a series of open-ended questions (Hodge, 2005) (see Appendix D) to assist them in recollecting their stories and assisting them in the completion of their life map. Participants will be instructed to complete the spiritual lifemap at their leisure after the initial interview over the course of one week on average.

Last, a follow-up appointment for a face-to-face meeting with each participant will be scheduled to complete the audiotaping of the spiritual life review questions and to collect the lifemap.

Face-to-Face: At the second face-to-face meeting, which will be at the participant's home, the spiritual life review will be conducted using three steps: First, the poem by Alvin Fine, "Life is a Journey", (see Appendix Q) will be read to the participants. Second, the spiritual lifemap will be referenced throughout the interview as a base to the significant spiritual life events within different decades. The final step will involve the in-depth interview with the participants using a set of eight semi-structured open-ended questions to elicit the participants' lived experience of spirituality from childhood to current age (see Appendix G). All interviews will be audio-recorded and will last between 60 – 120 minutes.

Both face-to-face sessions will be held at each of the participant's homes. Overall, the data collection will take place from November to December 2015. This will involve scheduling two face-to-face meetings to be held with each participant individually. Each meeting will focus on a specific aspect of the spiritual life review ministry project.

CHAPTER 4

Results:

A. Description of Outcomes Assessed:

A sample of 11 participants from four different faith based institutions. First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn (FPC), Rivers of Living Water (RLW), Seventh Day Adventist Church, Shrine Ile Omo Ope, and St. Theresa of Avila Catholic Church. The participants were contacted via telephone and were informed of the ministry project details. The intention to collect and document the oral history of older adults in the context of spirituality across his/her lifetime, while engaging in a spiritual life review was explained. Overall, 3 participants came from FPC, 3 participant came from Rivers of Living Water, 1 participant from a Lutheran church, 1 participant was from a Vodouist tradition, 1 participant came from the Orisha Tradition (traditional religion of West African), 1 participant was Seventh Day Adventist and 1 participant came from St. Theresa of Avila Catholic Church to participate in this ministry project.

Descriptive information about the participants is presented in (Table 1.) A total of 11 participants contributed to the experimental ministry, five of whom identified ethnically as African/American, one (1) as Haitian, and three (3) from Caribbean/ West Indian (describing their parent's heritage from two West Indies Islands: Jamaican and Trinidad & Tobago, and from South America: Guyana). The participants were between the ages of 69 and 90 years old. The majority of participants were Black (82%; n=9); two (2) participants were Caucasian, one with German, Dutch and French ancestry and the second with ancestry from Germany, England and Scotland/Ireland. The majority of participants were female (82%; n=9). Two (2) participants self-identified as married; two (2) widowed; three (3) divorced,

and two (2) single and one (1) separated. All the participants were living at home; two (2) were living with a spouse, six (6) reported living alone, two (2) reported living with their adult children. The majority of participants reported having a college degree or post college degree. One (1) had a Ph.D., four (4) had master's degrees, two (2) had bachelor's degree, three (3) had some college, and one (1) reported elementary level education. The participants' religious affiliations were diverse: Christian/Yoruba, Lutheran, Methodist, Santeria/Presbyterian, Presbyterian, Spiritual/Presbyterian, Catholic, Orisha Tradition, Vodou, and Seventh Day Adventist. Three (3) participants self-identified as being very religious, four (4) identified as neutral, while one (1) reported being somewhat religious, and three (3) self-identified as not very religious. A majority of five (5) participants self-identified as being very spiritual; three (3) self-identified as being somewhat spiritual; three (3) reported as slightly spiritual, and one (1) reported being neutral.

Interview Questions.

Interview questions were open-ended to guide the participant in reviewing their spiritual lifemap. Interviews were conducted face-to-face at each participant's home at a scheduled meeting time. All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim.

The second interview included a review of the spiritual lifemap and the eight main interview questions (IQ), (See Appendix G) which elicited spiritual events from birth until current age for the participant. Throughout the interviews, exploratory questions (EQ) were also asked to clarify the depth and meaning of a particular life stage or spiritual event experienced by the participant. All questions were based on getting a clear response to the main ministry question, "What is the unique meaning

of spirituality for you across your life-time?" The participants' spiritual lifemaps were central to the life review process as they allowed participants the opportunity prior to the interview to recall and pre-record significant spiritual life events, throughout their lifespan that they wished to highlight and discuss. Each interview started with the reading of a poem by Alvin Fine. Then, I provided a topical statement, "The focus of this ministry work today is to gain a general understanding of spirituality across your lifetime from childhood to your current age. Can you please tell me about your spiritual lifemap beginning with your childhood." This statement was followed by questions about spirituality at each stage of the lifespan (childhood – to their current age). Furthermore, participants were asked to answer two final questions (FQ) at the end of the interview. The goal of each question was to allow an in-depth exploration of the event and the face-to-face interview, which provided an opportunity for the participants to fully describe the details of their spiritual experiences and associated feelings. (see Appendix G) After the last interview question was answered each participant was given the post-test ego integrity scale to complete (Ryff & Heincke, 1983) for comparison.

Ego Integrity. Participants were asked to complete Ryff and Heincke's (1983) Ego Integrity Scale (EIS) as a pre test at the beginning of the ministry project and a second time as a post-test after completing a spiritual life review (see Appendix C). The Ego Integrity scale was used in this ministry project to assess participant's positive level with regards to Erikson's last psychosocial stage of integrity versus despair. The scale consists of 16 items measured on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The EIS is designed as a self-reporting tool to measure (operationalize) the dimensions of ego integrity

by assessing how much one accepts life as being lived with meaning and purpose (e.g., "When I consider the ups and downs of my past, they somehow fit together in a meaningful way"/ "If I had to do it all over again, there are very few things about my life that I would change") or feels disgust at choices made and fears death (e.g., "I still feel angry about certain of my childhood experiences"/ "I wish my life were just beginning so I could avoid many of the mistakes I made earlier in my life"). Items from the scale are written to assess both the high and low dimensions of integrity at any adult age regardless of gender. There are 9 negative items on the scale that are reverse scored and then added to the 7 positive items creating a possible range of scores from 16 to 96 with higher total scores indicating higher levels of ego integrity (Ryff & Heincke, 1983). The internal consistency of the scale has been reported at .82-.85 in general and older populations (Ryff & Heincke, 1983).

Ego Integrity Scale

A paired t-test was conducted to test the means between the pre and post test data collection comparing the ego integrity scores before the spiritual life review to the final spiritual life review sessions. It was found that there was no significant correlation. Participants who scored high on the pre-test also scored high on the post-test. The results show that the spiritual review did not change the ego integrity scores of participants. This means that most of these core super seniors appeared to have been able to attain a balanced resolution of this later stage of crisis or psycho/social development through their lived experiences, and to have integrated well the meaning of their life through their learned wisdom. They were able to

accept their lived experiences as having been meaningful, and had no regrets over unrealized possibilities.

Data recorded

The audio taped interviews were transcribed verbatim into individual Microsoft word documents from November 2015 – December 2015. This was done by reading and re-reading the text repeatedly, identifying concepts and sub-themes from the written text to provide a complete picture of what the participant was saying; non-verbal communication such as silences, laughing and sighs were also included in the transcriptions.

Table 1. Participants Data Description

Study ID	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Education	Religious Affiliation	Subjective Religious/Spiritual
001	A/A Black	Female	751/ 2	Single	2 Masters	Christian/Yoruba	Very Religious/ Very Spiritual
002	A/A Black	Female	811/ 2	Divorced	Masters	Lutheran	Neutral Religious Neutral Spiritual
003	Caucasian/American	Male	83	Widowed (Recently)	Bachelors	Presbyterian	Neutral Religious Slightly Spiritual
004	A/A Black	Female	74	Separated	Associates RN Nurse	Methodist	Neutral Religious Slightly Spiritual
005	Caucasian/American	Female	79	Married	Masters	Santeria Presbyterian	Not Religious Neutral Spiritual
006	A/A Caribbean	Female	79	Single	Ph.D.	Spiritual Presbyterian	Not Religious Very Spiritual
007	Black	Female	76	Divorced	Bachelor	Protestant Presbyterian	Neutral Religious Very Spiritual
008	Black/Haitian	Female	81	Widowed	Less than High School	Catholic	Very Religious Very Spiritual
009	A/A Black/Caribbean/Trinidadian	Male	72	Married	Some College Aeronautic	Orisha Tradition	Very Religious Neutral Spiritual
010	Black/Caribbean/West Indian	Female	89	Divorced	Some College LPN	Seventh Day Adventist	Neutral Religious/ Very Spiritual

A/A=African American

011	Black/Haitian	Female	70	Single	2 Masters	Vodouists	Not Religious Very Spiritual
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Table 2. Characteristic of Participants

Age (Years), M (SD)	84.5	
Gender:		
Female	9	82%
Male	2	18%
Marital Status:		
Single	3	27%
Divorced	3	27%
Widowed	2	18%
Married/Partnered	2	18%
Separated	1	9%
Race:		
African American/Black/Caribbean	9	82%
Caucasian	2	18%
Education:		
Less >High School Diploma	1	9%
Some College	2	18%
Associates Degree	2	18%
Bachelor's Degree	1	9%
Master's Degree	4	36%
Ph.D. Degree	1	9%

B. Spiritual Life Review

The spiritual life review is one approach used with an older adult population that is helpful in identifying issues of unresolved conflict as well as areas of pride and life satisfaction (Johnson, 2008; Lewis, 2001). The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions written to explore and clarify the participant's spiritual history and spiritual assets (Hodge, 2005).

The approach of utilizing each participant's home environment to ensure familiarity and to encourage in speaking may have also maximized participants acceptance of support and reception to pastoral care as they began the process of telling, and hearing their life stories. In fact, one participant, a 79-year-old female was born, raised and still lives in the same home in the Sugar Hill section of Harlem.

C. Spiritual Maturing as a Positive Factor:

Biblical stories contain powerful metaphors to help explain suffering in our lives. Biblical stories quoted by the super seniors came up as common thread in the tapestry of our conversations. During the experimental ministry project, different aspects of suffering emerged while super seniors were re-telling their stories.

Listening attentively in my role as witness allowed me to be more empathetic of negative feelings when they shared the context of their stories. My role was to emotionally support the super seniors by actively listening, even in the midst of the suffering that had emerged during the re-telling of their stories. I offered the super seniors a pastoral theology of hope. I used the above-mentioned biblical texts (see page 17) to validate the super seniors' stories. The theological principles of hope and

positive psychology were used to encourage the super seniors to share their lived experiences, to share their stories of grief, self worth, coping strategies and etc.

The truth is in the story, even in the negative feelings. And, in each individual's story is a reflection of the super senior's theology. To remember and retell our story is to engage in positive dialogue of hope, which is essentially and characteristically that of good theology of hope. Hindsight is twenty-twenty for these elders. In other words, these negatives memories were reconciled during the re-telling of their truth, their stories, and their theology. They reframed their understanding and perspective of these events.

According to Kwam (2010), pastors need to be accepting of negative feelings that come from the people's grievances or else their ability to share will be compromise. Rather the pastor is "to open channels for the intervention of God in [the] midst of human lamentations" (p. 57).

Several of the super seniors shared painful events. Tom, aged 72, told the story of growing up in abject poverty with clarity, and being beaten severely by his father. Hanna, aged 79, shared how painful it was for her to divorce her husband during a time when it was not common and made her very critical of herself. For many years afterward she experienced life as if she were in a wasteland; she described it as being spiritually empty and searching to be filled. Josephine, aged 81 1/2, told a heart wrenching story of how she got pregnant at 14; she explained how she was disappointed in herself; she couldn't finish her education. She was separated from her family and she was forced into an early marriage that lasted two years. Her struggle began as a single mother raising two boys in a room. She toiled for two decades to finish her education and obtained her GED, then her Bachelor's

degree and finally her Master's degree in Library Science. These super seniors managed to survive and to rise above their distress and to accomplish feats that they could not have imagined at the time to be possible. The younger generations can learn as much from the super seniors stories and theology as they can from well-known biblical stories such as Moses, Esther or Mordechia.

The super seniors, who recounted their stories today, have lived long enough to recognize that even their suffering was part of the tapestry of life.

These super seniors have a better perspective because they have lived long enough to overcome the trials, the hardship and the suffering of their respective life. They have come full circle and gained wisdom. Like, Job they have learned to accept life with all of its apparent complexities, and with this their new understanding comes a sense of serenity (Gillman, 2002).

This core group of super seniors has come to accept that there is meaning and purpose in their life while also accepting the wisdom in Ecclesiastes 12: that physical and mental deterioration and facing the end of life, is a basic part of growing old, instead of despairing about unrealized possibilities or regrets and having guilt. Most of these super seniors have been able to attain a balanced resolution of this later stage of crisis or psycho/social development through their lived experiences; and through their learned wisdom about the meaning of their life.

The super seniors shared how they endured or coped with adversity, embraced acceptance of plain ole life problem to build resiliency, integrated and created new narratives and at the end gained wisdom. Through the life review, the super seniors were able to recall different events from their past, which illustrated

how they overcame adversity. One super senior claims having been able to deal with “the hand that he was dealt”. Some super seniors shared that life’s hardships were not always a straight path, but still they moved through it, while others endured many of life challenges and difficulties. For example, the young teenage mother who raised two boys; the young divorcee, who self identified as a White Anglo Saxon Protestant (W.A.S.P), and was the first in her cohort to get a divorce with two children to raise; another female participant who had to cope with her diagnosis of cancer as an adult; and yet another senior having to deal with the death of her spouse of 53 years, and another super senior who raised an autistic child to adulthood.

This core group of super seniors was able to integrate life events into a coherent whole, a blended picture of understanding. They were able to accept their lived experiences as having been meaningful. And not have regrets over unrealized possibilities. Many relied on their Judeo-Christian beliefs and faith to deal with adversity and to help ease their suffering. Many quoted, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me (Psalm23)”.

Most of these super seniors have managed to bounce back, they have moved forward with their lives, and they continue to grow; while some have conformed to a theological position of surrendering to God's will. *In other words, they have relied upon their spiritual beliefs, trusted their wisdom, and they have accepted that they are powerless and that the will of God will be, and this acceptance actually liberates them to enjoy their last years.* “In essence, spirituality in late life consists of finding core meaning in life, responding to meaning, and being in relationship with God/Other” (Manning, 2012).

Participant's Spiritual Life Reviews:

Excerpts from the verbatim with the super seniors were used to create a simple tabulation to categorize the themes found in each interview question from the spiritual life review (See Appendix F). Overall there were seven (7) major themes with several subthemes (see table 3 below). The seven major themes, which emerged about spirituality across the lifetime with the eleven super senior's were:

- (a) Childhood – Experiencing a relationship to God through religious rituals, practices, and beliefs,
- (b) Family of Origin – Being part of a deeply rooted spiritual/religious interpersonal system (e.g., family, church, community),
- (c) Adolescence –Developing a spiritual life and community outside of immediate family,
- (d) Adulthood - Maturing in faith and wisdom,
- (e) Family of Procreation – Marriage and family,
- (f) Trials & Hardships – Spirituality during trials and hardships,
- (g) Meaning of Spirituality – Spirituality via experiencing the transcendent nature of God in one's own life and in relationship to others and the Universe.

Below is a discussion of each participant's response to each interview question and the identified themes and sub-themes (See table 3) that were found during the structural analysis/tabulation to describe the meaning of spirituality at each life stage.

TABLE 3. SUB-THEMES											
THEMES	PARTICIPANT										
	001	002	003	004	005	006	007	008	009	010	011
Childhood-Question 1											
Receiving Baptism, Communion and Confirmation	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x
Attending Sunday School	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		
Belonging to religious/spiritual community		x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x
Learning bible stories	x										
People who have made an influence	x	x			x	x	x				
Spirituality in family of origin-Question 2											
No recollection											
Attended church with family					x	x			x	x	x
History of parents/grandparents being involved in church	x						x		x		
Having spiritual/religious celebrations of traditions					x				x	x	x
Siblings involved with church		x			x	x			x	x	x
Adolescence-Question 3											
Making a personal commitment to God						x			x		
Having a spiritual mentor		x			x		x		x	x	x
Participating in Church camp/youth group	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x
Adulthood-Question 4											
Single religious or spiritual event		x		x			x		x	x	x
Spiritual/Religious Involvement					x				x	x	x
Other activity that brings spirituality closer	x					x					
Family of Procreation-Question 5							x		x		
Having Faith Based Marriage				x	x						
Nurturing Children	x	x		x	x			x	x	x	x
Trials and Hardship-Question 6											
Believing in God (Faith)/ Accepting the (Belief)	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Acting with Awareness (Trust)	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Meaning of Spirituality-Final Question 1											
Importance/relevance			x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Satisfaction w/study-Final Question 2											
Good	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Felt uncomfortable		x									x

The first question identified four sub-themes that were related to the major theme of *what spirituality means in childhood*. (See above Table 3 Themes/Sub-themes from SLR) The following four sub-themes from older adults were: a) Being baptized/ making communion/confirmation, b) Attending Sunday school, c) Belonging to a religious/community, d) Learning bible stories/prayers.

Being baptized, dedicated or making first communion. When responding to question 1 about identifying any significant spiritual events in their childhood, several participants recollected participating.

A 75-½ year old female participant offered the following memory:

"I was born and baptized at St. Phillips Episcopal Church right here on 125th street. I attended Catholic school. I was religious, because they made me go to church. My parents were Episcopalian."

A female Lutheran, age 81½ year, recalled the process she endured before her confirmation with humor.

"I remember when you needed to be confirmed, you had to seat on your knees, at the, Metropolitan Community Methodist Church on 126th street (Harlem, NY), until you felt Jesus' spirit. I never felt no damn Jesus spirit. When my knees got tired I just pretended I felt Jesus". (Laughing...)

Still another participant, 79 years old, recalls her first spiritual awareness:

"I remembered as a young person, I would always asked a friend in the Sunday school...who recognized God...she admitted and she talked about God. She would talk about talking to God. So, I would ask her questions about God. How do you know you are talking to him? Or is it a him? She says I just know it because it is something that happened inside. I could never understand it, because my experiences were not like that..."

Another female participant, age 89, now a Seventh Day Adventist, recalls her first spiritual event the celebration of Easter Sunday's in the West Indies, with a sense of excitement as it related to a particular part of the ritual:

"Oh yes, I always enjoyed Easter Sunday, that's because I was an Anglican then. On Easter Sunday you went to church at 5 am in the morning, so you had to leave your house at 4 am. The breeze was so cool and nice on you. And you had on your nice little Easter dress on you. And, you go to church and they had the procession, they used to march around the church and talked about the crucifixion-what happened with Christ from the time they arrested him until his resurrection. At night we went back to church and we would sing the alleluia chorus and the choirboys...the church was a Large church. The boys would go around and carry a lantern it was bright and so special... and so everybody in the West Indies... was a big thing. So, many people were outside going to church and greeting each other. So, that was a part of my spiritual experience as a child."

A male super senior Orisha Traditionalist, age 72, remembered his baptism as his first spiritual event at a Baptist Church. He acknowledges his ongoing involvement with churches as a child and stressed that it has not changed.

"Getting baptized at the Second Union Baptiste Church. I had to be 12 or 13 years old. I was in bible school in 1958. I had to have gotten baptized around that time. The experience was like going into the pool."

Attending Sunday School. Most of the participants described attending Sunday school and how it was a significant part of their spiritual life. Although, the participants represents a racially, culturally and religiously diverse most attended Sunday school in their childhood and it being their foundation in their spiritual belief, idea and in knowing God.

"I love the story of the station of the cross. At the time, I was in the little elementary school class where we were all crowded into... St. Mark the little church and there we were. It was a

time when the nun wanted you to be really quite, and there weren't anything funnier than that to a 4th grader to be so quiet. When I think about it now it is a very sound part of my grounding, because I see Christ, I see him, as a prophet and as a teacher, as a holy man, and of course I was taught he was part of the holy trinity. Here he (Jesus) is born to a woman, an ordinary woman and she already knew what would be the demise before she gave birth, she knew."

The same 81.5-year-old participant recalled her childhood experience of attending Sunday school as a significant part of her spiritual foundation.

"I used to go to visit my aunt on the weekends, and there was a lady who lived across the street. I don't know if she was a friend of my aunt. She would take me on Sunday's to church with her at Mount Mariah and I loved it, I loved it. I was little and she would come and pick me up and that ritual went on for a long time."

I went to church, but I wouldn't say it was because of religion. I went to sing in the choir and the other activities that were for kids at the Methodist Church. I went to summer camp and I had a good time there.

"Oh well, I think in Sunday school, I had a few favorites teachers. Mrs. Grams,...Carmen was one, and she was my favorite. She was bright and sparkly and I knew she loved me. She encouraged me. I was about 7, 8, 9, 10 wonderful years! Wonderful bible stories, and then she would ask me to dramatize them..."

Belonging to a religious/spiritual community. While reflecting on their childhood event and on their spiritual lifemaps, several participants identified attending church and being part of a spiritual community as an important part of their spiritual life. For example, the male Orisha Traditionalist, 72 years old, described the important role that church has had in his childhood development and throughout his life up to today by stating:

"We were church people, we did what church people do, feed thy neighbor, and feed the homeless, sick people. We tried to reach out to people. So, that was my experience all my life. Nothing changed from day one to now. This has been constant. Do unto others, as you want them to do unto you."

Likewise, a Santeria/Presbyterian female super senior, age 79, recounted the importance of knowing the value of her spiritual community

"We grew up in what I would call liberal Protestant. We went to church regularly and we saw church going and the church base value being important and significant. We prayed before meal, we read from the bible at Christmas Eve. It was ...I learned a lot about the bible that was part of growing up. It was never seen as...there was no negativity about it during my growing up time. Again, they (grandparents) felt that it was important in their life. I had a great uncle who was a pastor. It was definitely within being part of a religious community was the norm."

Two participants acknowledged belonging to their church, but as a communal experience rather than as religious or spiritual.

One Presbyterian male super senior, age 83, recalled with a sense of pride

"I went to church, but I would say it was because of religion. I went to sing in the choir and the other activities that were for kids at a Methodist. I went to summer camp; I had a good time there. I have my dog"

A female Methodist super senior age 79 recalled how she valued belonging to the church. Church was a big part of her family life: she attended choir rehearsal and sang in the choir on Sundays; she ushered and this was her life right through adulthood, but she recalls it more as a communal experience:

"My sister is very entrenched in the church today so are her four beautiful daughters. I had been, but I couldn't stand the hypocrisy and I tried to make it more community engaged and they thought that was repulsive and I persisted, but that was all"

kind of experiences. But that was more of a church experience rather than religious or a spiritual experience.

In the second question I identified three sub-themes that were interwoven in the major theme of *what spirituality means in family of origin*. The three sub-themes from the super seniors responses were:

- (a) No recollection of parent's involvement/ attending church with family
- (b) Having a family history of parents/grandparents /siblings being involved in church.
- (c) Having spiritual/religious celebrations.

No recollection of parent involvement/ attending church/ministry.

When super seniors reflected on spirituality in their family of origin, most participants described having a connection with a particular church or denomination. However, some had minimal recollection of their parents attending church, yet their parents respected religious values and ethic and provided the outlet to attend church. Although the grandparents stayed committed to their religious beliefs, their parents weren't committed to the church. The following are narratives that represent this shared experience among participants of the family of origin. The following experience was reiterated among several participants:

Female super seniors 81½:

"My father or mother didn't go to church. I think I was the only one that went to church. I think my sister went to church with me, but I was the one who was really involved. My parent didn't express their spiritual beliefs; my mother said that people in the church were hypocrites, so she didn't go. Daddy was busy messing up the money and gambling and carrying on-it was just rough for mama. She would dress me up in my church clothes

and I went...Neither, my father nor mother was spiritual. I have very vague memory of my two sisters and me going to church together, but I know I did."

Another participant, age 75½, offered the following personal account that took place in her family of origin:

"I grew up with Catholicism. My family said nothing, but sometime they would go to church when somebody died or when somebody was being baptized. They did not really go to church."

A male super senior, Presbyterian, age 81, relates a more pragmatic review of his family's history in the church with the following account of their lack of participation:

"My mother never went to church, only at the beginning, so did he (father). And, I think when they went it was to sing in the choir, they both could sing. That's how I got a choir voice I came by it honestly. It was shortly after I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio that they were singing. Then, they sang in a Methodist church, and later they dropped out."

Some super seniors did experience a commitment to the church within their family history despite their own ambivalent feelings.

"Mother was a churchgoer, she was active in the church as a deacon and on the usher board. She would always participate in the church. She would tithe and we would tithe...going to church was important for mother, not for dad. They were very much in touch with God. He was an important spirit in their lives...yeah. Very strong, they would have picture of a white guy with blond hair and blue eyes and I thought that was ridiculous anyway, but they had him everywhere. They had the praying hands and they had that all over the place. And, they would talk about God."

Likewise, a female Protestant, age 76, recalled:

"I didn't grow up with my mom. I lived in the south with my grandparents...The more I think about it can't remember. I know that they (grandparents) went to church every Sundays. I know I went but I can't remember them seating around and talking about it, spirituality.

Recollection of having a family history of parents/grandparent's, siblings in church/ministry. When reflecting on spirituality in the family of origin, most super seniors recalled having grandparents who instilled values.

One female Seventh Day Adventist, age 89, was very sentimental when reflecting on the meaning of spirituality in her family of origin:

"They (grandparents) were very spiritual people, they always pray, give thanks, and they teach you how to pray and to worship, and they had certain respect... you had a special place at the bedside where you prayed....before you go to bed...And they taught you for example, that the bible had a special place. When it was time for the Sabbath I would change my clothes.....I grew up in a home with a mother, a stepfather, and a grandmother...and a brother. My grandmother was a spiritual person; you had to say a prayer in the morning, first thing, before you did anything and that is still in me. You had to pray. The prayer was the lord prayer, 23 psalm and John 14:01. In Sunday school they gave you prayer card you had to memorize. The prayer at night...you had to be on you knees and while you are on your knees you had to say Pray papa, pray mama pray to God to bless me...You had to wait and let God receive it and wait to receive what God had to give you. I was blessed from then as a child. That was one of the fun memory of me as a child until I was baptized.

The male Orisha Traditionalist, age 72, recalled with pride the importance of spirituality in his family history in the church:

"We were church people, we did what church people do, feed thy neighbor, and feed the homeless, sick people. We tried to reach out to people. So, that was my experience all my life.

*Nothing changed from day one to now. This has been constant.
Do onto others, as you want them to do onto you.*

The third question in the spiritual life review was related to each super senior's memory of significant spiritual experiences during adolescence or teenage years. The following four sub-themes from the super senior's spiritual experiences during adolescence emerged:

- a) Making a personal commitment to God
- b) Cultivating a spiritual life,
- c) Having a spiritual mentor, and
- d) Participating in a church camp or youth group.

Making a personal commitment to God. One super senior recalls when she decided to commit to God and change faith through a religious rite of passage, An 89 year old Seventh Day Adventist female stated:

"The only thing I can say on that is when the crusade came to Guyana. An American minister, he brought some students from Trinidad, and they had a tent and I was invited and I attended. The singing, the songs were so lively and uplifting. Most, of these songs in the Anglican Church were solemn. You get something from the solemnity, but it is something that, to me, when you sing those solemn songs I tend to go into a different mode of meditation, but when they sing those happy songs you don't have that meditation but that joy, (clapping), that joy, (clapping). And, then the preaching was different. Because, The Anglican minister read a book and he takes something from that book, he doesn't read from the bible. When he was preaching he read a book-and he spoke something on the book for ten minutes and that was it. Church finished within one hour, but when you go and have that joy, and I call it the joy of my salvation (emphasis). There is when the joy of my salvation started, when I went to that crusade and eventually got baptized."

Having a spiritual mentor. When asked to reflect on spiritual mentors during adolescence most super seniors recognized a relationship outside of their family as having influenced them at that time.

Blessing, the 81½ year old female shared:

"My spirituality came from the fact that the people in the church cared about me. I felt that my Sunday school teachers, the two sisters, believed in me. They must have given me a lot of support and encouragement. And, I always knew that I was very bright."

"I would say that the two sisters, Ms. Ramon, Ms. German and Mrs. Harris, who was my teacher were my spiritual mentors; the church had a youth group and they had their meeting every Saturday at 6:00 pm. I would break my head...I would do whatever, mama asked me to do so I could make it on Saturday at 6:00 pm- that was the motivation to do my chores around the house."

A female Methodist, age 79, recounted being mentored in church programs from childhood until her adolescence years.

"Oh well (thinking) I think in Sunday school, I had a few favorite teachers. Ms. Ingram, she was my dentist's sister. Oh, I had both of his sisters. Carmen was one, and she was my favorite; she was bright and sparkly and I knew she loved me (chuckling). She encouraged me. I was about 7, 8, 9, 10 - wonderful years! (Heartfelt laughter). Wonderful bible stories, and then she would ask me to dramatize them. As an adolescent I helped her organized small groups and help her put on skits; and add hymns and make up song...(smiling) all kind of things—(in a child like voice) that for me was fun. Yes, so I remember her, yeah. (Pensive) I attended youth leadership group, I think we had monthly meeting. I don't remember it being every week. It was like monthly meeting. I do not remember what we did. But, it was fun. It was getting together with each other. I can't remember a specific activity we had or ritual we would have- we go through in our meeting. I just

remember having a good time with the group (laughing whole heartedly).

Similarly, a female Protestant, age 76, expressed gratitude when thinking about those who touched her life during her transition when she was away from family and going through life changes.

"When I went away to boarding school we stayed in a home with a minister, I know that he was very, very...how would I say...he was uplifting, I do recall that part, but I can't remember anything specific that he might have said. It was easy to live with him and to go to his church ... It was a Baptist church-yeah!"

A male Orisha Traditionalist, age 72, offered a thoughtful and succinct explanation of how he lives his life integrated in the practice; although he was raised as a Christian he recognizes that the Orisha Tradition has had the most influence on his life:

"...The only thing I can tell you I was going to church. Nothing special came out of it. It was the same all the time. It's not like I am doing something and it's wow, it was not like that. It's smooth sailing, smooth sailing, smooth sailing, smooth sailing...(pause)..., not in Christianity, anyway-not in the church. I had many ah ha in the Orisha Tradition. I got initiated, when I was twenty-four. That was life changing .In the church, you get up and they tell you God says this, God says do this and that, but when you ask a question they tell you got to believe, which you do. In this (Orisha Tradition) if you have a question, you get an answer, (emphasis) an answer- you still have to have faith. Faith is the key. The difference is that you get an answer that you can deal with. For example, you may come for a reading and you have a question, for example you are wondering between two jobs which one to choose? Or you have a school and need to decide which you want to go or you want to know which one would be the better school. And, they (spirits) will give you insight about both school, and you will be in a better position to make your decision. The decision is always yours. They provide you with information that will allow you to make your own investigation, and then the decision is with you. Nothing is mandatory, so it is like that. I have had many more ah ha in the Orisha Tradition, than in Christianity-in the church..

Participating in church camp or youth group. Most super seniors mentioned belonging to or being involved with bible study, youth group as an important spiritual life event.

Female, Santeria/Presbyterian, age 79.

"I think, I was a senior in High school and we were living in a different community and we were going to a different than the one I grew up in because we had moved. And, the family decided they were going to join that church, and I was less excited about it. I didn't like I really connected to, and so it was ok for me not to. I was going to be gone one weekend and so they arranged that would be the weekend they would join the church, so there wouldn't be any embarrassment of my not doing it. That is a lot of support and freedom. I went off to college and was very involved... and that is when the Episcopal church beliefs came into my life and I was very involved at that point on campus with the Episcopal program. The priest there was very good, and yes I would say there was a spiritual mentorship involved at that point. Yes, I attended youth group on campus.

One female super senior, a Vodouist, shared a personal experience of being touched spiritually during college. She was alone in her study hall, contemplating her concerns and wondering what to do. She was waiting for her three colleagues who lived off campus to come join her:

"I attended a bible group at Emmanuel College, I had a problem in study hall those friends from (Nigeria, Gambia and Ethiopia) came and just gave me all the answers I was looking for...wondering about. It was a spiritual coincidence and to me it was a revelation that spirits really exist. And, that spiritual answers were always being given to me... and it was at that moment... I realized it... at that time. I began noticing that the answers to my questions were always being given. It made me look at my past, about the dreams I have always been having and I made the connection."

The fourth question was to explore significant spiritual experiences that took place during Adulthood. 3 sub-themes emerged from the super senior's narratives about their lived spiritual experiences during adulthood:

- a) Single religious or spiritual event,
- b) Spiritual/Religious involvement.
- c) Other activity that brings spirituality closer.

Single religious or spiritual event. When the super seniors were asked about their adulthood many expressed how it was a time of spiritual growth. They described the following events:

A male Presbyterian, age 83, shared how certain life experience were essential:

"Between my 20's and 30's, that was my high point. I was going to D... University that was a very good scholastic school; meeting and marrying Darlene (Wife of 53 years). We met is Summer Stock...(hearty laugh); Ah...acting in summer stock was a hoot! My army career, two years I worked as...I was a counter intelligence core in the army. Marrying Darlene, I think was the most significant event. ...The second was starting renovating this house. That was a big thing for both of us. I have to mention even though it may seem miniscule. We had a great dog. He was a German Shepard he was one of the family. He was smart, he was great, and he understood us. He treated our cat with love and her kitten ...it was just incredible. He was just terrific. He (dog) understood me. (Deep guttural of a laugh) I've always had dogs that understood me. I will tell you a quick story about one dog I had in grade school-Adally. His name was Wicken; he was one of three in a litter. They were called Wicken, Linken and Nod. His name was Wicken, so we called him Winkie and he was a medium size brown and buff dog. He wasn't particularly needy. He wasn't particularly loving...he would do what you tell him and he liked you and you

knew that he liked you. He didn't fawn; he didn't crawl in your lap or anything like that. So, I remember one time. Dog in those times follows you to school. I had graduated from Junior High and was in High School. The first day of school I came out and didn't see Wicken, and I realized what had happened, so I went back to my Junior High School and there he was waiting for me. He didn't know I had graduated grade school. So, I brought him back to my high school scratch his ear and pointed to the school.

A female Lutheran, 81½ years old, shared that her graduation was a significant spiritual experience:

"My graduation from Fordham University (New York City) was an important event. It was pretty rough, I had to raise two boys and one of them had a mouth like me. I continued to go to Church, I love to dance and love to party."

A female super senior, age 89, offered the following account after a heightened spiritual experience; she categorically became a Seventh Day Adventist:

"The most significant experience would be another crusade when I came here (migrating to USA). The second crusade was Adventist. I was chosen to be an usher at the crusade...it heightened my spiritual experience because, I came in contact with various personalities,... people that really knew how to relate to others, that are not in Christ and those that are in Christ, and those that wanted to be in Christ. I had three different reasons. 1st category: I put those who are in Christ and how they handle themselves, and handle others. Some of them had the pomp and prize...you know, "I am a Seventh Day Adventists (very animated). I don't to this, and I don't do that, and you should do that. And, they do not know the reason why other people do other things. Because, situation put you whether what you did was right or wrong. Situation...therefore, There was nobody in the world but Adventists. I found out that it was not true. Because they only look outwardly and that kind of turned me off. 2nd category:, then I found people that were (emphasis) Adventist, that were flexible. They, I think, were a praying people-they were flexible and they could relate to you and others on pause on higher ground. And, for me higher ground was the foot of the cross. Higher ground is at the foot of the cross, because when you get there look up and you see Jesus and to know that it is for you (emphasis) that he

is going through that. So, with that in mind you can be sympathetic with others those that are truly Adventist. Some people want to become, but they do not have the strength and you have to give them that strength. And, if you don't have, you can't give that strength-what you don't have you can't give. So, I think for myself I have to get that spiritual strength so I can give. 3rd category: Thank God I think that I did share a lot., and learn a lot from taking that position in my life. And, then there are some who wants to be and don't want to be, because you can talk to some people and they would say [story- he wanted to cover and couldn't give it to God, so from my observation if he couldn't give it to God he couldn't give it to me...Accepting Christ....Jesus is the one that paid the price to set us free from sin...I came here to lead you to Jesus...My life has had its hill, and it has had its valleys, but I went through them the same way (laughing) same way be still and go through it and when it passes I say thank you. And, sometime when I am praying I say that to shall pass. And, when it passes, I said (increased her voice) Lord it passed!

Other spiritual events

A female super senior, age 81½, recalled her car accident in 1987, being wheel chair bound, traveling to St. Thomas, meeting a significant other, and having a relationship that lasted 2-3 years when it ended, it was a close spiritual encountered that helped her:

"I had a long-term relationship with this guy, and he broke it off. And, I was a mess. Thank God I had good friends, they never said, he was telling you this a long time ago. They didn't do that. One of the things I've learned is you just listen to the person. And, I guess at that point I was getting ready to have a mental breakdown...and I heard this voice that said I love you J. And, I felt it was God talking to me...that I love you J. I knew God was taking care of me and that it was all right. I knew I could get thru this.

A female Methodist, age 74, who shared that she didn't attend church in her youth; she did not consider herself an atheist. She believed in God. She recently began to attend church regularly in the last five years and shared an event that she identified as a single spiritual event she recollects as a godly intervention:

"It was 18 years ago, my youngest son went to visit with his friend and they took a cab. His friend pulled out a knife to rob the cab driver. My son got out and started running down the street. So, as he ran, the friend was running after him. The cop came very quickly in the area he was in...you see them (cops) pretty often... And, so the cop picked him up and the cab driver said both of them was trying to rob him. The cops were very good to my son. He told him that he would be there for him in court, and he was. Before he went to jail before all this. He was put on a bail bond; I did not have the money. He called me one night from the holding place on Queens Boulevard and told me they are sending me to Rikers Island Correctional Facilities. I called a couple of people. I sat down on the couch and said God it is up to you now, I've done all I could do. In 15 minutes, my oldest son called and a friend of his had given him the money. It was a student, a Japanese, her father had a lot of money and I spoke to her on the phone and I thanked her, and thanked her and thanked her, and she said that my son was like a brother to her...and if that did not set me to start going to church-but that did not. That was the first time...and God had done it. Within the first fifteen minutes."

A Female Santeria/Presbyterian (age 79):

"I met a set of people. Some of whom were carrying out very spiritual activities, but not through a church. So, it was like I was forced to do, to separate, integrity from religiosity. And, that is an important way to view the world. And, then as I said I came back to see people who had in addition to the integrity, and in addition to expressing these things with your life that they had this clear sense that comes from the higher power rather than themselves and, I envy that... and so I struggled on how do I lay down the pain I was in so that I could pick that up. So, I would say that conversation with [the pastor of the church] was a turning point. The pain was grieving...of choices made and choices not made. And, as long as I avoided the grieving I still carried it around. Finally, being able to express it, and to forgive myself. This was towards the end of coming out of the wasteland. Again, the traditional religious piece helped. I used to think of myself as being so empty that I couldn't stay... like a sack that has nothing in it. So the sack would just fall down. The task was how do you fill yourself so that you can stand up. And, how do you fill yourself up spiritually. It was a spiritual emptiness."

A female Methodist (age 74):

"The most...uh, uh...well, it's funny, but I go back to sport. I really do! Skiing, yeah I remember being outdoors, trees, the snow, the earth, its just nature and me and I am happy (laughing). Skiing for me is a spiritual experience. I am so comfortable there; I feel I am wrapped up in his arms. Just and Being out there surrounded by nature and moving and it is just awe. I just went skiing. I started out with a group and did not think I would do much skiing. I was terrified But, once I got up there (the mountain) I learned how to ski... laughing I was fine.

When the fifth question was explored two sub-themes emerged:

- a) Having a faith based marriage,
- b) Nurturing children.

Many of the participants had faith-based marriage as a common theme. Several participants described their adult experience in marriage.

"I won her at a dating game...I am Fifty-seven years old and I have been out of commission. I just came back from Cuba. I had donated money for someone Osha (initiation ritual ceremonies), and that made me so confident, and I rolled in with that same energy into this dating game. I won the dating game...and when she was revealed she was beautiful, pretty. I liked her, she liked me...she was gorgeous. But, there were some issues there.... I didn't know (if) you should date someone who was only one year of recovery.

"When I found out I was pregnant at 14 I got married with the baby's father. I moved in with his mother in the Bronx. In fact, it was the baby father's mother who told my mother, because I was going to commit suicide. My mother was shocked and didn't even know we were going together. Now, the baby father just got out of the mental hospital and I didn't know that. He was my best friend's cousin, he was gorgeous and she introduced me to him. What I found out was that he was helping his mother financially to pay the rent. So here I come along and take this person who is helping her in this apartment and she resented me. Looking back, she was a wonderful grandmother; her daughter M was a wonderful aunt. My granddaughter reminds me of M, the aunt." When I got pregnant with my second child, I left him. I got married a second time. I don't make good choices in men. I make good choices in career and

the job. I don't make good choices in men. I know that so I keep stepping."

"Ok, well two marriages. The one with the kids...The kids actually were raised during that wasteland period. They didn't grow up going to church. Neither of them sees themselves as religious and that is fine. April every once in a while...People in France tend not to be religious-My son lives in France. Don...I do not know how different it would have been if they had been or not been raised within a religious community. That's sort of something they have to work through. I didn't model that. Don started to go to church with me. He has never been a church person himself. But, he said church is important to you and you are important to me so I want to share this with you. And how good is that...yeah

"I was 9 years old when I decided no. I had many good relationships. And many of them lead up to wanting to engage me [in marriage], it really had been beautiful men.... but I never wanted to be in the kitchen; required to clean the dishes and put away; or required to do the laundry, I'll do it when I am ready. In my head that is something that went with marriage. And, that meant a relationship to one person. ... You had to be loyal to that one person, that is what I would expect and that is what I would want to give. I didn't want to be loyal to one person. I like him, I like him, and I like him (laughing). I want to be able to go to the movie with him, sleep with him if I wanted to, and I have him to make love to me, and me make love to him, and do the same with the next one, and the same with the one down the block, yeah. And, so I lived like that (chuckling)."

"My brother and I was at the church talking waiting for the music to start and we missed it (the pastor introduction of me, the bride). The minister was half way through his word when (he didn't see us marching in) and so he came to see where we were. We were so busy talking we did not hear, we missed ...yes, yes (chuckling). That should have told me something right there. I did not need it...oh boy, oh boy. I had warning, but I wouldn't listen. Uh, uh."

"I sent my boys to Sunday school, and I also went with them. It was a church school. I would take them to Sunday school and we would stay for church. I figures that's what they should do instead of hanging around and getting in my hair and driving

me crazy. So, we all went to church. Holy Trinity Church...They attended the Catholic school.

"I was married. He and I didn't have any kids, that's number one. Spiritually, I do not remember him going to church, except to get married..... (hearty laugh) it was during that period I dropped out of church as well. I would sometime go with my mother for something special, an event or something like that. I didn't attend on a regular basis, until he and I were separated. Yeah!

Two super seniors shared that they had met their spouse in their youth and have enjoyed decades of happiness:

"You know the saying a family that prays together, stays together, so, that is what's up with that. That would answer that simple question. All of my family is involved in the Orisha Tradition. I am initiated; my wife, my daughters, my sons, my grandchildren, and I have a great-grand child. All of my kids were born into the tradition. My kids are not churchgoers they were born into this. Everyone is doing well. My eldest daughter has five children, she has a house in the Poconos...The tradition gives them insights, a road map to exist in this chaos...its a sense of value, but more of a direction, all sort of things you need to be aware of. So, it's more and its giving you insight and food for thought, because, at the end you have to make the decision. It gives you information and you work with that."

The sixth question in the spiritual life review explored each senior's relationship with the higher power during life's trial and hardships. The majority of participants described several sub-themes: a) Believing in God (faith), b) Accepting the truth of life events (beliefs), c) Acting with awareness (trust).

Super seniors shared stories about trials and hardship and described a unified theme of belief, faith, and trust in God. Some shared difficult life events, challenging medical conditions and the loss of a spouse during their lifetime.

"The drumming and the meditating helped me. There was lots of drumming, and by that time I was teaching and from then on I was a teacher. I had turned my closet into a shrine and could meditate for hours. That is how I got my messages. I really didn't have that much responsibility. It was around that time I bought my brownstones with my mother."

"When I delivered her eulogy I had to tell her that I couldn't be like her that I had to be me."

"Raising children was very difficult...I had to depend on God. I kept on praying. And, she kept sending me people. 'I'll never forget this lady in my church, Ms. M, just so wonderful. I remembered when I got this apartment, and she loaned me this money. She was in the choir, just an angel. I just feel that God sends me all these angels; so therefore, I have to be an angel... [She pointed to a beautiful painting and said that it reminds her of beautiful angel.]"

"I was just thinking about that...I was arranging my funeral with my pastor. Second 2 King 5 it was about Namaam. ...That's my favorite scripture, because I feel I am like Nammath. I feel that's me, that's my favorite because I feel I am like Nammath. I have to do it my way, even if it's going to kick my butt."

"Jesus is not the first one I think of. I do not rely on Jesus to help me out in a crisis...It is deep within...somewhere. Well, the deep within is my experiences. My life history where have I confronted this before, anything close to it and, if not then any friend of mine that went thru it and how did he get out of it-that kind of stuff. My wife help me, she was amazing. Most of the time I would share with her when I was going thru a crisis. She was going through her own, so we would help each other. I think she prayed a lot and she was very close to the preacher and he came to see her and prayed with her.) Spiritual belief is not my thing, and it is not on purpose it's not there."

"Well, you know. Oh God, or you say God help me. I would say it, but I really did not think I deserved it because I really did not go to church. Oh really, that is how I really felt. I felt ...some people say there is really no God. And I say that's how you felt ...but there's got to be a higher power, if we are all, if man is all we got than we are all in trouble. So I said there got to be a higher power. That is what I would tell people. Psalm 23 I like

that psalm very much. It gives u hope you are not alone...I like that very much. Going to Rivers, listening to sermons"

I think when I was a toddler and I had to go to the sanitarium (hospital). I did not want to leave my sister, I did not want to leave my mother, and I did not want to leave my father. I knew I had to in order to get better. And, I knew I wanted to get better, because I didn't like feeling badly. Feeling poorly, ... feeling...not able to run down the block. No! No! That was very hard to separate myself from them at that point and go away for a while. I knew it would be a while, I did not know how long, but I knew it would be awhile. That was hard. But once,... and it was like everything else in my life. But once I got there (laughing, laughing) wow, wow I like it. Well, I gave thanks because I got there. I gave thanks again, I was feeling better, not so tired. I was about 3, 4 years old. I remember feeling so tired, so very tired...Yeah. I remembered being held a whole lot. I was picked up a lot. I didn't get that at home. The nurse picked me up. I gave thanks"

"Again, I think it's to differentiate between religiosity...and God. Rightly or wrongly I felt the religious institution was not there for me both... Again, think part of that was me...When I got divorced, I judged myself and it was easier not to go to church and I was with people for whom going to church was not important. So, that is what I did, I didn't go to church. And, here is this church I had been active in and no one came to me to say Emily where are you? How can we help you? So, that is too bad what would happened if they did. And, I didn't expect them to. And I didn't. I also saw that the church had been involved in the whole civil right stuffs, it was that whole movement and that ended. And, the church went on to worry about other stuff. It moved off over here and I was sort of wondering where is it going, and I didn't go there. So, I say I didn't leave the church the church left me. Later I moved to New York, this was in the 70's it was an Episcopal Church. It was a point in the 60's that church was very involved, many of them, not a lot of them in the civil rights movement. Then, there was a blow back in that and they quit being so socially involved.

"It drew me closer to God. Stay because I think if it wasn't for God I would not be sitting here today (soft, quiet voice of acceptance). I think that he...that God makes me feel much more acceptance of the things to deal with them. You know what I am saying, and not say why me. Some people say that, I can't say that. I have to say thank God. Sometime I do not

feel good, whatever. Having the cancer was the biggest thing I had to go through...I am not going to call my breast cancer hardship. But, I will call it....I was one out of one million, stage 1 breast cancer...we had to do three operations, and we couldn't get it. But, I couldn't call that hardship. When I had to go for radiation for my 36 days, my God. I said I was going to treat it like a job and get it over with, just up and go. That is what I did. My first operation, I was in the hospital for a long time. That was a big operation, I don't know. I was never sick, but when you are sick you lose a lot of your patience. It's like you want it now. You know. I would say that was one of the look back and thinks. I had to go through to say, God you were so rude, why were you so rude. I was going out with this guy. He came here and cleaned out my whole house and did all kind of stuff and I just was nasty and I knew it. He left me some money on the table and I thought to myself if I was him I wouldn't leave it. I couldn't, I had no control over it. So, I would think that was the toughest thing I had to deal with. When I had breast cancer I didn't even tell the church, no. I didn't want them all...Darlene (another church member) got it before me and every Sunday, everybody was crowded around her. I said, you know I do not want everybody around me every Sunday. And, (clearing her throat) that was like a in and out of the hospital. I was not in the bed. I remember going to one of those seminars--you've heard of Joel Olsteen. I went to the seminar with the little drained bottle, you know. But, (stressing her words) I went because I wanted to be there. Right, I would say. I would always try, maybe look at life in a more positive light get involved things that is uplifting-right, uh hum. I learned from it, I learned who I was, you know and everything."

"I have life. I thank God because I'm still there. I've asked God to send me away, but he did not. I'm still here. I can go to church; I have to catch myself to even travel a short distance I use a cane to walk. I used to be able to go down in the basement, but now I can't. I need the cane to go down 27 steps. I've had many experiences. I worked hard so I could travel. I wanted to follow those who had traveled. Everyone is comfortable. Nothing is lasting. The real riches are on the other side; although no one has come back to give a report. We follow everything they tell us, but no one has come back to tell us if it is true. When the rich man asked if he could go back and tell his brothers about the afterlife, he was told they had the bible and the prophets"

"The only hardship that I've experienced, and they were not that drastic was finance. Not having enough money to pay bills.

The tradition gives you the confidence to go on. They show you something else, and help you forget about the blues. In the person themselves, you could be... the event. You could be on either side of the event- this is happiness and this is sadness. (Demonstrating the two sides of the event). You have a choice on how you want to deal with the event it is up to you. Now, depending on your make up, you may deal with it in laughter, or sadness. What the Orisha does when a person goes to get a reading they show you the options, and what you think is bad is really not that bad at all. It shows you- we believe there is good and bad in everything. There can't be one without the other. So when you have a bad situation they can show you the other side; even when you have a good situation they can show you the other side and what you may have to be leery of-so it is like that. The Orisha tradition teaches you about trials/ tribulations: As long as you have faith you will be victorious-that is what it teaches me. You are not going to get everything you want. That's the kind of world we live in, for the most part. Rituals helps the Orisha, we say prayers, we make offerings, singsongs, dance... This is our temple, this whole house-when we have our religious activities we have it right here. This is where the community comes to gather. We sing and we pray and we have fun. We feed the Orisha, we have sacrifice of fruits, food, sing songs and dance, the whole nine. We learned the tradition through the word of mouth. In Orisha we have what we call Odu (scripture), it is part of Yoruba scripture, and there is no favorite. Well, I don't have a favorite, as a diviner I have to deal with all of it. We have a word, Iwa Pele (to have good character). You may have a lot of money, but if you do not have good character, you do not have anything. You can easily relate it to the Ten Commandments, The Egyptian book of the dead, yogi philosophy, and all of that; because, they are all advocating love and togetherness in approach to God. God is love. When they say we won't be in the strife we are in today."

In the final question (1) the overarching theme that emerges was the importance and relevance of spirituality.

Participants were asked to *Define spirituality*. A majority of the super seniors described an awareness of being connected to a higher being often referred to as God/Supreme Being/ Jesus Christ/ Lord. These super seniors recognized this as being outside (extrinsic) of themselves, but being motivated by it intrinsically to live

a spiritually focused life. The following comments are excerpts of the various interviews with the super seniors defining spirituality:

"Spirituality is the life that we live it is the essence of who we are. It is very hard to separate the essence of spirituality from the person. Spirituality is that thing that is almost breathes into you when you are born, and your connection with the higher power. I think Spirituality is staying on track as to the reason we are here. I think, that God the creator, whatever you want to call him or her that is your connection with your 'nia', your purpose. The only reason why we come here is to have an opportunity to fulfill in this realm that purpose we sent here for. The only reason why we come here is to have an opportunity to fulfill that purpose in this realm that we were sent here for. This is what I believe and I am spiritual about this when the spirit, the soul, is in heaven, wherever that is, wherever that idealized place is. God, Aludema, whatever we call him/her. The soul says I want to go down there and be in that family. I believe we choose the family and it's a whole spiritual thing from then on. And, in that family the mother could be a drug addict, the father could be a pedophile or whatever. In a spiritual way we come down to help that family, at the same time we are helping ourselves. And, this is the new incarnation now. We don't come back until after we have done the work. So, the spirit keeps coming back until the spirit has completed that work. I remembered an old babatal told me, about ten years ago, you probably won't have to come back anymore-I won't take that to the bank. The idea is that when we have finished the work we are done. For me right now, I do feel the urgency to do the work. There is an urgency to get it done, because, this is what we [I] bargained for. That is almost like what [I] we contracted to do. It's that connection. As long as [I] we don't break that connection [I] we still can remember. We say we can't remember why we are here, but spirituality and meditating and those practices those types of spirituals things; some people do chanting, whatever it is that we do to help us stay on track- That is what I think spirituality is about, staying on track on why we are here in the first place."

"Spirituality means, that I am not in charge...that there is a higher power. And, the higher power will take care of things, not in my time and I know what she is going to say, that it's none of your business. I am in charge and I don't have to explain nothing to you, you know what I mean. So, that is what I think. ...I don't understand why she allowed me to have the accident. When, I was knocked down by a car. Because it has

impacted on my body now, even now, and that was twenty-seven years ago. If she had a message for me, that was in 1987 twenty seven years ago. "I felt if God had wanted to tell me something, she could have told me without having me be knocked out." I am glad that the accident happened after I had divorced from James, because he would not have allowed me to do the exercise like I was supposed to. I was exercising before I met him, cause he would have done everything for me."

"I look at church as a community function. Where good people meet. Your chance of finding a rotten apple is very slim. I feel safe there in their endeavor...I can help I love a good sermon as long as it doesn't go into what I call the fable land. My strong belief is when the church fathers were putting together the rules for Christianity felt that they had to appeal to the lower classes and most of the world was made of the lower classes in those day peasants, and I hate to say farmers. They make a pretty good living today. Anyway they were under the thumbs of the Roman emperor and Herod was the king, you know and he answered to the Romans really. And, I just felt like they made it seem like it was this marvelous religion that you just couldn't afford to say no to. Exemplary life or even lead a life you didn't do much harm you would go to heaven. Who is not going to join that, especially if you are not educated? They don't know the difference bring Jesus and they recite that he came back to life...(stressing) please. I put a brake on the Immaculate Conception...-that cannot happen, please. I said to my wife, she would get so angry with me. She believes in the whole kit and caboodle and I said here this ought to make you feel better. All religions are based on faith that is the big thing. Five letter words that each religion banks on, especially Christianity because, if you don't have faith and all these miracles occurred then you won't go to head, but if you do then you will go to heaven. You are going and I am not! (He utters a long laugh)..."

"I guess it is like your connection to God and how you feel about God and thing that happens in conjunction with your life...and every day living and everything. That's what I think."

"It is a way of knowing that you are part of a larger whole. You are not whole within yourself and you do not have to be. You are whether you be working with a group for some goals,

whether it be just a group of friends family, tribe or whatever you belong to and they accept you with all your imperfection and as you accept them with all their imperfection. Yeah, it is a feeling of not being alone, of being enough."

"Spirituality means being in touch with the higher power; it means... feeling it, feeling it. It's stronger than a breeze, not as impactful as a wind, but feeling it. And, having comfort, feeling comfort it's like being embraced; it's like being in a pool or in a tub. For me, sensation I love that. It is not as sensational as skiing, but it as energizing...it as quieting...it's quieting. It's restful, restful...enjoying solace that is what spirituality is to me."

"...OMG it means everything, I don't know how to sum it up. I think it is more of a feeling, than (pause) I think it's been keeping the positive attitude, being kind to other people, I try to treat others the way I want to be treated. I want to be there for people. I want to be there to help anybody I can possibly help. (Story...I had this neighbor who lived on my floor, we weren't great friends....I would go down and do what ever he needed. When he needed somebody, I helped him get into the hospital. I used to visit him everyday. I think its doing things for others and having them, enjoying the feedback I get from them. I used to do a lot of catering; I do a little bit now. I get some good feed back. It makes me feel good, yeah, right. I met a lot of wonderful people through my catering. I catered a party for a judge in Manhattan ten years ago. In October, she called me, he was 80...he is going to be 90. She has a party invitation and she wanted to know if I was still catering (laughing, laughing, laughing....) She had 75 people. I did that in October. I have regular waiters. I had a friend of mine. And I had ...I never saw them in the kitchen. You have to have the patience of Job with her...(Laughing) She tells me at Thanksgiving time...she emailed me that she lost a tooth. How could she is missing the tooth until you got home."

"I believe in God and try to live by everything God says, but we are weak and sometimes we sin without knowing. Change your life, sometimes people convert, but their lives don't change. I don't understand things here, but in my community some people convert from Catholic to Protestant, but if you don't change that's all you've done is change religions. If I convert

and I used to do wrong to someone, I should stop. But if I convert and you say, Kathy, give the poor person \$10 for me; and (instead) I give them \$3, (and) then tell you I did; Tell me did I really convert? Don't bluff me. You have only changed your religion. Spirituality is change. You change all of the old things you used to do. Spirituality means learning to live with your neighbors, come closer to God. Believing in God. As I get older, I want to become closer to God. When I've done all my chores, I watch a little TV. What I love watching most is basketball. I don't like shooting or violence so I watch Mass on TV."

"As human beings we are of two worlds. We are of the physical and the spiritual world. And, when these two worlds are not balance that is when we have difficulties in our life. You know, you can have medical issues that are caused by spiritual issues and significant. And you could have spiritual difficulties because the spiritual is out of whack, and also again you can bring this to the Orisha and they can show you how to bring everything back into balance....Spirituality is your conscious, you know how they portrait good conscious and bad conscious, ancestry, anything of the divine is part of your spirituality and being able to tap into that. What I mean is you maybe walking down the street and someone says don't go there? You can wonder if you said that. So, you turn. So you have two options, listen to it and respond or don't listen to it and don't respond. So in spirituality, so to develop spirituality is to be one whenever that voice come to you to recognize if this is your conscious or the spirit and to be able to react the minute you hear, that is what you stride for; that's what protects you from all the stuff that is going on out there. It has many names dependent on the level of education, and intelligence of the person. It's always the same thing; It is taping into the divine for guidance and enlightenment. I do not like to label things, because it is so simple. It is what is."

"I could only say maybe in one word-Everything, everything, because in everything I include God. I try to tell people in everything I try to include God. Everything you use comes from his hand and from his creation. The chair we are seating on comes... its made wood, God made the trees that produced the wood; the breath we are breathing; the air we speak to each other comes from creation; Let us make man; so, in conclusion everything, everything. And, if I go to name them all, all would

come back ...like reading the bible even the words. The gold and the silver that the people of old made images with that's God creations where they got the gold. God made the gold ...By sharing it with each other and given glory to God... for how you share what he gave...(that you in turn give it) it to somebody else, and that somebody else can share it with you. So, that's what it means finally everything. I do not know if that is a bad way to close."

"We are all energy and light. We are the same but different. We influence each other and those with different levels of light. Spirituality is when you are in alignment with the Higher power and the light. We are here to serve each other. Spirituality is you as an individual. It is how you represent your light, your level of light. It is when we get rid of all the obstacles like envy, bitterness and become aligned with the creator."

All eleven participants completed the spiritual life review ministry. At the conclusion of the study each participant was asked to answer the final question. *How have you enjoyed participating in this Spiritual Life Review?* Below are the comments provided by the super seniors about the experience of participating in this spiritual life review. From the feedback the super seniors provided I found that many of the responses demonstrated high levels of ego-integrity among the super seniors.

"Yes, it has been very helpful to me. It has been very, very helpful to me...I haven't put down. You understand, it is emotional to re-live the stuff, its very good. I am very blessed."

"It has been a little uncomfortable. I had to think back, and it brought back some effect, because I had to think back of some of the things I did wrong. She then corrected it to choices I made. But, also I have to thank God that I was able to regroup, and say ok, you jump in the rain this time and next time you'll take an umbrella, so get over it."

"I thought it was very illuminating to me, because I had to go back and look at my past in a way that I wouldn't have done without you. It made me understand that I have been pretty lucky in my life and I have done a lot of stuff. I don't consider myself to be ravishingly intelligent maybe a little.....I've

managed to have come....even so. I was blessed with an ability to get along with people to use whatever Mother Nature gave me, partly that's intuitive. An acting job that paid a lot of our bills for 30 years in a big way. And, in a big way it was necessary. When we renovated this house after the first five years we were very much in debt a lot of credit card debt, we had to pay the mortgage. And the first wave of checks I started getting where for commercials really I was able to pay off everything. Everything! Most people don't have that opportunity."

"Yes, it was very interesting. I was telling....I didn't take great care of myself, I did not pamper myself. I shouldn't say pamper...well when I got older. I guess after I had the kids you would say. I never took much stock in doing stuff for myself, you know. I had to be mother and father to the boys, say things people had to ask me about myself I had to stop and think because you know...(she laughed...) It's just odd for me to talk about myself. Maybe...Sometimes you really don't realize what you are like. Until somebody brings it out of you, and then you realize when something happened. It has been very interesting. Yes, very interesting."

"Yes, ...oh well it has been kind of fun. Alicia has been asking me to write down stuff and I have been unwilling, unable to do it, or to take that seriously, and I've been saying maybe I need to take that seriously. You got me started on that. So you have stuff there that I could have gotten out of sooner if I had blah, blah you know and I think rather than stay stuck with that feeling that I could have done it differently it's like-it is what it is. And, ...I've moved on and other people can move on and it is what it is. Acceptance...Yeah."

"I was glad you asked me questions. You refreshed my mind. I feel revived talking about these things. I thought of good things."

"I loved it, I wish I had started sooner...the Orisha Tradition sooner. It was like doing a reading, except you were asking me questions. My life has been a straight line, straight line from childhood to elementary school, to elementary to Junior High school to Aviation school, and I am. I just closed down my business three years ago. I just do odd jobs, home improvement."

"Immensely, for lack of better word it rooted some of the things that happened at that time seems bad, and it still seems bad, but how I over came it, how I have gotten the victory over it makes me feel good to recall certain things. My life did not have this. It had, like I said the hills and the valleys. The hills is when I enjoyed the peace, the joy and the love of others... and sharing and caring, and the valuing, ...sometimes it is so quiet."

"I do not know, I was dissecting the 23rd psalm and I say 'yes though I walked thru the valley of the shadow of death' ... I don't know, but shadow comes from light and I can't see the light only Christ. Not the light of the moon or the sun in the valley to make a shadow. Shadow must have space... the valley is narrow and that tells me that God is with you even when you are squeezed in the narrow. So, I think that's what's happened to me...that God was with me in the valley of the shadow of death. So ...I enjoy life, and I still do. I still enjoy waking up every morning...(Laughing)."

"I didn't like it too much. I thought when you said about Spirituality you were not going to ask me about my childhood and myself. I don't like to talk about my history and myself. Like I have to ask, why so many questions about my childhood and my family. I enjoyed sharing with you the connection I have with the higher power and the light. Every single moment is heaven when you are alive."

CHAPTER 5

Discussions

Implication of the Life Review

This project sets out to explore the role of spirituality in the lives of eleven super seniors from different faith-based institutions. It involved the engagement of these super seniors in a process known as life review, which some may refer to as a time of reflection upon the success and failures of one's life.

This ministry project has explored the intersection of aging and spirituality in the lived experiences of these eleven participants from a theological/spiritual perspective as well as a psychological/developmental perspective.

The aging body was never designed to live forever. Aging is a natural process of the physical self, as well as a process that affects the spirit. The experiences of moving through different developmental phases also affect one's spiritual life. In other words, the process of aging at every life stage brings about changes in one's spiritual life. The spirit that enlivens us at 25 years, and brings deeper meaning at 45 years of age may not be the same that nurtures our senses at 80 years of age or brings us a sense of wholeness and spiritual wellness at 90 years of age. Therefore, the process of aging also brings about changes in one's spiritual maturation. This may also lead to further exploration to find greater meaning and purpose in one's life and existence.

The aim of this ministry project was addressed through both quantitative and qualitative measures. The qualitative section of the project involved collecting the oral histories of the super seniors to explore how they found meaning in their lives

through their lived experiences. There were seven themes that could be identified from the spiritual life interviews to help support the main focus of this ministry project. Butler (1963) encouraged the use of the life review process as a means to analytically review one's life events from childhood to current age with the ultimate purpose of revisiting and resolving any past conflicts, losses or regrets. For instance, not everyone ends life without many loose ends. The loose ends often do not tie up easily without denial, even under the pressure of death approaching. Other studies have concluded that a life review process is successful in attaining the resolution of Erickson's final stage of integrity with older adults (Haight et al., 1998; Peck, 2001). For the purpose of this ministry project a modified version of a structured life review was used to focus on spiritual life events that were significant to the participants and to facilitate an organized review of the super senior's life span from childhood to current age. The focus of those sessions was primarily how the review of spiritual life experiences across the life span helped contribute to the super seniors' understanding of spirituality as it relates to Erikson's final stage of ego integrity versus despair. In other words, whether this core group of super seniors has been able to reflect back on their life with satisfaction (integration), as opposed to having unresolved conflicts or regrets (despair).

The results showed anecdotally that all participants from the different faith-based institutions interpreted their life events with spiritual meaning. Therefore, the qualitative results suggest that the spiritual life review was useful in contributing to an understanding of spiritual development across the lifetime, facilitating experiences of ego-integrity. Furthermore, the qualitative results show how participants gained personal insight, spiritual growth and also experienced a

renewed sense of purpose and meaning from participating in the spiritual life review. The following excerpts from the super seniors' responses highlighted this: a 75-year-old shared that she will be looking for someone to do her autobiography; a 83-year-old stated that he was working on finishing a fictional book, and said "I am not done yet". A 79-year-old wants to start working on her memoir.

The results also demonstrated that all the participants were able to identify spiritually significant events across their lifetime. They did so with extraordinary similarity in their stories about spiritual experiences. For example, the majority of these super seniors attended Sunday school and joined youth groups, which can be viewed as an extrinsic adherence to religiosity- outwardly motivated. Findings from this study are in line with other research suggesting that experiences of religion and spirituality in early life are predictors of spirituality in later adulthood (Dalby, 2006; Melia, 1999; Wink & Dillon, 2002). From childhood through adolescence, significant spiritual life experiences were most often described as extrinsic experiences related to religion including: having a relationship to God through religious rituals, practices and beliefs; being part of a deeply rooted spiritual/religious interpersonal system; and developing a spiritual life and community outside of immediate family for example, church, and mentors. Coincidentally, many of the super seniors described how these early experiences fostered an internal spirituality for example, beliefs, trust, faith, and respect that carried them through to their adulthood.

Secondly, a corresponding change was noted between spirituality during the first half of the super seniors' life in comparison to spirituality in their later life. As the super seniors shared events beginning in adulthood through to their current age, most seemed to have had a spirituality shift to more intrinsic: maturing in faith and

wisdom; making God's presence central in their life; having trust and belief; and experiencing the transcendent nature of God in one's own life, in relationship to others and the universe. The shared stories reflect a lifetime developmental process that is more oriented towards intrinsic spiritual development in later adulthood. These findings are consistent with the spiritual development that recognizes how individuals have a propensity to alternate, supplement, or integrate both extrinsic (adhering to the indoctrination of a religious group) and the intrinsic through a degree of (belonging to a religious group while maintaining a sense of self-awareness and existential quest) spiritual /religious experiences throughout life (Canda & Furman, 1999; Nelson-Becker, Nakashima, Canda, 2007; & Dillon, 2002).

The quantitative measure compared participant's self-reported levels of ego-integrity before and after the spiritual life review. Participants showed no statistically significant changes in ego-integrity before and after the life reviews. The findings showed that super seniors who scored relatively high levels of ego integrity before participating in the spiritual life review also rated high after the spiritual life review process. This is consistent with earlier research that also showed higher levels of ego integrity in older adults indicating successful resolution of conflicts and regrets at an earlier age (Brown & Lowis, 2003; Torges, Stewart, & Duncan, 2009). In addition, the result also suggested that the process of completing a spiritual life review had no bearing on levels of ego integrity for these super seniors who have no life regrets or few (if any) unresolved conflicts. Several of the super seniors in this ministry were of sound mind and seemingly well grounded individuals.

In conclusion, the findings also showed how spirituality and religion are central in most of the super seniors way of life. When the super seniors' were asked

to rate themselves on two separate scales, which measured how spiritual and religious they considered themselves, the majority of participants (55%, n=6) viewed themselves on the spectrum of very spiritual-to-spiritual while (36%, n=4) viewed themselves somewhere on the spectrum of very religious to religious. All the participants described how they are immersed in a culture of faith and spirituality, by attending church regularly, or either with like-minded older adults who shared similar values, interests and background. Finally, super seniors in this ministry actively pursued spiritual development in later adulthood as some reported reading inspirational literature, attending prayer groups, centering (meditation) groups; one particular senior shared that she follows prayers and devotionals on television daily because her physical condition has deteriorated in the last three months.

Contribution of project to ministry in a wider context

This ministry project embraced interfaith people, and participants from all walks of life, from non-traditional religious affiliations, different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. The spiritual life review is a unique experience which has helped eleven super senior participants reflect on their past, deal in the present and look towards a realistic future. Therefore, the spiritual life review process can be a useful tool to help the baby boomers entering old age.

In review of my project summary it is possible from here to develop a new vision of pastoral ministry that can help address those end of life concern, such as missed moments regrets, life tragedies, and despair faced in the later years of life.

In addition, church leaders should continue to embrace scriptures that assert or offer a new definition of aging in the 21st Century. After all, God accepts our old (aging adults) and it is written in the different books in the bible, Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament. Clergy and pastoral counselors can offer healing by encouraging the visibility of our super seniors and encouraging their relationship with the younger generation within the church setting.

How do we reconsider, reconstruct, re-view and understand aging today? We as pastoral counselors can help our elders by honoring them, by seeking their advice, by receiving their counsel, by listening to their wisdom; this will ultimately help older adults to re-claim their position as the wise elders. This act affirms the older adult's lives. Integrating our super seniors in our faith institutions will expand our capacity to see God's love and presence in our community, in our churches, in our congregations, in our temples, and strengthen our faith and our interpersonal relationships.

Below are some of the contributions:

1) This spiritual life review ministry project honored the super seniors (older adults). It brought them from the background of the congregation to the foreground.

2) This spiritual life review empowered the older adults to look back at spiritual events, both positive and negative and recognize their resilience. An 89-year-old female Seventh Day Adventist puts it succinctly, "...it rooted some of the things that happened [and] at that time seems bad, and it still seems bad, but how I over came it, how I have gotten the victory over it makes me feel good to recall

certain things.” It helped participants put things into perspective how far they have come in life with faith, strength, resilience, hope and wisdom.

3) This ministry project process contributed to the older adults becoming the author of their own story, to hearing themselves tell their story, and this ascended them to a place of honor.

4) In a wider context, these super seniors real life stories are based on their lived experiences, which are still relevant today. This highlighted the concept of the living epistle that God is not done with us (super seniors), and that God is still speaking through our older adults. These super seniors’ stories can be shared during bible studies and small group meetings with the younger generations.

5) This ministry project is ecumenical, and its process has transferability across faith-based institutions, regardless of their religious affiliations, from traditional or indigenous religions, which are secular. In addition, it can be replicated within any Adult Day Care, health care or retirement home setting. Depending on the focus and the population one can either use the very structured life review or use the spiritual life review, which is semi-structured with open-ended questions.

6) This ministry project represents strength-based ministry, which offers ideas to identify strategies that can help older adults face current or future challenges through a renewed sense of spirit and resolve. In addition, it can be useful in addressing important aspects of aging.

Contribution of Project to Clarifying and Expanding Theological Principles

Theologically, the super seniors were proselytized into the practices of Christian religious beliefs be they Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Catholic or Protestant. The benefit was that they belonged to a community and they participated in fellowship with a group. Sunday school used bible stories and scriptures as a way to teach, to ground and to teach the values that were acceptable norms and created a communal space. Congregations and seminaries are places that have been attentive to the spiritual and emotional needs of members. Churches should create a space for the unforeseen to happen. Church leaders, clergy and pastoral counselors should continue to embrace scriptures and biblical texts that assert the positive potential in aging. "I am asking readers to think outside of the frameworks we have inherited not only from psychology and medicine but from theology as well. Recall Psalm 90, which declares "The days of our lives are 70 years, perhaps eighty if we are strong." However, this additional decade is "only labor and sorrow" (Elledge-Volker, 2010, p.62). Evidently, this is not so, as this ministry project has shown; there are several super seniors in this core group of eleven who are in their seventies, eighties, and close to their ninetieth year, and they are thriving and living fulfilled lives.

Contribution of Project to Clarifying and Expanding Clinical Principles

Clinically the findings show the insight shared from this set of super seniors was based on their lived experiences (wisdom), with evidence that life was not easy, and that you have to take the bitter with the sweet. However, the findings show that most of these super seniors have integrated well with their present life in terms of

looking back at their life with satisfaction, as opposed to having regrets (despair) or unresolved conflicts. Most are active, engaged in their community; they still have a purpose; and some I would say have transcended to a better understanding. "Rather than despairing, the elder develops what Erikson (1982) called integrity, he or she comes to terms with his or her life, understanding it in the context of life as a whole, and is at peace with life as it is" (Corbett, 2013, p. 154).

Implications for future ministry

How can pastoral counselors address important developmental tasks associated with aging through a spiritual life review?

I would like to offer the following considerations for future ministry:

Pastoral counselors can adopt 3 steps on the use of spiritual mapping:

First, what is unique about this ministry group and its approaches to the spiritual life review is the inclusion of each super senior's constructed spiritual lifemap (Hodge, 2005). a) The approach honors the super seniors self-determination and autonomy as the seniors decide the events that represent their spiritual life; b) it was empowering to the super seniors to look back at a lifetime of spiritually oriented events (both positive and negative) and recognize how far they have come through life with faith, strength, resilience, hope, and wisdom; c) it offers a strengths perspective as the super senior identifies spiritual assets that can help them face current and future challenges with new resolve of spirit; d) it offers an opportunity to re-examine and to positively reframe (spiritual or not) or to validate those negative feelings associated with life events that an older adult may not have been able to reconcile or move beyond; e) it can address unhealthy beliefs, anxiety,

and depression especially with diverse religious cultures; f) and can in fact create opportunity to address concerns or issues related to end-of-life matters.

Second, the spiritual lifemap and the semi-structured questions can become the tool for navigating through the spiritual life interview with the super seniors. Pastoral counselors with a nonjudgmental attitude of respect and understanding can foster support for super seniors to address their unique perspectives on spirituality/religion while they review their life events (Ortiz & Langer, 2002). Pastoral counselors, using a spiritual life review in this context, can help older seniors to understand and accept the way spirituality has shaped their worldview and perspectives, to re-evaluate negative events in a spiritual lens, to identify meaning and purpose in life, and to recognize aspects of the sacred and transcendent in later life (Hodge, 2005; Lewis, 2001, Moschella, 2010; Turesky & Schultz, 2010). Pastoral counselors with knowledge or skill can create an opportunity to assist super seniors in using a spiritually oriented tool that can promote a positive outlook and provide insight to spiritual development (Nelson-Becker, Nakashima, & Canda, 2007).

Third, it is necessary for pastoral counselors to be committed to ethical principles as the field is experiencing an increase in the interest in and use of spiritually oriented practices with a growing population of diverse super seniors (Canda & Furman, 2010; Lewis, 2001; Moberg, 2005). Rabbi Address (2016, personal correspondence) states, "ministry of life review geared to older adults and boomers is being validated across the country in a variety of venues." The main ethical principles recommended for the pastoral counselor are respect for client spiritual belief and determination. The pastoral counselor should also be aware of

their own spiritual orientations, and biases and have knowledge of diverse spiritual perspectives through educational pursuits, and professional competences through training and spiritual interventions.

How can pastoral counselors address important developmental tasks associated with aging through spiritual assessment tools?

Spiritual assessment tools are important instruments that can become part of a routine practice that faith-based institutions could tailor to their congregants. Thus, simple modifications of the spiritual assessments tools used in the D.min-DP could be adapted for faith-based institutions, or different cultures for replication and more regular use. Spiritually sensitive practice represents a strength-based perspective, demonstrates a respect for client heterogeneity (e.g., diverse worldviews and cultures), promotes functional behaviors with death and dying- lowers levels of anxiety about death, increases mental and physical health, increases resiliency, and assists with depression and bereavement (Armstrong & Crowther, 2002; Canda, Nakashima, & Furman, L.D 2004).

Another issue related to practice and ministry was cultural diversity among the participants. The pastoral counselor must be sensitive to how race, culture, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation affect practice. I was cognizant of how my own beliefs, attitudes, and biases would influence the dyadic relationship as I engaged participants from different faith based institutions while conducting this experimental ministry project.

Furthermore, it is important that clergy, pastoral counselors or pastoral care team members practice active listening skills. This is the area of my ministry project,

which has allowed me to grow the most and expanded my outlook to recognize and be mindful of the response to social and cultural factors. This meant that I had to be present, to listen, to have no judgment, to become a container to hold, and be filled with another's grief and joy. The ministry process has taught me the value of the ministry of presence. During a session with an 89 years old participant, she insisted that I prayed with her over the phone when I scheduled our first meeting; when I finally met her she shared with me the value of prayer. She quoted the scripture from the bible, "*For where two or three gather in my name I am with them.*" (Matthew 18:20, New International Version (NIV)). We prayed before and after our sessions.

How do we address the brokenness that comes with aging? How do we return to the places in our lives that cannot be reclaimed by simply making (or saying) it so? How do we as pastoral care givers address (sit in) those dark and empty places with others, as they seek to wrestle with realities of what cannot be 'glossed' over or easily redeemed by evolving narratives, alone? In essence, what must be faced (or not) in the final chapters and hours of a life? I will refer to Ernest Becker's statement that..."awe, fear, and ontological anxiety were [are] natural accompaniments to our contemplation of the fact of death" (Becker, 1973, p. xii).

This project is meant to offer insights and techniques can serve to enhance and bring healing to the brokenness of life at this stage for the aging. More can be done with this project. In developing and expanding a model of ministry to those who are aging and dying, several of the following citations, suggest by J. M. Erikson further explore issues that emerge as the aging population faces death.

In thinking about a proposed model of renewed ministry in the 21st century, for the aging, the Ninth Stage is a review and enhancement or, re-development of the previous stages. It is essentially bringing the earlier virtues to be achieved by accomplishing the 'crisis' of these stages, to new and more mature levels. This 'refresh' deepens the nuances of those stages as they are accomplished from earlier life phases - childhood, early adulthood, mid-life and even first stage elders. Ernest Becker's "The Denial of Death" is a philosophical study of death and dying explored through western philosophy and several psychoanalytic theories, which may contribute to thinking about ministry and those who are facing death and dying (Becker, 1987).

Strengths/Limitations

A limitation of the study is that, the control group lacked diversity in the arena of faith followers vs. non-faith followers. All of the participants expressed faith-led lives, in their history and present life; therefore, we did not observe any coping strategies of non-faith followers. Similarly, it would have been interesting to have included a few un-churched people to see if their interpretation matched the church people.

A further limitation of this ministry project showed in utilizing the Ego Integrity Scale (Ryff & Heincke, 1983) with the wording of two of the questions. The core groups of super seniors seemed uneasy. The question (i.e, # 12 "One of my greatest disappointments is that I have not been able to do more traveling"), did not reflect the experience as most of these super seniors are immigrants and

seasoned travelers. Additionally, I noticed when these super seniors were asked to respond to question # 8 – (i.e, “My life has been fulfilled and I am not afraid by the idea of death”); all of their responses were similar on the pre-test and on the post-test. They all strongly agreed. It appears that this core group of super seniors may have “accepted that they are powerless to prevent ‘death and dying’, and this [seeming] acceptance may actually liberate them to enjoy their last years; or is it rather, as Becker states, since the terror of death is so overwhelming we conspire to keep it unconscious” (Becker, 1987, p. xii). It is our basic human defense to lessen the painful awareness of our immortality.

A further limitation was found in the administering of the spiritual life review ministry. The actual process took these super seniors twice as long than the allotted time to tell their stories because they wanted to tell their entire story with details and they also enjoyed my presence. It was a conscious decision to allow the super seniors to move at their own pace. Thus it allowed more depth, wisdom and insight in their stories. However, one super senior said she wanted to take her story to her grave, and she didn't feel that her culture allowed someone to divulge intimate details regarding their lived experiences.

This ministry project was constructive for me as well as for some of the participants. This ministry process revealed the ministry of presence, where two are gathered God is present in their midst. In addition, one of the most transcending moments of this project was when one of super senior's in the group shared her gift of prayer with me. During, my initial phone call to her she asked me to pray for her over the phone. Jenny, age 89 explained that when someone enters her home and when they leave her home they must pray with her. Hence, I prayed with Jenny

each time I met with her. The relevance of daily prayer in Jenny's life was highlighted. I realized now that daily prayers was her way of practicing compassion, it was her way of sending love outward unto the world and to me. I can still experience her praying as a celebration of her shared spirituality and her Joy.

Jenny appeared to have reached the stage in her life where she has switched gear from doing to being, which contributed to a higher level of existence. She has no worries; she has reached a state of peace of mind. " Self-transcendence becomes more important than the ego; ideally, one becomes less egocentric and more open to working for the good of society" (Corbett, 2013, p. 155). 'Gerotranscendence' is a term coined by Lars Tornstam, which speaks to a meta-maturation that remains to be achieved in ones' final life cycle stage(s). Simply put gerotranscendence is a shift, from a materialistic and rational vision to a more cosmic and transcendent one. (J. M. Erikson, 1997)

She offered me a word of wisdom during our last session: "Always keep some change in your other (right) pocket, you never know when you might need it." I understood, and thanked her. I am deeply touched that her spirit converged with my spirit.

Conclusion

The sample of older adults that were interviewed in this ministry study represents the heterogeneity in our society. This set of eleven older adults attempted to reflect what is to come as our baby boomers get to the ripe old age of 70 plus. These super seniors represented the diversity in our society, culturally, ethnically, religiously, spiritually, and in term of their faith and practices. Some of

these Christians had a metamorphosis with much more traditional practices such as: Yoruba, Orisha, Vodou and Santeria. Others broadened their scope from Anglican faith to Seventh Day Adventist; from Catholic to Seventh Day Adventist, back to Catholicism; from Catholic to Kemetic to Vodouist and from Catholic to Yoruba priestess and Baptist; while another combined the beliefs of Santeria while belonging to the Presbyterian faith.

The landscapes of spirituality for these super seniors, at the beginning of the twenty first century, indicate the need for us pastoral counselors to begin now to re-imagine and to embrace the diversity of what the upcoming baby boomers spirituality and religiosity may look like; especially, as the boomers age. They will inevitably age very differently than our current super seniors, their parents. Congregations, seminaries, and pastoral counselors need to prepare and to widen their understanding and acceptance of these super seniors' unique needs for spirituality and religiosity as they blend and re-master what spirituality looks like in the future. What has been revealed in this group of super seniors: 1) Their early exposure to religious teaching develops and changes; 2) their binding to a community becomes dualistic; 3) their blending of religious practices needs a new name.

This core group of super seniors has given this ministry project:

- 1) A new vision
- 2) They have re-constructed what aging looks like and what is likely to become increasingly more common as the baby boomer generation ages, in

the twenty first century. They are more active, engaged in their community and family.

3) Psychologically: they are much smarter and physically more able.

4) Theologically they are more expressive and searching for less indoctrination, while embracing a broader mosaic of spirituality through the blending or the merging of traditional practices. Most of these super seniors have found meaning and living their best life yet with gratitude and with faith.

As the current 70 plus population ages, the current theological, psychological, and spiritual services are inadequate to meet their unforeseen growing needs. The aging baby boomers will saturate the market in the next ten to twenty years.

This ministry project was successful in engaging eleven super seniors in a process known as life review, in the context of their lived spiritual experiences. This process allowed these super seniors a time to reflect upon their successes and failures; and the positives and negatives in their life. At the end of the dyadic process it produces a desire for these super seniors to want to tie up any remaining loose ends in their lives. My overall contribution to this ministry process was the provision of care for the spirit and the soul of another. Namaste!

The End

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APPENDIX A:

Short Portable Mental Status Questionnaire

THE SHORT PORTABLE MENTAL STATUS QUESTIONNAIRE (SPMSQ)

1. What are the date, month, and year?
2. What is the day of the week?
3. What is the name of this place?
4. What is your phone number?
5. How old are you?
6. When were you born?
7. Who is the current president?
8. Who was the president before him?
9. What was your mother's maiden name?
10. Can you count backward from 20 by 3's?

SCORING:*

0-2 errors: normal mental functioning

3-4 errors: mild cognitive impairment

5-7 errors: moderate cognitive impairment

8 or more errors: severe cognitive impairment

*One more error is allowed in the scoring if a patient has had a grade school education or less.

*One less error is allowed if the patient has had education beyond the high school level.

Source: Pfeiffer, E. (1975).

APPENDIX B

Thanking you in advance for your willingness to participate in our research project how does spiritual engagement impacts the aging gracefully for the super seniors.

Directions: Below is a questionnaire that will support us in assessing your religious or and spiritual experience as a participant. Kindly fill out the questionnaire by answering the following ten questions:

Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions:

1. Age: _____

2. Gender: ___Female ___Male

3. Race/Ethnicity (select one):

_____ African American / Black

_____ Asian / Asian American / Pacific Islander

_____ Latino / Latina / Hispanic

_____ Native American / American Indian

_____ White / Caucasian / European American

_____ Biracial or Multicultural (please specify):

_____ Other (please specify)

4. Highest level of education completed (select one):

_____ Less than high school

_____ High school diploma or equivalent

_____ Some college

PROJECT PROPOSAL

APPENDIX B (Continued)

_____ Associate's degree

_____ Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S.)

_____ Some graduate school

_____ Master's degree (M.A., M.S., MBA)

_____ Doctoral degree (Ph.D., M.D., J.D.)

5. Relationship Status (select one):

_____ Single

_____ Separated

_____ Divorced

_____ Widow/Widower

_____ Married or Partnered

_____ Living with significant other, not married

_____ Have a significant other, not living together

_____ Other, please specify _____

6. Please list all the civic, church, and community organizations that you are involved in currently:

7. Living arrangements (check all that apply):

_____ Alone

_____ With spouse / partner

_____ Assisted Living

PROJECT PROPOSAL

APPENDIX B (Continued)

_____ Health Center

_____ Apartment Complex

_____ Other, please specify _____

8. What is your religious affiliation?

_____ Atheist

_____ Agnostic

_____ Jewish

_____ Muslim

_____ Hindu

_____ Buddhist

_____ Spiritual, not religious

_____ Christian (please circle): Catholic Protestant

Other Christian (please specify): _____

_____ Other (specify): _____

_____ None

9. On a scale of 1 – 5 (with 1 being not very religious and 5 being very religious) where would you rate yourself in terms of how religious you consider yourself?

Not Very religious...1 2 3 4 5... Very Religious

10. On a scale of 1 – 5 (with 1 being not very spiritual and 5 being very spiritual) where would you rate yourself in terms of how spiritual you consider yourself?

Not Very spiritual...1 2 3 4 5... Very Spiritual

APPENDIX C

D. Min Project Proposal

Ego Integrity Scale (Ryff & Heincke, 1983) Below are items, which are used by people to describe themselves. Please circle the number that best describe you.

	Disagree			Agree		
Questions	Strongly	Somewhat	Slightly	Slightly	Somewhat	Strongly
1. If I had to do it all over again, there are very few things about my life that I would change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I feel generally contented with what I have accomplished in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I wish my life were just beginning so I could avoid many of the mistakes I made earlier in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. In general I would say I have few regrets about my past life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. All in all, I am comfortable with the choices I made regarding my life's work.	1	2	3	4	5	6

PROJECT PROPOSAL

APPENDIX C (Continued)

	Disagree			Agree		
Questions	Strongly	Somewhat	Slightly	Slightly	Somewhat	Strongly
6. I still feel angry about certain of my childhood experiences.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. If I had had just a couple more lucky breaks, my life would have turned out much differently.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. My life has been fulfilling, and I am not frightened by the thought of death.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. If I could turn back the clock, there are many things I would do differently.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. It doesn't bother me to think about goals I haven't reached and probably never will.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Reading old diaries and letters usually brings more pain than pleasure	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. One of my greatest disappointments is that I have not been able to do more traveling	1	2	3	4	5	6

PROJECT PROPOSAL

APPENDIX C (Continued)

	Disagree			Agree		
Questions	Strongly	Somewhat	Slightly	Slightly	Somewhat	Strongly
13. I often wish I had been born during a different period of history.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. There are many people whose life I would prefer to my own.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. When I consider the ups and downs of my past life, they somehow fit together in a meaningful way.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. There are some disappointments in life I will never be able to accept.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Using a 25-item questionnaire, the research team aimed to measure three different concepts of care.

APPENDIX D
Hodge's (2005) Spiritual Lifemap Questions

Spiritual Assets	Exploratory Questions
Relationship with God	How did your relationship with God help you to address that problem? What did God teach you about that situation? Have you been able to apply those lessons in other situation? How has God supported you in times of crises? What are the spiritual strengths of your relationship with God? How does God view you/feel about you?
Spiritual Beliefs	What does your faith teach about trials? Is there a metaphysical reason for life's challenges? What are your favorite scriptures? Are there certain scriptures that really speak to you during times of stress? What spiritual principles have you learned from life's experiences?
Spiritual Rituals	Are there certain rituals or regular spiritual practices that help you cope with life's trials? Are some rituals particularly effective in certain situations? Are there particular rituals that strengthen your relationship with God?
Church-Based Social Support	What role has your church or faith community played during the crisis? Are there relationships in your church that are particularly supportive? Has there been a spiritual mentor in your life that has been particularly significant? How have these individuals assisted you in coping with trials?

APPENDIX E:
Haight's (1988) Life Review Form

Life Review by "stage":	Questions:
Childhood	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the very first thing you can remember in your life? Go as far back as you can. 2. What other things can you remember about when you were very young? 3. What was life for you as a child? 4. What were your parents like? 5. What were their strengths and weaknesses? 6. Did you have any brothers or sisters? If so, tell me what each was like. 7. Did someone close to you die when you were growing up? 8. Did someone important to you go away? 9. Do you ever remember having an accident? 10. Do you remember being in a very dangerous situation? 11. Was something that was important to you lost or destroyed? 12. Was religion a large part of your life? 13. Did you enjoy being a boy or girl?
Adolescence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When you think about yourself and your life as a teenager, what is the first thing you can remember about that time? 2. What other things stand out in your memory about being a teenager? 3. Who were the important people for you (parents, brothers, sisters, friends, teachers, those you were especially close to, those you admired, those you wanted to be like)? Tell me about them. 4. Did you attend church or synagogue and youth groups? 5. Did you go to school? What was its meaning to you? 6. Did you work during those years? 7. Tell me of any hardships you experienced at this time. 8. Do you remember feeling that there was not enough food or necessities of life as a child or adolescent? 9. Do you remember feeling left along, abandoned or that you did not have enough love or care as a child or adolescent?

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Life Review by "stage":	Questions:
	<p>10. What were the pleasant things about your adolescence?</p> <p>11. What was the most unpleasant thing about your adolescence?</p> <p>12. All things considered, would you say you were happy or unhappy as a teenager?</p> <p>13. Do you remember your first attraction to another person?</p> <p>14. How did you feel about sexual activities and your own sexual identity?</p>
Family and Home	<p>1. How did your parents get along?</p> <p>2. How did other people in your home get along?</p> <p>3. What was the atmosphere in your home?</p> <p>4. Were you punished as a child? For what? Who did the punishing? Who was "boss"?</p> <p>5. When you wanted something from your parents, how did you go about getting it?</p> <p>6. What kind of person did your parents like the most? The least?</p> <p>7. Who were you closest to in your family?</p> <p>8. Who in your family were you most like? In what way?</p>
Adulthood	<p>1. Now I'd like to talk to you about your life as an adult, from when you were in your 20s up to today. Tell me of the most important events that happened in your adulthood.</p> <p>2. What place did religion play in your life? 3. What was life like for you in your 20s and 30s?</p> <p>4. What kind of person were you? What did you enjoy?</p> <p>5. Tell me about your work. Did you enjoy work? Did you earn an adequate living? Did you work hard during those years?</p> <p>6. Did you form significant relationships with other people?</p> <p>7. Did you marry? [Yes] What kind of person was your spouse? [No] Why not?</p> <p>8. Do you think marriages get better or worse over time? Were you married more than once?</p> <p>9. On the whole, would you say you had a happy or an unhappy marriage?</p> <p>10. Was sexual intimacy important to you? 11. What were some of the main difficulties you encountered during your adult years?</p>

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Life Review by "stage":	Questions:
Summary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On the whole, what kind of life do you think you have had? 2. If everything were to be the same, would you like to live your life over again? 3. If you were going to live your life over again, what would you change? Leave unchanged? 4. We have been talking about your life for quite some time now. Let's discuss your overall feelings and ideas about your life. What would you say have been the three main satisfactions in your life? Why were they satisfying? 5. Everyone has had disappointments. What have been the main disappointments in your life? 6. What was the hardest thing you had to face in your life? Please describe it. 7. What was the happiest period of your life? What about it made it the happiest period? Why is your life less happy now? 8. What was the unhappiest period of your life? Why is our life more happy now? 9. What was the proudest moment in your life? 10. If you could stay the same age all your life, what age would you choose? Why? 11. How do you think you have made out in life—better or worse than what you hoped for? 12. Let's talk a little about you as you are now. What are the best things about the age you are now? 13. What are the worst things about being the age you are now? 14. What are the most important things to you in your life today? 15. What do you hope will happen to you as you grow older? 16. What do you fear will happen to you as you grow older? 17. Have you enjoyed participating in this review of your life?

APPENDIX G

Spiritual Life Interview Questions

IQ1 (Childhood): In looking back at your childhood were you able to identify any spiritually significant events? (EQ): Can you tell me about the first spiritual events you can remember in your life?

IQ2 (Family of Origin): Describe the religious/spiritual traditions you grew up with and how your family expressed spiritual beliefs? (EQ): What were you parents/grandparents like spiritually? Did you have any brothers or sisters and were they involved in the same spiritual community?

IQ3 (Adolescence): When you think about yourself and your life as a teenager what is the most significant or important spiritual memory you have from that time? (EQ): Did you have a spiritual mentor? Did you attend youth groups?

IQ4 (Adulthood): Now I would like to talk to you about your life as an adult, from when you were in your 20's up to now. Tell me about the most important/significant spiritual experiences that happened in your adulthood?

IQ5 (Family of Procreation): Tell me about your marriage and/or children and your spirituality as a family? (No exploratory question)

IQ6 (Trials and Hardships): If you had any trials or hardships in your lifetime what was your relationship with God/Higher Power like during those times? (EQ): What are your favorite scriptures or readings?

FQ1 (Meaning of Spirituality): Could you please take a moment to describe what spirituality means to you?

FQ2 (Satisfaction in Study): How have you enjoyed participating in this spiritual life review?

APPENDIX F:

Spiritual Lifemap Instructions

CREATING A SPIRITUAL LIFEMAP

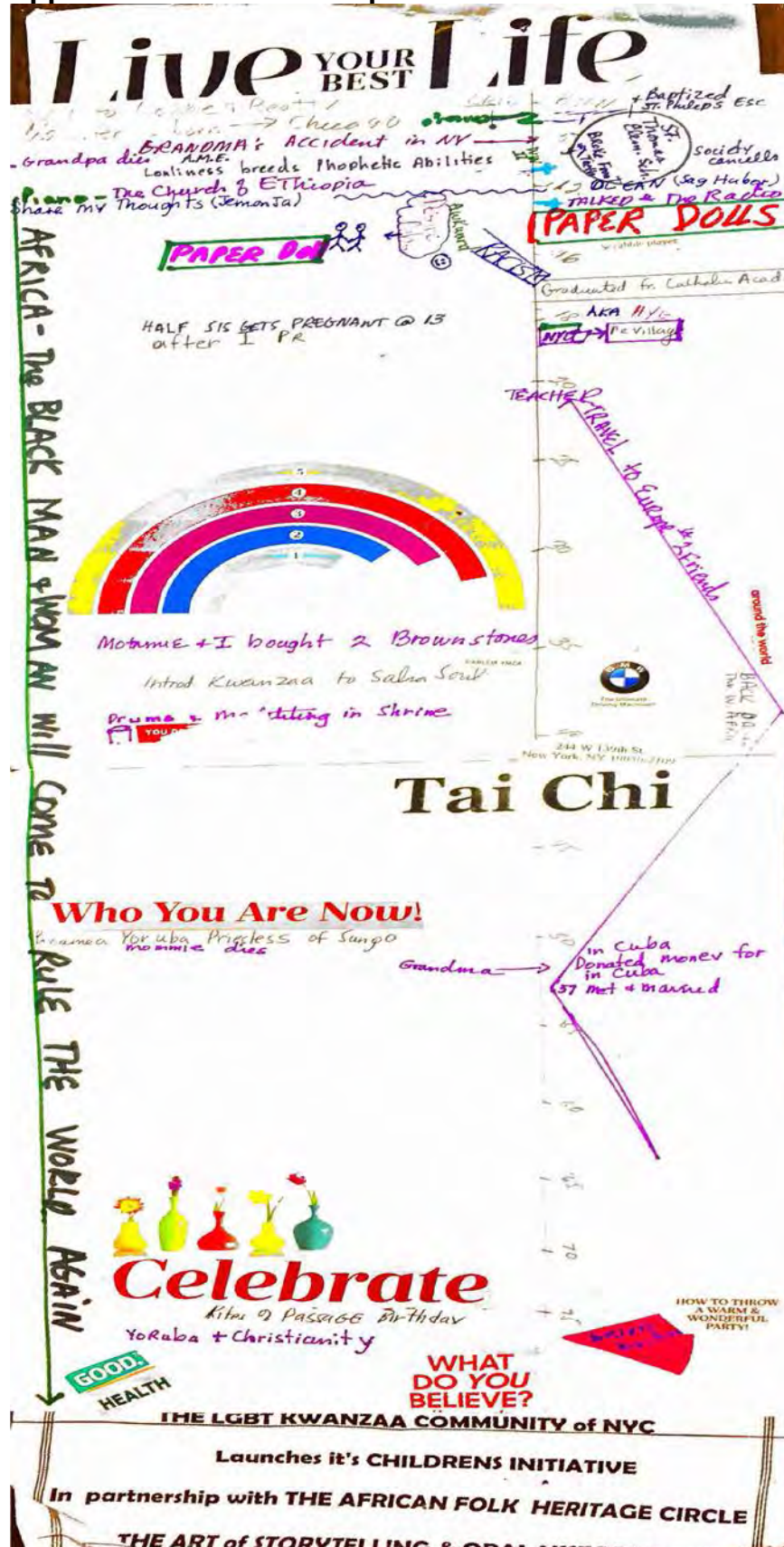
Basic idea is to sketch spiritually significant life events on paper. Similar to a roadmap a spiritual lifemap tell us where we have come from, where we are now, and where we are going.

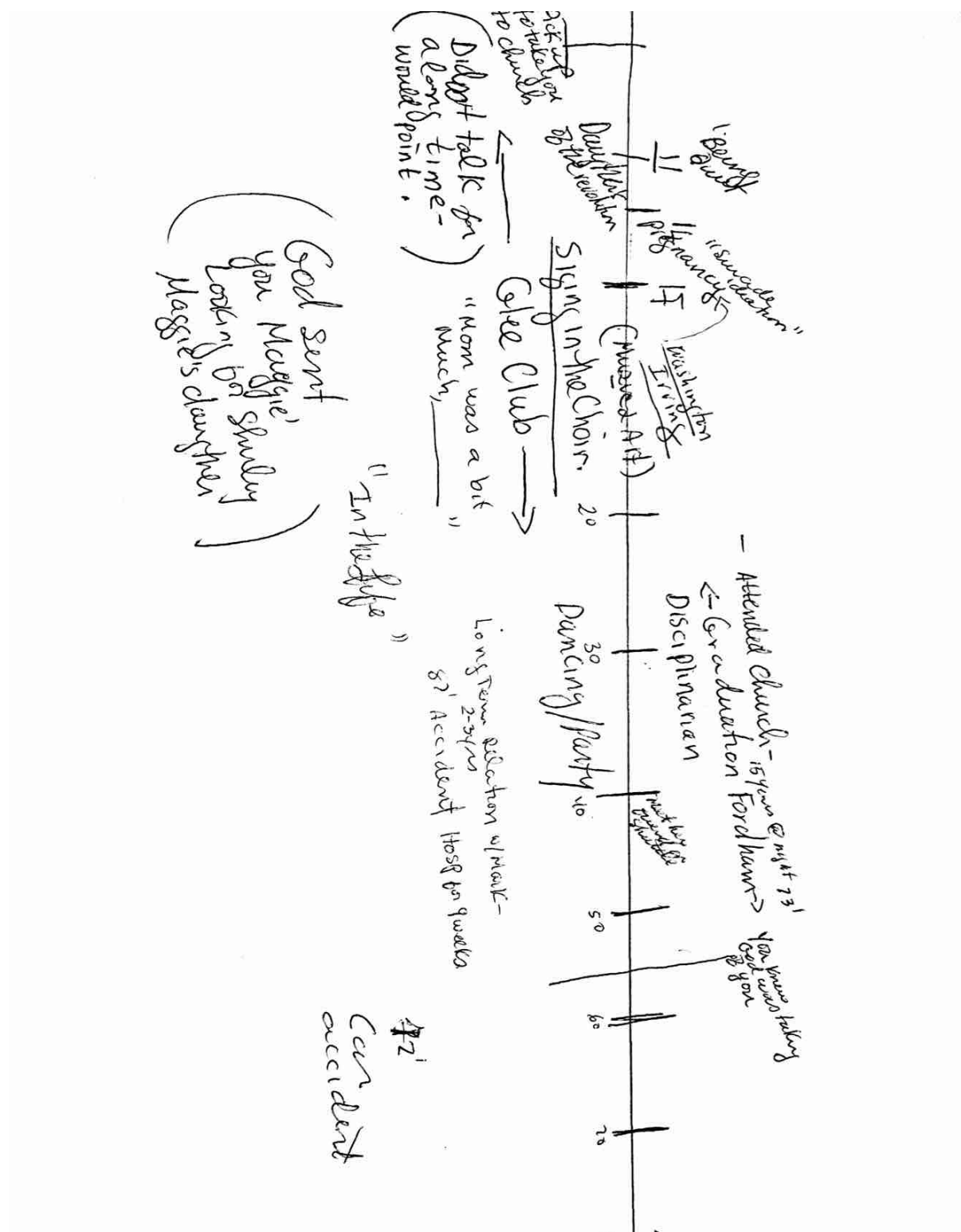
1. Use a pen, pencil, marker, crayon, or paint
2. Draw a path, a roadway, or a single line on the paper to represent your life journey
3. Break the path into years or decades
4. Fill in events along the path using symbols, drawings or sketches to represent significant life events
 - a. You can use basic elements such as pencil sketches to represent an event (e.g., a cross, lightning bolt, cloud, sun, bird, etc.)
 - b. You can use clipped material from magazines and newspapers to depict significant life events (e.g., auto accident, airplane for travel, flowers, wedding rings, baby, etc.)

Materials you can use include colored pencils, crayons, markers, paints, pictures, and newspaper or magazine clippings. You might need glue sticks, scissors, rulers, and other materials as needed.

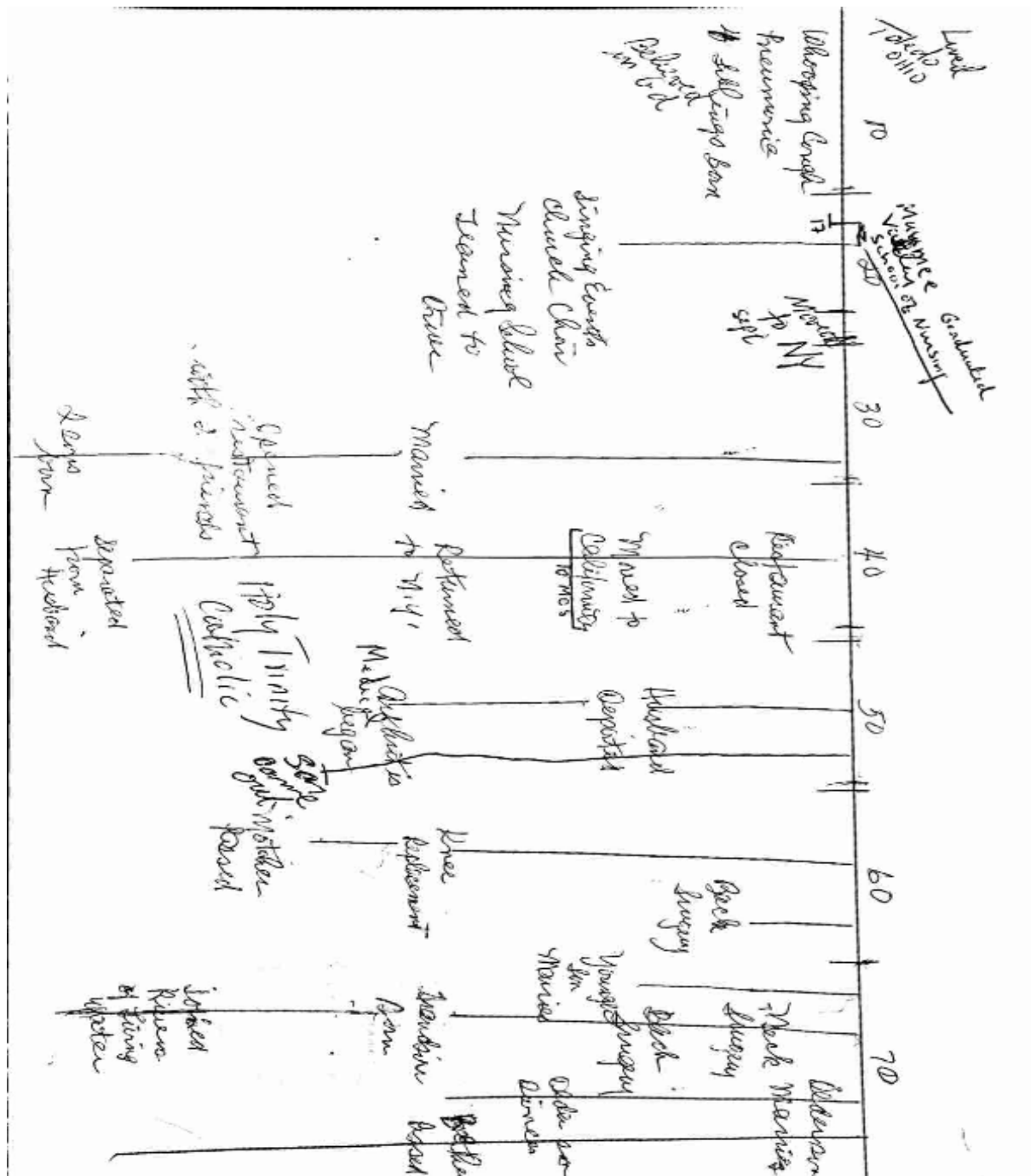
Remember: There is no correct way to draw a spiritual lifemap. A drawing using words or stick figures is just as valid as one with more elaborate portrayals.

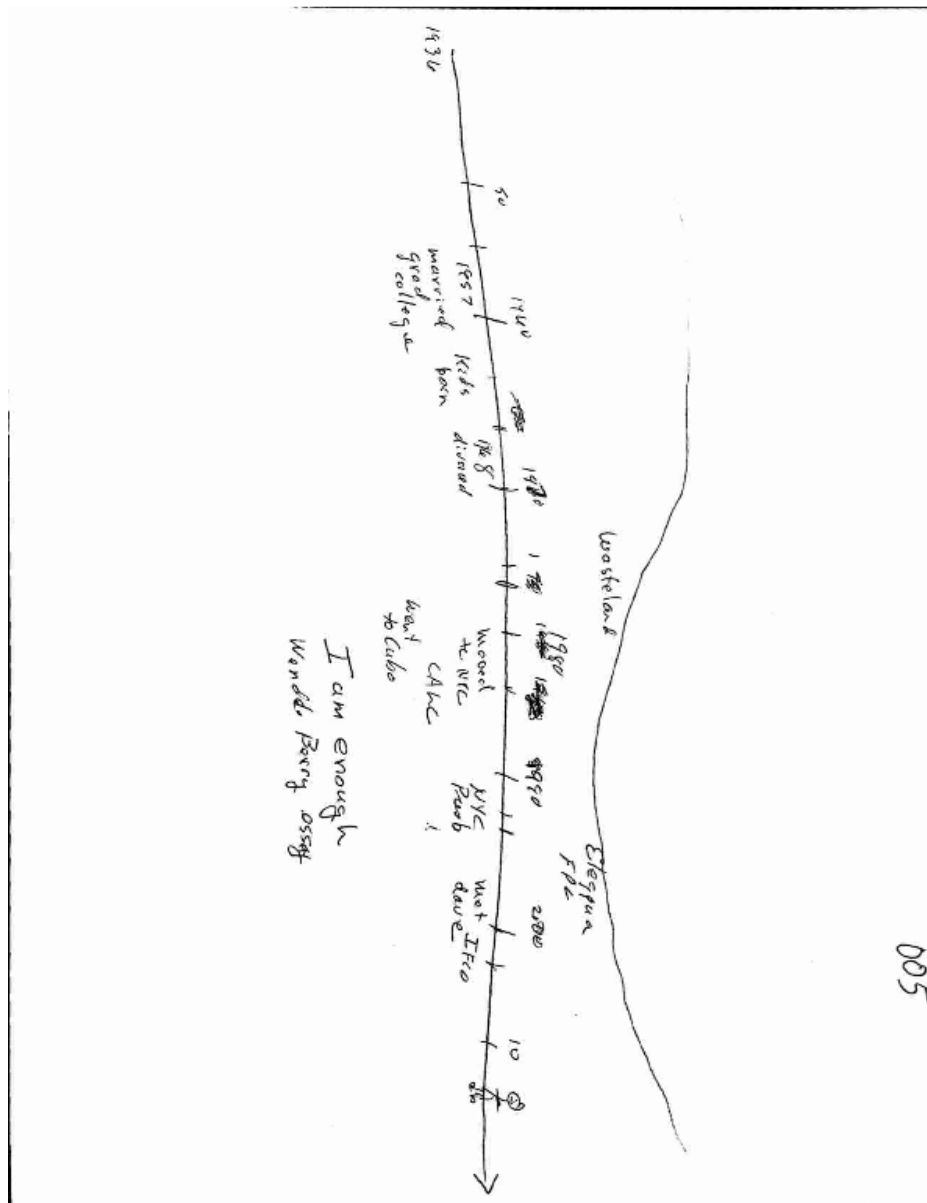
Definition of Spiritual Lifemap – Illustrated account of one's own relationship with God (Transcendent, or Higher Power) over time. A map of one's spiritual life depicted through significant life events (Hodge, 2005).





<p>TUES 10⁰⁰ AM DEC 1ST. BETSY</p>	<p>003</p>
<p>1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some teachers didn't like me • Never played basketball well • My father's family paid no attention to me
<p>20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class president • Traffic squad captain • Collegians member (choral grp.) • Voted most popular student in H.S. • Honor roll student in H.S. • First string in football 3rd yr
<p>30</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College grad; grad of bridge & architecture • C.C. agent in Army acting • Helped to develop companies • Leading man in 4 companies • Married Dottie • Had a great dog • Double champion water in ping pong college
<p>40</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renovated carriage house • Magazine writer/editor (interior design) • Corporate management jobs • Play tennis, good at Scrabble • Good writer
<p>50</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Started commercial acting career • Elected to Senator • Travelled Europe, Haiti, British Isles, most of U.S., much of Canada • Hunted gators in Louisiana
<p>60</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made many commercials • Appeared on Letterman Show many times, also Comedy Central • Appeared in industrial film and filmed. Made VOs. for Models • Had church and house repainted and inside painted as Big Chair for 9 yrs.
<p>70</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Botanic garden • Travelled to Spain • Herded cattle in Montana • Rafted Colorado River for week • Wrote musical "Loving Henry" • "Once Upon a Sunset" and "Down Road"
<p>80</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travelled to Cuba and all over Canada • OTV in Canadian woods • Still made ads. (Negroni, Liguori plums...) • Lived on lake for 15 yrs. • Had a quint veg. pane operation at 75 • Dottie & I secured the church at times for 25 yrs





Spiritual Path

Although I grew up in a Christian Home, I did not feel the spiritual connections until much later in life. It was through Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Spiritual and Holistic Music, and other Secular Programs, such as Metaphysical Teachings that shaped me into being the person I am today.

Yoga is an ancient, yet still unsurprisingly science of living. It is a means of harmonizing the body, mind and spirit through relaxation techniques. Meditation brings real peace and happiness.

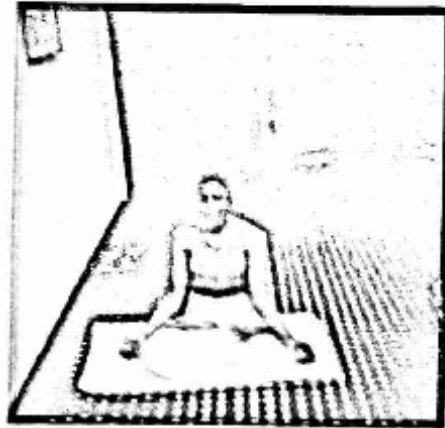
Although I had to walk through the fire to get to where I am, I do not regret that. I attended a Baptist Church during my childhood years because it was the thing to do in the home where I grew up. In my twenties, I also attended a Baptist church. At that time I felt that the service was good, but looking back, I feel that it was a cold church with no real spiritual values. I did not know anyone in the church except my immediate family. I knew the pastor but he did not know me.

I stayed away from the church for a while. After going through other self-help programs and and having to fight cancer I became a better person and grew closer to God than I had ever been in my entire life.

I became a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn Heights twenty-five years ago where I found a church home. I consider it my second family and look forward to being there every Sunday. I have been a member of the Deacon Board and served on many other committees. On the Sunshine committee I visited the sick in hospitals, nursing homes as well as their home. I prepared meals as well as whatever their needs were. They all loved me and I loved them. I continue to pay visits to the sick whenever I can because it is something I enjoy doing. I want to remain strong against adversity, and let no one steal my joy.

My life today is spiritually as good as it gets. I have no desire to look back and putting old wine into new wine skins as I want to continue to grow and if I can help someone, I want to be there for them.

I thank God every day for being so good to me, mentally, physically, and spiritually.



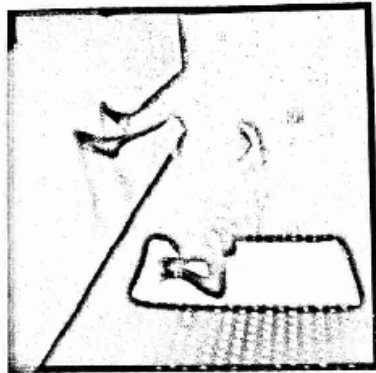
EASY POSE
(Lotus position)

This is one of the four meditative poses. One should be able to sit in either one of the four meditative positions from one to two hours without moving. And erect position of the spine will keep it in its natural curve. Also, training the body to set for long periods without movement reduces its metabolic processes to a minimum. When the body is kept in a steady position for a long time, the mind becomes free from physiologic disturbances caused by physical activity of the body. Also, when the spine is in a straight position there is a steady flow of nerve energy through the body.



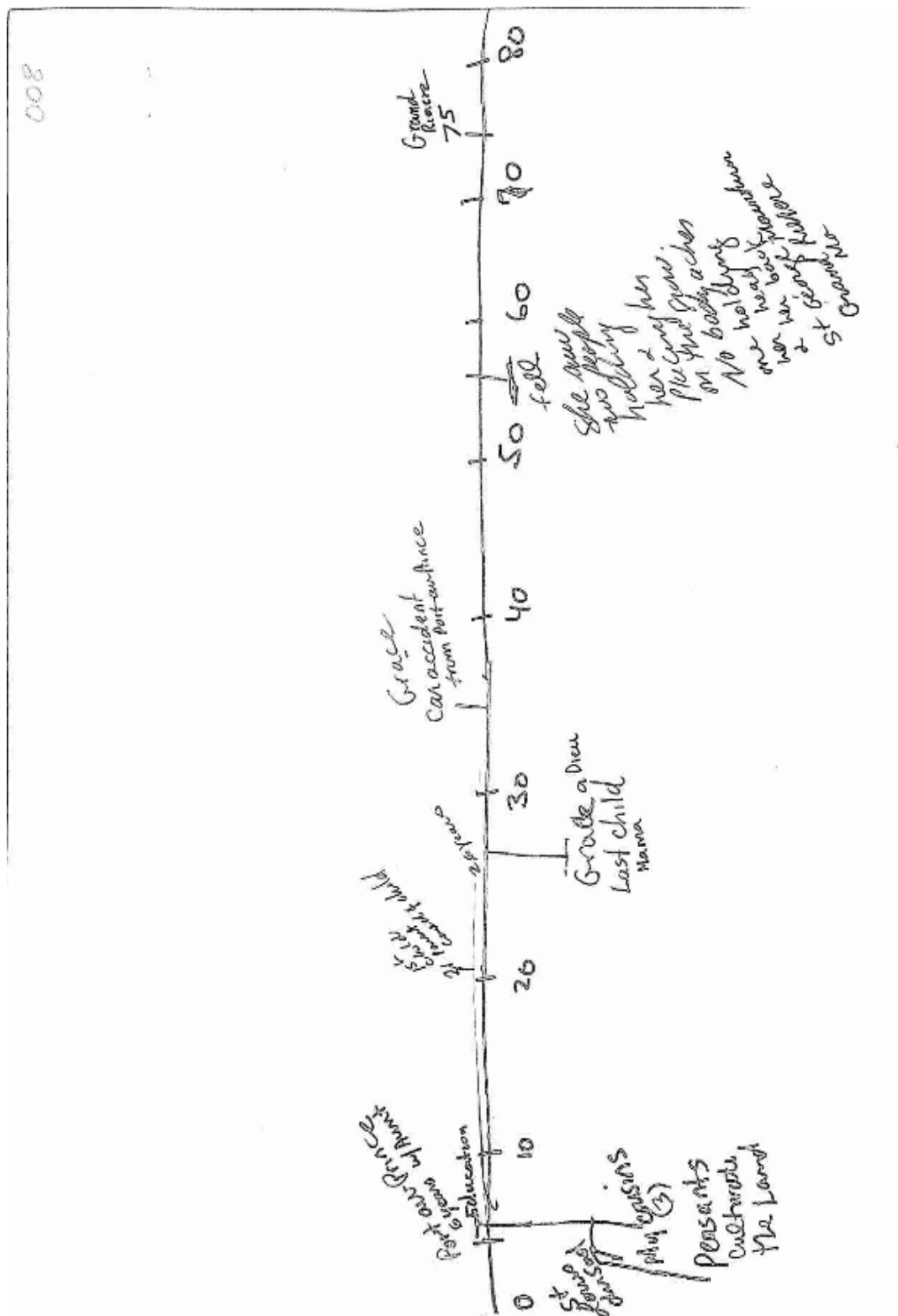
SPINAL TWIST

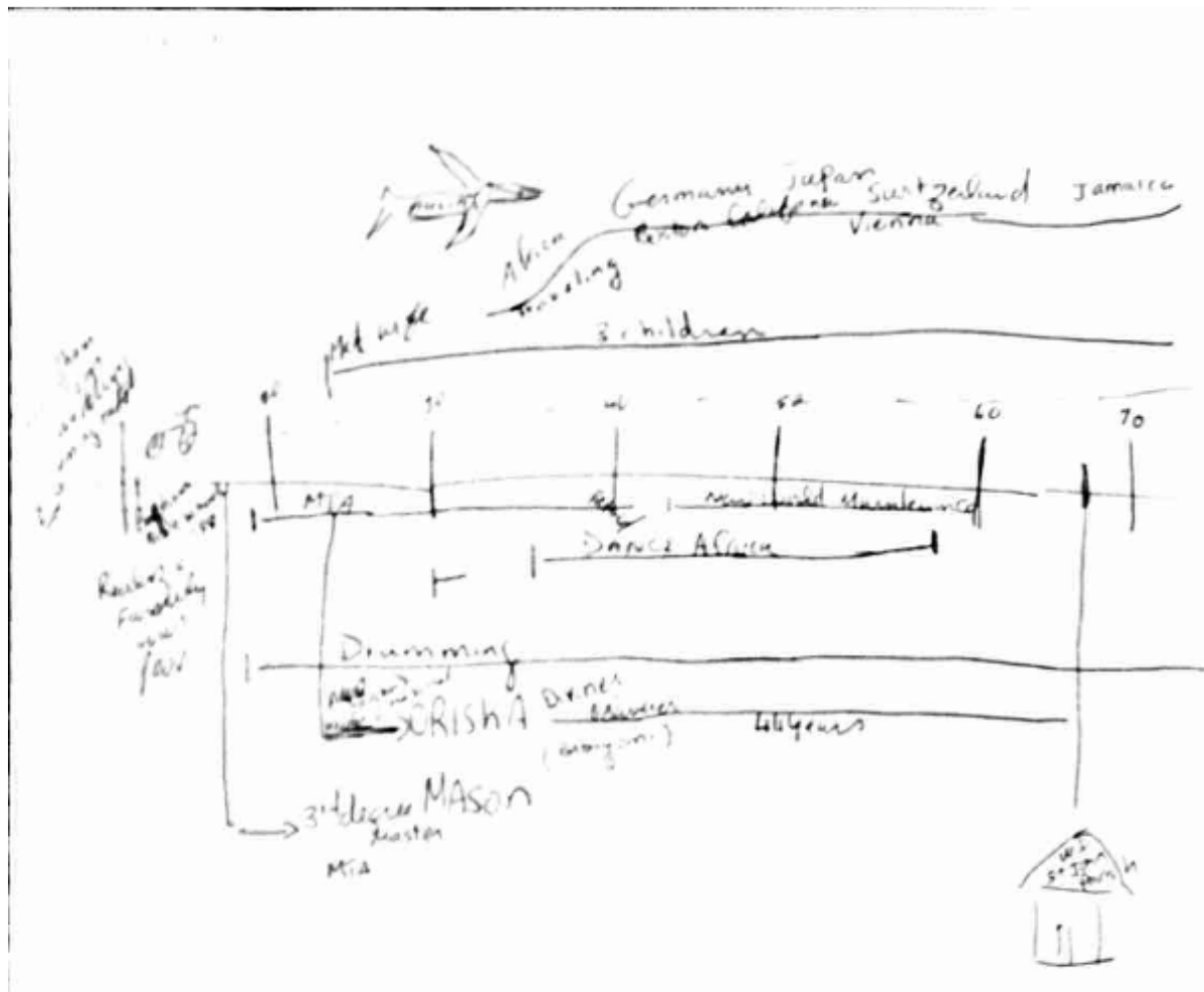
This pose keeps the spine elastic and massages the abdominal organs. Lumbago and all sorts of muscular rheumatism of the back muscles are helped. The spinal nerve roots and the sympathetic system are toned. This is a very good ^(Exercise) ~~article~~ for constipation and dyspepsia. Every vertebra is rotated on both sides the attached ligaments receives a rich supply of blood. All the spinal nerves are toned.

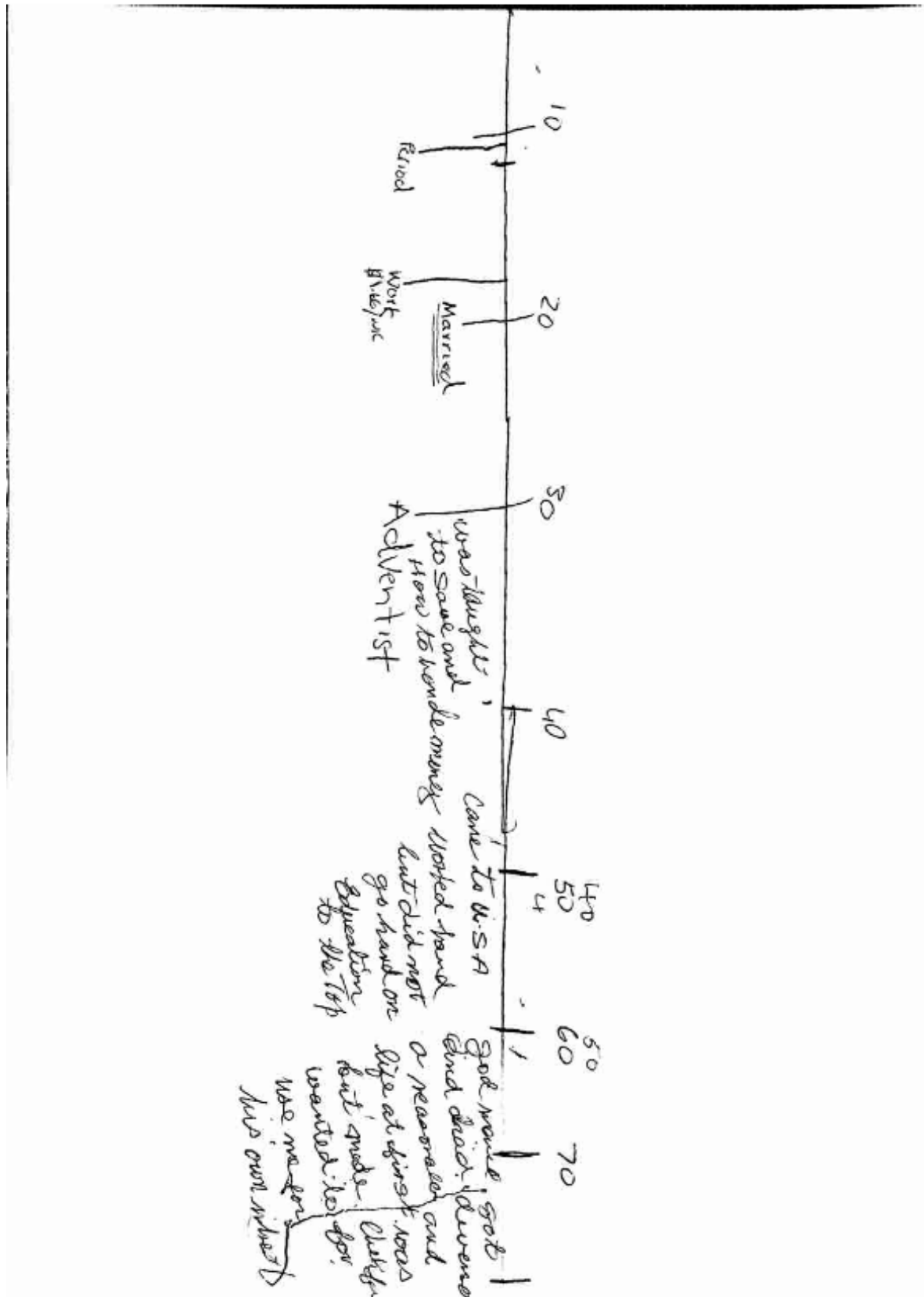


SCORPION POSE

This exercise gives maximum bending to the spine and imparts balance and harmony to the entire system. It should be practiced only after acquiring maximum proficiency in the head stand and wheel pose.







Appendix Q

Alvin Fine

Poem

Life is a Journey

Alvin Fine

Birth is a beginning and death a destination; But life is a journey. A going, a growing from stage to stage: From childhood to maturity and youth to old age.

From innocence to awareness and ignorance to knowing; From foolishness to discretion and then perhaps, to wisdom. From weakness to strength or strength to weakness and often back again. From health to sickness and back we pray, to health again.

From offense to forgiveness, from loneliness to love, From joy to gratitude, from pain to compassion. From grief to understanding from fear to faith; From defeat to defeat to defeat, until, looking backward or ahead:

We see that victory lies not at some high place along the way, But in having made the journey, stage by stage, a sacred pilgrimage. Birth is a beginning and death a destination; But life is a journey, a sacred pilgrimage, Made stage by stage...To life everlasting.