Spring 3-1-2021

Avoiding Compassion Fatigue in Hospice Chaplains through Cultivating Sabbath as an Element of Self-Care

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AVOIDING COMPASSION FATIGUE IN HOSPICE CHAPLAINS THROUGH CULTIVATING SABBATH AS AN ELEMENT OF SELF-CARE

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of

Harding School of Theology

Memphis, Tennessee

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

By

A. Milton Stanley

March 2021

Chairman: _____

Reader: _____

Reader: _____

Dean: _____

Date Approved: _____

Dedication

To the four men whose names appear with mine on the title page—Dave Bland, Carlus Gupton, Mark Powell, and Allen Black—and for my erstwhile classmate Matt Carter: I could not have completed this doctoral program if not for your godly support. You have each manifested the Spirit's fruit of peace, patience, kindness, and gentleness without sacrificing the strength required to be fully a man. Through your faithful guidance and examples God has transformed me into not only a better preacher and chaplain, but a more godly man. For that I am eternally grateful.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Context

Statement of the Problem

Much has been written about avoiding compassion fatigue among hospice and health-care professionals. For the most part, however, the professional literature is focused around self-care for nurses. The research behind this dissertation, therefore, arose from an effort to identify self-care strategies specifically for hospice chaplains.

This project first surveyed hospice chaplains to determine how many are already incorporating the principle of sabbath as an intentional element of self-care and how much more, if any, each participant would like to include in his or her practice. For the purposes of this project, sabbath refers not necessarily to one day a week but rather to regular, intentional periods of rest of whatever length. After hospice chaplains completed the initial survey they were offered a pilot program to incorporate intentional sabbath practices into their work. Finally, after chaplains had done these intentional sabbath practices for six weeks, they were surveyed again to determine if and how the incorporation of sabbath rest contributes to improved self-care. As a result of chaplains' reports of their experiences, I developed a report for hospice management with recommendations for expanding this pilot program for chaplains throughout the hospice parent company.

Ministry Context

From December 2009 through May 2020 I worked as the primary teaching and preaching minister for the Fredonia Church of Christ near Manchester, Tennessee. From July 2010 through May 2020 I also served as an elder in the congregation. The Fredonia congregation has a weekly attendance of around fifty members and is unable to pay a full-time minister. In July 2020 I began preaching part-time at the Iconium Church of Christ near Woodbury, Tennessee, and began full-time, bivocational preaching for the congregation in January 2021.

In June 2014 I began working as a hospice chaplain for Avalon Hospice in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. From 2014 to 2017 I also served as a bereavement counselor for families who have lost loved ones on Avalon's service and in the community at large. As a hospice chaplain I visit hospice patients and their families in their homes and provide spiritual support. As a bereavement coordinator I remained in contact for up to thirteen months with survivors of hospice patients who had died. Both of these roles require extensive practice in compassionate, reflective listening. Until November 2015 my work as a hospice chaplain and bereavement coordinator was essentially a three-day per week, part-time job. Shortly after transitioning to full-time with Avalon I discovered that without the built-in "down days" during the week, dealing with the emotional and spiritual weight of dying patients and grieving clients was a challenge that pushed me toward compassion fatigue. This project arose from an effort to find health-giving, spirit-renewing practices both for myself and other chaplains to avoid compassion fatigue.

Avalon Hospice has twenty-seven offices in Tennessee, each with one or two chaplains on staff. Avalon is one of several hospices in nine states formerly under the umbrella of Curo Health Services. In 2018 Avalon and other Curo hospices were bought by Humana and merged with Kindred At Home to become the largest hospice provider in the United States.

Review of Related Literature

The concept of compassion fatigue was introduced to scholarly literature in a seminal article by Carla Joinson in 1992[1] and expanded upon in a book-length work by Charles Figley in 1995.[2] By

1. Carla Joinson, "Coping with Compassion Fatigue," *Nursing* 22, no.4 (1992): 116-22.

2. Charles Figley, "Compassion Fatigue as Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder: An Overview," in *Compassion Fatigue: Coping With Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 1995), 1-17.

the first decade of the current century, the concepts of compassion fatigue had made their way into the language and awareness of many healthcare practitioners.[3] A concise introductory overview of compassion fatigue can be found in a 2011 article by Maryann Abendroth.[4]

Compassion fatigue, also known as "secondary traumatic stress disorder" originally referred to a stress reaction by the caregiver to trauma experienced not by oneself, but by those for whom one cares.[5] It is symptomatically similar to post-traumatic stress disorder and includes symptoms such as "difficulty falling or staying asleep, irritability or outbursts of anger, and/or exaggerated startle responses."[6] In a broader sense, compassion fatigue refers to the strain caregivers sometimes experience from sustained exposure to the suffering of those for whom they care.[7] Compassion fatigue is distinguished from burnout in that, although it tends to build up slowly,[8] its symptoms tend to appear more suddenly.[9] Compassion fatigue is also different from burnout in that burnout is typically associated with stress reactions to demands ancillary to caregiving while compassion fatigue is a reaction to the caregiving itself.[10] As such those

3. Patricia Smith, "Recognizing and Managing Compassion Fatigue: A Path to Wellness," *Families of Loved Ones*, no. 12 (Summer 2009): 9.

4. Maryann Abendroth, "Overview and Summary: Compassion Fatigue: Caregivers at Risk," *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing* 16, no.1 (January 31, 2011), accessed January 21, 2015, http://www.nursingworld.org.

5. Deborah H. Boyle, "Countering Compassion Fatigue: A Requisite Nursing Agenda," *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing* 16, no.1 (January 31, 2011), accessed January 21, 2015, http://www.nursingworld.org.

6. Abendroth.

7. This is increasingly the more common sense of compassion fatigue. See, for example, Sally Beth Pelon, "Compassion Fatigue in Hospice Social Work: Potential Moderating Factors," (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2015).

8. Françoise Mathieu, "Running on Empty: Compassion Fatigue in Health Professionals," *Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project* (2007), accessed May 5, 2016, http://www.compassionfatigue.org.

9. Peter Huggard, "Compassion Fatigue: How Much Can I Give?" *Medical Education* 37 (2003): 163. See also Abendroth.

10. Huggard, 163. See also Boyle.

suffering from compassion fatigue "ultimately experience a reduced capacity for, or interest in being empathetic toward the suffering of others."[11]

The consequences of compassion fatigue go far beyond the ability of an individual healthcare provider to give compassionate care. If unaddressed, compassion fatigue can result in a wide range of personal pathologies including interpersonal conflict and isolation, poor self-care, and mental and emotional exhaustion.[12] If compassion fatigue "hits critical mass" at a given workplace, detrimental effects for the organization include absenteeism, lack of team cohesion, disregard of corporate rules, aggressive behaviors, and a culture of hopelessness.[13]

Adding to the detrimental effects of compassion fatigue is that, once overcome, compassion fatigue may later return unless the healthcare worker practices intentional self-care to prevent flare-ups.[14] Many writers have offered suggestions for managing compassion fatigue. Personal approaches involve practicing self-care and include balancing work and life, healthy eating, physical exercise, meditation, personal counseling, building healthy relationships, and cultivating spiritual health.[15] Professional approaches include defining and keeping personal and professional boundaries, practicing professional supervision, and being involved with

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11. Abendroth.

12. Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project (CFAP), "Recognizing Compassion Fatigue," *Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project* (2013), accessed May 5, 2016, http://www.compasssionfatigue.org.

13. Ibid.

14. Smith, 9.

15. For recommendations on coping strategies, see Angelea Panos, "Understanding and Preventing Compassion Fatigue—A Handout for Professionals," *Gift from Within* (2007), accessed October 24, 2018, http://wwww.giftfromwithin.org; Françoise Mathieu, "Transforming Compassion Fatigue into Compassion Satisfaction: Top 12 Self-Care Tips for Helpers," *Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project* (2007), accessed May 5, 2016, https://www.tcty-nd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Compassion-Fatigue-to-Compassion.pdf; and Sally Hill Jones, "A Delicate Balance: Self-Care for the Hospice Professional,' *Aging Well* 1, no.2 (Spring 2008): 38. See also Boyle; Huggard, 163-64; and Smith, 9.

professional networks.[16] Organizational approaches include fostering a "culture of support and respect within the workplace that relates to employees as well as patients."[17] Deborah Boyle lists a number of particular practices that might foster this culture of support, including on-site counseling, staff support groups, de-briefing sessions, and bereavement and spiritual support.[18]

Although compassion fatigue has been identified as an occupational hazard particularly for those dealing with trauma, the nature of hospice care provides its own challenges, as hospice staff may develop personal bonds with patients who stay on service for months or even years. As Sally Hill Jones has noted, "Given the scope and intensity of hospice work, thoughtful, intentional focus on self-care is necessary for hospice professionals to remain effective."[19] At the same time, the process of "being fully present" with patients—that is, being non-anxiously engaged with patients without carrying one's personal agenda into the interaction—can foster wellbeing not only with patients, but with hospice workers themselves.[20] In addition to strategies common to countering compassion fatigue in other areas of healthcare, hospice workers may especially benefit from spending time "with children and healthy older adults."[21] Another means for hospice workers to find support is through regular meetings of the hospice interdisciplinary team, which all hospices convene at least every fourteen days for each patient. These meetings

16. *Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project,* "The Ten Laws Governing Authentic, Sustainable Self Care," *Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project* (2013), accessed May 5, 2016, http://www.compasssionfatigue.org. See also Huggard, 164; and Mathieu, "Transforming".

17. Huggard, 164.

18. Boyle.

19. Jones.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

are both opportunities for team members to coordinate patient care and for the team to minister to one another.[22]

Although much of the professional literature on compassion fatigue addresses challenges faced by nurses, calls for self-care among chaplains and other clergy can also be found. Christian chaplains, for example, have noted that remembering Christ's sufferings has helped them deal with suffering in others.[23]

The idea of intentional sabbath makes at least a few appearances in writings about self-care for ministers in general and chaplains in particular. Jeffery Gates, for example, roots self-care in both God's love and the biblical concept of self-love.[24] He concludes that failing to care for oneself is ethically equivalent to harming others.[25] T. Scott Bledsoe and Kimberly A. Setterlund did case studies of sixteen ministers working long-term in current ministry settings. Their summary of self-care methods used effectively by these congregational ministers track closely with techniques typically suggested for health-care workers in avoiding compassion fatigue.[26]

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22. Janice Lynch Schuster, "With Nurses at Risk of Compassion Fatigue, Hospitals Try to Ease Their Stress," *The Washington Post,* June 10, 2013, accessed January 14, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/with-nurses-at-risk-of-compassion-fatigue-hospitals-try-to-ease-their-stress/2013/06/07/b92b9e86-97e3-11e2-97cd-3d8c1afe4f0f_story.html.

23. See, for example, Lucky Severson, "Chaplain Burnout," *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly*, no. 11 (November 2011), accessed September 29, 2017, https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2011/11/11/november-11-2011-chaplain-burnout/9903/. Although this article deals specifically with military chaplains, several ideas apply as well to hospice chaplains.

24. Jeffrey Gates, "Self-Care: A Christian Perspective," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 39, no.1 (January 2015): 4-17.

25. Gates, 15.

26. Scott T. Bledsoe and Kimberly A. Setterlund, "Thriving in Ministry: Exploring the Support Systems and Self-Care Practices of Experienced Pastors, *The Journal of Family and Community Ministries* 28 (2015): 48-66.

Several writers have focused, at least in passing, on sabbath-oriented methods of self-care for ministers. Donald Odom, for example, offers Christian ministers biblical and theological insights on self-care, including the biblical call for sleep and rest. Odom's recommendations for the intentional cultivation of rest in ministry are relevant for all ministers, especially those serving as hospice chaplains.[27] Other sabbath-related recommendations for self-care include taking intentional times-out for at least one "nourishing activity" each workday, even if for only ten or twenty minutes.[28]

Alternatives to conventional self-care have also been recommended specifically for Christians. Marshall Segal, for example, calls for a uniquely Christian form of care focused more on God than self.[29]

In recent years several doctor of ministry projects have focused on helping Christians and particularly ministers to develop beneficial practices of intentional sabbath. At least one project has been directed toward helping hospice chaplains avoid compassion fatigue.

For his doctor of ministry project Wayne Bruner surveyed experienced hospice chaplains to develop a guide for helping hospice chaplains avoid compassion fatigue. He identified major stressors for hospice chaplains and methods for nurturing good relationships and life balance. Bruner, however, addressed self-care for hospice chaplains but did not look specifically at sabbath beyond the self-care category of "sufficient sleep."[30]

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27. Donald L. Odom, "The Importance of Self Care for Ministry Leaders," *The Living Pulpit* (July-September 2012): 34-36.

28. Mathieu, "Transforming."

29. Marshall Segal, "The Insanity of Self-Care," *Desiring God* (March 2016), accessed October 11, 2020, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-insanity-of-self-care.

30. Wayne R. Bruner, "How to Live While Ministering to the Dying: A Guide for Hospice Chaplains" (DMin diss., Liberty University School of Divinity, 2018), 96.

Several doctor of ministry projects have examined the effects of sabbath rest on clergy self-care. Randy Kanipe studied sabbath practice as it relates to "clergy serving in stressful appointments." His project was a ten-week trial on how sabbath affected the effectiveness of clergy members' dealing with stress. Kanipe found that for "clergy who did engage in at least some sabbath rest on a regular weekly basis every single one of the participants were able to begin to reduce the symptoms of complex trauma by as much as 30%."[31] Working with an *a cappella* Church of Christ congregation, Sheila Vamplin found that a six-month sabbath project encouraging full-time congregational ministers to practice contemplative prayer helped those ministers better deal with stress and deepen their relationship to God.[32] Through the use of a focused retreat, James Hailstock attempted to help ministers develop a "sabbath lifestyle" through "prayer, silence, feasting and fellowshipping."[33] Craig Harvey Carr used a twelve-week guided sabbath-rest curriculum in what he describes as a generally successful attempt to help Seventh-Day Adventist ministers better resist extraneous stressors through developing a better sense of self.[34] Scott D. Comerinsky examined the practice of intentional sabbath in his own life.

31. Randolph Wayne Kanipe, "Clergy Stress, Complex Trauma, and Sabbath Practice: A Study on Sabbath Practice as Healing Process for Clergy Serving in Stressful Appointments" (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2016), unnumbered abstract page.

32. Sheila Carol Vamplin, "Measuring the Music of Our Lives: Contemplative Prayer as Sabbath Rest for Ministry in the 'Culture of Busy'" (DMin diss., Lipscomb University, 2017), 156-57.

33. James L. Hailstock, "Practicing Sabbath to Reduce Stress Among Ministers in the Tyger River Baptist Association, Spartanburg, South Carolina" (DMin diss., Gardner-Webb University, 2017), v.

34. Craig Harvey Carr, "The Effects of as Guided Sabbath-Rest on Increasing Emotional Maturity and Decreasing Anxiety Caused by Pastors Externalizing Extraneous Demands" (DMin project thesis, Denver Seminary, 2014).

His project focused specifically on how stopping watching television for two months affected his relationships.[35]

Similar doctor of ministry projects have been directed toward helping entire congregations. Karen Ballard attempted to introduce sabbath-keeping to a Presbyterian congregation and focused not only on rest but on a number of issues including mindfulness and refreshment. A relevant conclusion of Ballard's project is that sabbath is best kept in community.[36] David Markwalder used case studies to examine the effects of a weekly sabbath rest over sixty days by members of another Presbyterian congregation. He found that "having a weekly sabbath rest improved the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental health of participants."[37] Gregory Zurakowski makes the case for Sunday as the Christian sabbath and invited members of two Presbyterian congregations to participate in intentional sabbath-keeping practices on the first day of the week. Zurakowski used letters and surveys both to gather information and encourage participants in the effort of rest, and he reports that the results were overwhelmingly positive.[38] Mary Elizabeth Yarborough introduced sabbath rhythms to members of a Presbyterian congregation through ten weekly ninety-minute sessions in which participants developed, implemented, and shared results of plans for practicing "bits of sabbath" time of

35. Scott D. Comerinsky, "How Motives and Priorities Drive Our Use of Time and Impact the Relationships We Have With God, Our Self, And Our Family Members" (DMin diss, Ashland Theological Seminary, 2010).

36. Karen R. Ballard, "The Challenge of Keeping Sabbath as Observed in the First Presbyterian Church of Rome, PA (DMin thesis, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2011).

37. David Edwin Markwalder, "Sabbath Rest: An Essential Spiritual Practice in a Busy Culture" (DMin project report, Columbia Theological Seminary, 2012), v.

38. Gregory Calvin Zurakowski, "Intentional Sabbath-Keeping in the Parish: Shutting Down to Open Up" (DMin paper, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 2016).

various lengths.[39] In work with members of a Baptist congregation Jeremiah Childers found good results in practicing intentional sabbath through sharing a sabbath meal and engaging in group discussions.[40] In her efforts to help a congregation incorporate intentional sabbath, Barbara Cordelia Hart Yorks discovered that many participating in a sabbath program found sabbath practices to be helpful but were hindered by the need to be productive and be "doing something."[41]

Conrade Yap interviewed participants from churches in Canada and Singapore to develop a model for intentional sabbath keeping.[42] Yap's dissertation offers a particularly strong theological evaluation of the need for sabbath in a world that actively drives out rest and contemplation.

In summary, this review of existing literature brings several important issues to light in terms of the relevance of this self-care project. First, the relative paucity of research on the effects of sabbath self-care for hospice chaplains suggests that the topic is one in need of exploration. Research by Yap and others show how this need is not limited to hospice care but is symptomatic of trends in the broader culture. This need for intentional sabbath is further highlighted by the distinction between burnout and compassion fatigue. Hospice chaplains are susceptible to the latter even if work conditions are optimal; if the very act of caring for the

39. Mary Elizabeth Yarborough, "Recovering Sabbath Rhythm" (DMin project report, Columbia Theological Seminary, 2013), 21-28.

40. Jeremiah Vance Childers, "A Reintroduction of Sabbath as a Biblical Practice for the Spiritual Formation of Inman First Baptist Church Inman, South Carolina" (DMin diss., Gardner-Webb University, 2018), 103-04.

41. Barbara Cordelia Hart Yorks, "The Understanding and Practice of Sabbath" (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2011), 171-72.

42. Conrade Yap, "The Sabbath as a Stairway to Trust: Glimpsing the Heavenly Through Earthly Rest" (DMin diss., Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2012).

dying carries the risk of developing compassion fatigue, chaplains will do well to take steps to avoid its onset. Secondly, the negative effects of caregivers' compassion fatigue on patient care should assure chaplains that there is nothing intrinsically selfish about self-care. Finally, research by Ballard and others point up the importance of practicing Sabbath in community.

Theoretical Framework

The heart of this project is development of a program to help hospice chaplains counter compassion fatigue through intentionally incorporating biblical sabbath into their practice. Theologically this project is based on the idea, as discussed above, that sabbath in the general sense of rest and refreshment is fractally implicit in Scripture as something that all humans require both for spiritual health and to participate fully in the *imago dei*. This study further assumes, as Brueggemann has observed, that sabbath is an effective counter to the type of production-oriented "anxiety system" in which we live.[43]

From the standpoint of healthcare research, this project draws upon and expands the concept of compassion fatigue as first identified by Joinson and developed more fully by Figley. Joinson first identified and named compassion fatigue as a form of burnout among emergency room nurses. Figley acknowledged Joinson's initial work on compassion fatigue but distinguished it from burnout in that the former is associated with "a sense of helplessness and confusion" and is more rapid than burnout in both its onset and the sufferer's subsequent recovery.[44] While Figley focused on compassion fatigue specifically as a form of indirect or secondary post-traumatic stress disorder, subsequent research has expanded the term to apply to a wider range of clinical care, including oncology and intensive-care nursing and caring for HIV

43. Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 35.

44. Figley, 12.

patients and the elderly.[45] This project drew on compassion fatigue research for assisting hospice chaplains in avoiding pathologies that arise from the combination of "empathy and exposure"[46] in their service to the dying and their families.

Figley notes that "absorbing. . . suffering" is a part of "professional work centered on the relief of the emotional suffering of clients"[47] and that compassion fatigue is in a sense "'the cost of caring' for others in emotional pain."[48] Because, as Huggard and Abendroth have noted, compassion fatigue arises from caregiving itself and not from ancillary demands, sabbath is particularly helpful in resisting and counteracting compassion fatigue's onset and effects.

Developing methods in this project for resisting compassion fatigue through intentional practice of sabbath began by reviewing strategies identified in existing literature. While health-care literature tends to focus on self-care strategies such as exercise, good nutrition, healthy boundaries, and supportive relationships, relatively little is available on sabbath per se. Identified techniques for integrating sabbath at work include short periods of prayer and meditation, daily ten-minute breaks to listen to music, and twenty-minute lunchtime naps.[49] At-home strategies include periods of meditation, intentional quiet times, and long baths.[50] Christian literature on practicing sabbath tends to focus on a longer time-frame with one day or part of a day each week

45. For brief overviews of articles expanding the scope of compassion fatigue as related to forms of suffering other than trauma, see Abendroth and Boyle. See also Kathleen Gamblin, "Compassion Fatigue: When Caring Takes Its Toll, *Oncology Nursing News*, September 21, 2011, accessed April 20, 2019, https://www.oncnursingnews.com/publications/oncology-nurse/2011/september-2011/compassion-fatigue-when-caring-takes-its-toll.

46. Figley, 15.

47. Idem, 2.

48. Idem, 9.

49. Jones, 38; Mathieu, "Transforming Compassion Fatigue."

50. Ibid.; Mathieu, "Running on Empty."

set aside for rest, refreshment, and a break from work and commerce.[51] Responses from initial questionnaires and in-person interviews were also used in developing a framework for helping chaplains avoid compassion fatigue through the practice of sabbath.

Methodology

In reviewing relevant literature, several writers suggest ways for putting sabbath rest into practice. For Christians working in time-demanding careers, Tim Keller recommends asking other Christians in one's field how they have been successful in finding times to rest.[52] Adele Ahlbert Calhoun recommends practicing sabbath times at home in which family members put down cell phones, enjoy sleeping and rising without setting an alarm, and move slowly while giving thanks to God throughout the day.[53] Keller, on the other hand, cautions against assuming that "family time" actually constitutes rest when it may in fact simply be another kind of anxious toil.[54] John Dobbs suggests using periods of sabbath as times distinct from normal daily activities to reflect upon sabbath's theme of holiness. Dobbs also recommends that, while practicing sabbath, Christians face our own difficulties in practicing godly rest and bring those difficulties specifically to God in prayer.[55] For those desiring a more disciplined approach to

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51. See, for example, Leigh Meekins, "Daily and Weekly Sabbath," *Ministry Matters*, last modified May 12, 2012, accessed January 29, 2019, http://ministrymatters.com/all/entry/2869/ daily-and-weekly-sabbath; Richella Parham, "The Spiritual Discipline of Rest," *Renovaré*, last modified August 19, 2016, accessed November 22, 2017, https://renovare.org/articles/the-spiritual-discipline-of-rest; and Tim Challies, "Sunday Reflection: Take Back Your Sabbath," *Challies*, last modified January 25, 2004, accessed January 29, 2019, http://www.challies.com/articles/sunday-reflection-take-back-your-sabbath/.

52. Timothy Keller, "Wisdom and Sabbath Rest," *Gospel in Life*, last modified June 28, 2011, accessed October 17, 2017, http://www.gospelinlife.com/wisdom-and-sabbath-rest, 5.

53. Adele Ahlbert Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us, r*ev & exp. ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2015), 44-45.

54. Keller, 4.

55. John Dobbs, "The Lost Art of Rest," *Out Here Hope Remains,* September 16, 2017, accessed November 11, 2017, http://johndobbs.com/sabbath/.

sabbath, Dallas Willard recommends three spiritual disciples for "making sabbath real in the midst of our life: Solitude, Silence, and Fasting."[56] Calhoun's *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* offers practical suggestions for implementing each of these disciplines, along with the discipline of sabbath itself.

How long should Christians set aside for sabbath rest and reflection? Keller recommends at least one twenty-four-hour period each week,[57] while Dobbs suggests that those struggling to practice any amount of sabbath begin with one hour. However much time one chooses to set aside for the practice, it helps to remember that sabbath is not another item to add to an already loaded to-do list. Sabbath is a blessing and celebration of God's love for his people. As Brueggemann reminds us, "Sabbath is the great festival of freedom."[58]

This project began by surveying hospice chaplains, through questionnaires, on what amount of sabbath they are already practicing and how much more, if any, they would like to introduce to their hospice practice. After gathering this information, I drew upon both available literature and my own experiences to develop a variety of suggestions for integrating sabbath intentionally into hospice chaplaincy. I, along with several other chaplains, then implemented individualized programs of intentional sabbath for the six weeks of the pilot program. Participating chaplains were surveyed through written questionnaires both before and after this implementation and received weekly emails of encouragement, sometimes with additional questions for reflection. After a final survey at the end of the six weeks, three participants who did not complete the program were also interviewed, either in-person or by phone, to learn what

56. Dallas Willard, "Key to the Keys to the Kingdom," *Dallas Willard*, last modified 2006, accessed November 22, 2017, http://www.dwillard.org/articles/printable.asp?artid=40.

57. Keller, 4.

58. Brueggemann, 43.

they had found both challenging and helpful about the program. These responses were all evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the program and develop recommendations for potential full-scale implementation by hospice chaplains throughout Kindred at Home.

Limitations/Delimitations

The primary delimitation of this project is that it draws from the pool of hospice chaplains in Tennessee for Avalon and Kindred hospices, both of which operate under the corporate umbrella of Humana at Home. This pool of hospice chaplains includes those from twenty-seven Avalon offices and one Kindred Hospice office in Tennessee.

A limitation of the project was that, because the program was entirely voluntary, only ten chaplains, along with one nurse and social worker, volunteered to participate in the project. Of those twelve, eight completed the entire program.

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation includes this introductory chapter followed by three others and two appendixes. Chapter 2 is a detailed theological reflection on sabbath as an element woven by God into the fabric of creation. Chapter 3 details the development and implementation of the program for helping hospice chaplains integrate sabbath into their practice. Chapter 4 summarizes findings and evaluates how the program might be refined and expanded to other regions of Kindred at Home and beyond. Appendix A includes copies of emails and responses, and Appendix B is a letter to my management with suggestions for implementing a sabbath self-care program company-wide.

Chapter 2: Theological Reflection

Unless otherwise noted, in this paper sabbath is used not in the narrow sense of a twenty-four-hour rest period every seventh day of the week but in a broader sense of intentional, reflective rest of whatever length within a Christian's life. Taking this broader view of sabbath helps to avoid the all-too-easy temptation of simply dismissing any contemporary idea of sabbath as a relic of the Mosaic covenant now made obsolete by institution of the New Covenant**.** Sabbath is used here simply as a term for faithful, intentional practice of godly rest and reflection, of whatever length, at whatever time, and in a variety of ways.

The Need Today for Sabbath Rest

American Christians, and Americans in general, are too often over-worked and under-rested. Indeed the increasingly hectic pace and lack of rest in contemporary American life has been a cliché for decades. Over the past twenty or thirty years, for example, Americans have consistently gotten less sleep than those in earlier generations,[1] and this lack of sleep has become a public health problem.[2] This sleeplessness is integrally related to both the ever-growing pursuit of physical and experiential consumption and to a pervasive "culture of overwork."[3]

> The industrial economy, by definition, must never rest. Rest would deprive us of light, heat, food, water, and everything else we need or think we need. The economic impulse of industrial life (to stretch a term) is limitless. Whatever we have, in whatever quantity, is not enough. There is no such thing as enough. Our bellies and our wallets must become

1. Jeffrey M. Jones, "In U.S., 40% Get Less Than Recommended Amount of Sleep," *Gallup News,* December 19, 2013, accessed November 1, 2017, http://news.gallup.com/poll/166553/less-recommended-amount-sleep.aspx.

2. "Insufficient Sleep is a Public Health Problem," *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,* last modified September 3, 2015, accessed November 28, 2017, https://www.cdc.gov/features/dssleep/index.html.

3. Kalli Holloway, "America is Working Itself to Death: How '9 to 5' Became '24/7,'" *Salon,* last modified August 12, 2015, accessed November 28, 2017, https://www.salon.com/2015/08/12/overworked_americans_partner/.

> oceanic, and still they will not be full. Six workdays in a week are not enough. We need a seventh. We need an eighth.[4]

Our current workaholic culture, in turn, reflects a deeper cultural anxiety related to production and an acquisition-based value system.[5] Milton Brasher-Cunningham describes the challenges to faithful Christian living in such a culture.

> We are bombarded with the distorted 'truth' that enough is not adequate, over-achieving is average, acquisitive is better than imaginative, networking is building actual relationship, and padding our resumes makes us more important. Hearing and heeding the Still, Small Voice is no easy task.[6]

Indeed, the world today is "an arena of distractions."[7] The contemporary explosion of material products, along with exponential advances in transportation and communication technologies, comes with "a toll to enter the highway of modernity. We must pay an invisible cost, one borne inwardly, at many different points. . . . Modernity is thus a two-edged sword. It gives and it takes away. It blesses and it curses. It fills and it empties. It illumines and it obscures."[8] One of the deepest consequences of this explosion in wealth and its pursuit is that today Americans are becoming so accustomed to the "largesse" of a consumer society that many have begun to see ourselves simply as consumers and in the process have lost the ability even to think of ourselves as moral beings.[9]

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4. Wendell Berry, "Foreword," in Norman Wirzba, *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 13.

5. This workaholic culture is discussed at length in Brueggemann's *Sabbath as Resistance* and Wirzba's *Living the Sabbath*.

6. Milton Brasher-Cunningham, "The Work of Rest and Worship," *Christian Reflection* 3, no. 3 (2002): 52-54.

7. Yap, 5.

8. David Wells, *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,1998), 118.

9. Wells, 119. See also Brooks, 15, who suggests that the idea of the inner life as something worth cultivating has been lost only in the past few generations.

The church, through its once rich biblical and theological tradition of sabbath, has the potential to offer an alternative to what Walter Brueggemann calls the "culture of now." Unfortunately, several impediments hinder Christians from embracing and proclaiming sabbath. One, as mentioned earlier, is the tendency to view sabbath observance in its strictest sense: one of the ten commandments and therefore obsolete for Christians today.[10] Another impediment is the persistence of earlier generations' idea of sabbath as involving rather arbitrary prohibitions—no dancing, card playing, shopping, etc.—for Christians on Sunday.[11] Finally, the American church is guilty of following, uncritically, the world's call for ever increasing production, toil, and acquisitiveness. Comparing our contemporary culture to Egypt of the Exodus, Brueggemann has noted regarding the American church that "We are, liberals and conservatives, much inured to Pharaoh's system. For that reason, the departure into restfulness is both urgent and difficult, for our motors are set to run at brick-making speed."[12] As a result of the church's synchronicity with the world, Dallas Willard notes, "Sabbath is almost totally absent from the existence of contemporary Christians and their ministers."[13] And yet, as Norman Wirzba writes, "The extent and depth of our Sabbath commitment is the measure of how far we have progressed in our

10. For a few representative samples of the many examples of this approach, see Wayne Jackson, "Should Christians Keep the Sabbath?" *ChristianCourier.com,* n.d., accessed November 28, 2017, https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/314-should-christians-keep-the-sabbath; John Paul Lewis, "Is the Command to Keep the Sabbath Day Holy Still Binding?" *Gospel Gazette* 6, no. 9 (2003): 18, accessed November 28, 2017, http://www.gospelgazette.com/gazette/2004/sep/page18.htm; and Gordon Wilson, "Should Christians Keep the Sabbath?" *The Gospel Guardian* 15, No. 7 (June 13, 1963), 1, 8-9, 12-13.

11. See, for example, Brueggemann, 20, and Dobbs.

12. Brueggemann, 19. For a related perspective, see Jen Pollock Michel, "A Story Called Rest." *Comment Magazine*. Internet. December 1, 2016, accessed October 11, 2020, https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/a-story-called-rest/.

13. Willard.

discipleship and friendship with God. Our Sabbath commitment bears witness to whether or not we have brought our habits and priorities in line with the ways and intentions of God."[14]

Biblical Perspective on Sabbath

This loss of sabbath in the contemporary American church stands in contrast to the rich tradition of sabbath, in its broadest sense, found from start to finish in the Scriptures. Although observing sabbath was not commanded for God's people until after the Exodus, the sabbath as a holy day is presented in Genesis as dating to the time of creation: "And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done" (Gen. 2:2).[15] What's more, as A.J. Swoboda and others have noted, humanity's first full day on earth was one of rest.

> The Genesis account tells us that God created humankind in a garden full of potential, yet their first day was not one of work, but of rest. Sabbath may have been day seven of the creation poem, but it was day one for humankind. Rest is so counter-intuitive to our culture, and yet humankind's first knowledge of God was that God rested and that they were to rest with him. Sabbath is that practice which reminds us that we were not created to do, but rather simply *be* with God.[16]

Swoboda also points out that man's first full day being one of rest is

> the first image of the gospel in the story of the Bible. God's grace is given first, and work comes as a result, not the other way around. As it turns out, we don't work to please God, but we rest because God is already pleased with us. Sabbath, by nature, fights the instinct within us that says we are a slave—that we are what we do.[17]

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14. In Wirzba, 12.

15. All Scripture quotations here are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001).

16. A. J. Swoboda, "Remember the Sabbath" Faculty Publications - Portland Seminary,2018, accessed August 10, 2020, https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gfes/107.

17. Ibid.

Sabbath is an image not only of God's creation in general, but a specific reminder of Eden and of God's goodness.[18] It has rightly been called "the zenith of God's creation and the climax of living."[19]

Norman Wirzba calls sabbath the "climax" of the seven days of creation and "thus the goal toward which all our living should move. . . . It is the interpretive key that helps us understand what all the moments and members of life mean"[20] Wirzba argues that the pinnacle of creation is not humanity but *menuha*: peace, rest, happiness, harmony.

> It is this capacity for happiness and delight, rather than humanity, which sits as the crowning achievement of God's creative work. . . . *Menuha*, not humanity, completes creation. God's rest or *shabbat*, especially when understood within a *menuha* context, is not simply a cessation from activity but rather the lifting up and celebration of everything.[21]

Sabbath is, therefore, fundamentally about being at peace with all of God's creation.[22]

Although Genesis includes no command for humans to follow the Lord's example of rest, the sabbath day is depicted as holy because it is the day that God rested. When the Lord later commanded sabbath day observance to Israel in Exod. 20:11; 31:12-17; and 34:21; he did so with reminders of its origins in his own rest at creation.[23] Because sabbath was holy before the covenant at Sinai, its significance was not simply made obsolete with the institution of the New Covenant. As Tim Keller aptly notes, because God rested and enjoyed his creation at the first sabbath, he has continued to invite mankind also to rest and take delight in creation: "The whole

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18. Ibid.

19. Hailstock, v.

20. Wirzba, 33.

21. Ibid.

22. Idem, 21.

23. Many commentators have long made this observation. See, for example, Brueggemann, 27, 36.

point of Sabbath is joy in what God has done."[24] This connection of sabbath to creation, and not merely to Sinai, is a critical component in locating sabbath rest within all of Scripture and Christian theology.

Sabbath in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, and especially the Torah, sabbath is presented as essentially fractal in nature. A fractal is a geometric structure whose pattern remains unchanged regardless of what size sample of the overall structure is being observed; the same pattern repeats at both the smallest and largest extremes and at every element in-between. In the Torah the fractal nature of sabbath is suggested in that sabbath rest occurs not only in days, but in weeks (Lev. 23:15-21), years (Lev. 25:1-7) and sabbaths of years (Lev. 25:8-11). Such a fractal structure, along with its origin at creation, reinforces the idea of sabbath rest as what Richard Lowery has described as "woven into the very fabric of the universe."[25] Sabbath's fractal nature thus suggests its ongoing significance well beyond the confines of the Mosaic law.

In looking at sabbath as an intentional part of present-day work it is helpful to consider exhortations within the Law and the Prophets that sabbath is a time to remember Israel's liberation from the slavish work demands of Egypt. God made this point explicit through Moses (Deut. 5:12-15), and later Ezekiel (Ezek. 20:12-16). One intention of this reminder, as Ellen F. Davis has noted, is that "Israel is not to be a total-work culture."[26] Brueggemann has shown succinctly but convincingly that Egypt of the Exodus is paradigmatic of the acquisitiveness,

24. Keller.

25. Richard B. Lowery, "Sabbath, a 'Little Jubilee,'" *Christian Reflection* 3, no. 3 (2002): 13.

26. Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 143.

"anxious productivity" and commodification of humanity in subsequent coercive systems, including our own.[27]

Locating a strong concept of sabbath rest within the Old Testament wisdom literature—Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes—is neither simple nor obvious. The word sabbath appears nowhere in any of the three wisdom books, and the concept of rest itself is often presented with a negative connotation. In Job, for example, the majority of references to rest (Job 3:13-16) are all associated with death. In Proverbs, sleep and rest are often presented as related to sloth and eventual poverty (Prov. 6:10; 24:33).

Commentators have long noticed the lack of sabbath language in the wisdom literature, and a number of suggestions have been put forward regarding why wisdom writers gave it no overt attention. Perhaps in the time that the Old Testament wisdom literature was taking shape, the sages had become disillusioned with the legalism surrounding Israel's implementation of the practice. "Their sympathies, at least, were decidedly not with the movement whereby the Sabbath lost completely its early joyousness and festivity and came finally to be the severest kind of burden, fettered by every manner of restriction and loaded down with ritual."[28] Whatever the reason for its lack of overt treatment, however, the concept of Sabbath rest is strongly implied throughout the wisdom literature.

In Proverbs, for example, sleep and rest are not only presented as pitfalls for the fool, but as rewards of a life well led (Prov. 3:24; 19:23). Specifically, rest is something a parent enjoys as the fruit of rearing a wise son (Prov. 29:17).

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27. Brueggemann, 28-30.

28. Theophile James Meek, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament (Its Origin and Development)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 33 (1914): 211-12.

In a similar manner the so-called joy passages of Ecclesiastes (2:24; 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-20; 7:14; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:8-10) encourage abandoning the futile chasing of worldly ambition and simply enjoying a life of work, food, and family. Brian Peterson looks beyond these joy passages to assert that Ecclesiastes is essentially an optimistic book whose apparent negative outlook is in fact "a straightforward assessment of what living in a broken world due to sin looks like when God is not central to one's life."[29] The recurring joy theme in Ecclesiastes, in fact, suggests a perfect balance of work and enjoyment. As with the first sabbath at creation, Qoheleth finds joy in taking time to rest, reflect upon, and enjoy not only the fruits of his labor, but the labor itself.

This concept of peaceful rest as a reward for wise labor is in keeping with an overarching view within the wisdom literature that a balanced life is a defining characteristic of the sage. As one commenter has noted, the sage "is neither lazy nor a workaholic, neither an underachiever nor overachiever."[30] Cautions against overwork, in fact, can be found throughout the wisdom literature. Job's prosperity, both at the beginning and end of the book, is not the result of his own fevered efforts at acquiring wealth, but are rather the gifts of God to a faithful servant. Proverbs repeatedly warns against hastiness (13:11, 19:2, 20:21, 21:5; 23:4; 28:20, 22), an element of

29. Brian Peterson, *Qoheleth's Hope: The Message of Ecclesiastes in a Broken World* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020), 3. Although the quote here is from Peterson's stated purpose early in the book, the entire work is intended to support Peterson's assertion of the essential optimism of Ecclesiastes. Peterson does not address the topic of sabbath by name. He does, however, note that Qoheleth encourages the reader to fear God and to enjoy his creation and that "God's approval of the good things given to humanity harks back to the creation narrative as the basis of the good, which God desired his creation to enjoy" (121). In short, the entire book of Ecclesiastes supports living a well-balanced, godly life, of which rest and refreshment are implicitly essential.

30. Dave Bland, "Wisdom and the Sage as a Model for Ministry," unpublished essay, 12.

workaholism.[31] Ecclesiastes 4:4-8 also offers a number of memorable warnings against workaholism.[32]

This sapiential balancing of work and rest is part of a larger focus in Proverbs on developing a character that allows the wise person to live responsibly and appropriately in every occasion.[33] In thus living as a responsible member of society, the wise man is in tune not only with that society, but with the whole created order.[34] Wisdom, in short, enables "the wise person to live by the order of the universe."[35] Kevin Youngblood shows that in Proverbs wise character development within the family ultimately results in one "who both reflects and reinforces the cosmic order that testifies to Yahweh's wisdom in creating a coherent universe."[36] The fractal alignment of the individual, family, and society in submitting to God's boundaries through the practice of wisdom are thus microcosms of God's universal order. "One could even go so far as to say that voluntary submission to these cosmic boundaries, at every experiential level, is the quintessential expression of Proverbs' most celebrated character trait—the fear of the Lord."[37]

Fear of the Lord, as Proverbs reminds us, is the beginning of both knowledge and wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 9:10). Such godly fear is inseparable from developing a true, deep wisdom, for the distinction between God and man is perhaps the most fundamental truth of the created

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31. Bland, "Wisdom and the Sage," 13.

32. James Limburg, *Encountering Ecclesiastes: A Book for Our Time* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 60ff, Kindle.

33. Dave Bland, *Proverbs and the Formation of Character,* Eugene, Cascade Books (2015), 13, 16, Kindle.

34. William P. Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder: Character, Creation, And Crisis in the Bible's Wisdom Literature,* Grand Rapids, Eerdmans (2014), 16, Kindle.

35. Bland, *Proverbs*, 150.

36. Kevin Youngblood, "Cosmic Boundaries and Self-Control in Proverbs," *Restoration Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2009): 140.

37. Ibid.

order. This relationship between God and man is clarified in the so-called Yahweh proverbs (Prov. 15:33-16:9). These proverbs address the tension between human and divine work in life and provide an antidote to pride, the fundamental human sin that results from "losing sight of the creator of the universe."[38] As Iain Provan notes,

> The universe is not designed to contain gods and heroes who control the world. It is designed to contain moral beings who accept the limitations that have been set upon their lives by the Creator of the world and who move forward within these limitations in quietness and humility.[39]

This sapiential attitude toward God and his creation has been called "receptive reverence."[40] Qoheleth hints at the role of sabbath rest in developing this receptive reverence in his concluding call to "remember your Creator in the days of your youth" (Eccl. 12:1ff). As Limburg notes regarding this section of Ecclesiastes, "Here are no words about working hard, saving money, disciplining oneself in sexual or other affairs, such as one might find in the book of Proverbs. The directive here is simply to 'Remember' God as creator."[41]

A rest motif is also found in both the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament (1 Chron. 22:9; 1 Kings 8:56; 2 Chron. 20:30; 2 Sam. 7:1; Isa. 14:3; 66:1; 28:12; Josh. 21:44-45; Mic. 2:10).[42] In short, for Israel sabbath was a recognition of God's order in all of creation. "Israelites interpreted the Sabbath as a right ordering of life, and keeping it signified a right

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38. Bland, *Proverbs*, 143, 150.

39. Iain Provan, "Fresh Perspectives in Ecclesiastes: 'Qohelet for Today,'" in *The Words of the Wise Are Like Goads: Engaging Qohelet in the 21st Century,* ed. Mark J. Boda, Tremper Longman III, and Christian G. Rata (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013): 406-07.

40. Dave Bland and David Fleer, eds., *Preaching Character: Reclaiming Wisdom's Paradigmatic Imagination for Transformation* (Abilene: ACU Press, 2010), 206.

41. Limburg, 136.

42. The passages from historical and prophetic OT literature referenced here come from Luisa J. Gallagher, "A Theology of Rest: Sabbath Principles for Ministry." *Christian Education Journal* 16.1 (2019): 134-49.

relationship with God, with people, with animals, and the land."[43] Essential to that right relationship was a recognition of the essential lack of distinction between classes of human beings, and the extension of sabbath rest to all creation, including slaves and domestic animals.[44]

Sabbath in the New Testament

Finding affirmations of sabbath-keeping in the New Testament is no easy task and one without simple or obvious fall-backs onto proof texts. As has long been noted within *a cappella* Churches of Christ, keeping the sabbath is the only one of the Ten Commandments not reaffirmed in the New Testament. Adding to the lack of support for sabbath keeping *per se* is the apparent attitude toward sabbath by Jesus himself. As William Willimon has noted, "much of the talk about Sabbath overlooks that Jesus was deeply ambivalent at best, and downright critical at worst, of Sabbath."[45] What's more, the central theme of the New Covenant is self-sacrifice—ultimately by Jesus in his trip to the cross but also in his call for Christians to take up our crosses and follow him. Brian Mesimer notes wryly that "Bearing a Roman executioner's stake doesn't seem like it has a lot to do with taking time off."[46]

Yet the idea of sabbath is nevertheless implicit in the New Testament. Sabbath themes are not so much explicitly stated as interwoven within larger motifs: the church as a kingdom of liberty apart from the world's bondage (Col. 1:13); trusting in God's loving provision rather than

43. Gallagher, 140.

44. Volker Kessler, "The Sabbath as a Remedy for Human Restlessness," *In Die Skriflig* 46.2(2012), Article #61, 8 pages, accessed August 14, 2020, https://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v46i3.61.

45. James Kim, "Sabbath and Self-Care: A Conversation." *Peculiar Prophet*, December 11, 2014, accessed December 15, 2020, https://willwillimon.com/2014/12/11/sabbath-and-self-care-a-conversation/

46. Brian Mesimer, "Self-Care or Sabbath?" *Reformation 21*, June 6, 2017, accessed October 11, 2020, https://www.reformation21.org/blogs/selfcare-or-sabbath.php.

one's own slavish efforts (Matt. 6:25-34); and the ultimate, eternal sabbath rest for Christians (Heb. 4:1-12).

A practical recognition of sabbath, for example, may be found in the practices of early Christian disciples of sharing all things in common (Acts 2; 4). This sharing by the disciples was essentially sabbatical in that

> they were able to divest from Rome's extraction economy that was killing them and everyone around them. They sold private property and possessions and created an alternative economy that made sure that no one had too much so that no one would have too little. . . . They were returning to the sacred rhythms of Sabbath and Jubilee. They were restoring balance in the belly of an empire that had gotten so devastatingly out of balance.[47]

Thus from the beginning of the church God's people practiced what Frances Berger has called "system distancing"[48] and affirmed that Christians are a holy people to the Lord, chosen "to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Deut. 14:2).

Sabbath is also implicit in the motif that Christians need not worry about tomorrow but rather trust a loving, gracious God to provide. Jen Pollock Michel has observed that Christian trust in God goes back to the Genesis story and its "scandalous idea of divine work for the purpose of human flourishing—a world in which true rest is possible because someone else is awake."[49]

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47. Solveig Nilson-Goodin, "Pentecost as the Practices." *Ecofaith Institute*, 2017, accessed October 27, 2020, http://www.ecofaithrecovery.org/resources_practice1/.

48. Francis Berger, "System Distancing Has Become a Spiritual Imperative," *Frances Berger-Blog*, November 19, 2020, accessed November 21, 2020, https://www.francisberger.com/bergers-blog. Berger's main idea is that the world system is intrinsically, intentionally, and increasingly evil and that Christians must, as much as possible, distance ourselves from that system.

49. Jen Pollock Michel, "A Story Called Rest," *Comment Magazine*, December 1, 2016, accessed October 11, 2020, https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/a-story-called-rest/. As with Berger's article noted above, it is difficult to overstate the amount of concentrated wisdom found in Michel's article.

> "The earth is the lord's and the fullness thereof," cries the psalmist (24:1). These are the tidings of the Genesis story, which no doubt Jesus recalls when he reassures his own followers who are worried over clothing and bread, even life itself. Don't be anxious, he implores. "Seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). Rest, in the most Christian sense, is not the temporary act of escaping the rat race, nor is it the lazy reach for the remote on Sunday afternoon. It is bound up in the story in which we are immersed weekly: in our corporate reading of the Scriptures, in the waters of baptism, at the table of Christ, in our prayers for God's name to be hallowed and his kingdom to come. The narrative arc of the Sabbath points beyond our anxious preoccupation with rent and groceries, college tuition and retirement savings, and grounds us in the eternal certainty that God is on the throne. The central actor in earth's drama is not humanity, but God, and he never slumbers or sleeps. Sabbath unseats work from the narrative centre and puts God in his rightful place of rule, forbidding our terrifying freedom to believe that pay and productivity are the only means of our provision.[50]

In short, as Michel notes, daring to rest is the Christian's affirmation of God's call to "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10).[51]

The New Testament's most extensive and explicit treatment of sabbath is found in Hebrews 3-4, in which sabbath is equated with faithful disciples' eternal rest in the presence of the Lord. Commenters have long associated this rest with Jesus' call in Matt. 11:28-30 to receive rest through taking on his yoke.[52]

> In Christ crucified and risen, we find eternal rest (Matt. 11:28-30), and we are restored to communion with God (Matt. 11:25-30). The lost treasures of the Sabbath are restored. We rest in Christ from our labor of self-sufficiency, and we have access to the Father (Eph. 2:18). As we meet with Him, He shows us Himself, His ways, His world, His purposes, His glory. [53]

In this context sabbath for Christians is less a practice than an attitude of heart and mind in looking to a future glory in which sabbath will be fully realized.[54]

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50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. For an accessible and compact explanation of this relationship, see Sinclair Ferguson, "Sabbath Rest," *Tabletalk Magazine* March 1, 2004, accessed October 13, 2020, https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/sabbath-rest/.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

Finally, Nathan T. Stucky makes the case that although sabbath is not specifically commanded under the New Covenant, it should not therefore be viewed as optional. “If it is true that the sabbath is a gift of grace, then the question about whether it is optional becomes irrelevant. Why would we refuse a gift from God?”[55]

Self-Care or Obedience and Transformation?

This project began with the popular assumption that the Christian discipline of intentional sabbath is a form of self-care.[56] In recent years, however, a number of writers have challenged the idea that self-care is a central purpose of sabbath discipline.[57]

Willimon, for example, contends that, while rest is a good practice for Christian ministers, it is a mistake to “sanctify” self-care by calling it “Sabbath.”

> I’m concerned about the lack of theological grounding in much of the talk I hear about ‘Sabbath’ among seminarians and clergy these days. Much of the conversation seems predicated on the assumption that keeping Sabbath is somehow good for you. Taking a day away from the activity of ministry may be good for you but that is not ‘Sabbath’ in scripture. Sabbath is one of the unique aspects of Israel. Sabbath keeps Israel as Israel. It is a day not to take ‘time for me,’ which is what I sometimes hear. It’s time taken for God.[58]

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55. Nathan T. Stucky, “5 Sabbath Myths,” *Eerdword: The Eerdmans Blog*, June 28, 2019, accessed February 23, 2020, http://eerdword.com/2019/06/28/nathan-t-stucky-5-sabbath-myths/.

56. In addition to sources referenced earlier, Jessica Briggs makes a theologically sound and easily accessible argument for Sabbath as self-care in her article "Sabbath is Self-Care," *JessicaBriggs.Ink*, n.d, accessed October 21, 2020, https://jessicabriggs.ink/sabbath-is-self-care/. Briggs notes both that man’s first full day on earth was one of rest and that Jesus specifically stated that the Sabbath is created for man (Mark 2:27).

57. Examples of sound, easily accessible arguments for Sabbath as self-care include Rob Muthiah, "Sabbath is Not Self-Care," *Shepherd Heart Ministry Consulting,* February 21, 2019, accessed October 21, 2020, https://www.shepherdheartconsulting.com/2019/02/21/sabbath-is-not-self-care/; and Stephen Rankin, "It's Not Self-Care," *Faith on Campus*, June 8, 2011, accessed October 30, 2020, http://faithoncampus.com/blog/it-is-not-self-care-re-thinking-sabbath/. For a particularly acerbic treatment, see also Segal.

58. Kim. See also William Willimon, *Leading With the Sermon*: *Preaching as Leadership* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2020). Willimon challenges the idea of the special need for ministers to take sabbaticals (141). He also takes issue with the very idea of ministerial burnout, which he calls “a self-congratulatory metaphor” (176). Willimon evidently uses the term burnout as synonymous with what is here called compassion fatigue, but his central idea is that ministry should be no more stressful than any other profession (177ff). If anything, Willimon’s insights suggest that times of rest and refreshment are important in every occupation.

Most significant, perhaps, for this current study is Willimon's observation that in Scripture sabbath is not an individual exercise but is rather "a communal activity where God joins with God's people."[59]

At the same time, as Jesus reminds us, sabbath was made for man, not vice-versa. Rest is in fact a manifestation of God's love for his creation. In 1 Kings 19, for example, Elijah's flight to the wilderness is a form of sabbath rest in which God provides miraculously for his servant's needs.

> Elijah clearly engages here in some form [sic] life-sustaining practice that strengthens him physically, emotionally, and spiritually. And it is very effective. The focus on feeding Elijah in the text affirms that we are physical beings with physical needs and limits. . . . In a sense, the passage affirms the importance of taking care of ourselves.[60]

Yet God's strengthening of Elijah was for a purpose more than simply helping the prophet to feel better. God provided for Elijah so that the prophet could fulfill God's mission for him in Horeb to anoint Elisha.[61] The implications for the present are not difficult to discern.

> God's care for us is not simply a utilitarian pit-stop, allowing us to fill up on the emotional gas necessary for our work. It is primarily an experience of the Lord Himself. The culmination of the story is a majestic moment in which God speaks to Elijah. Here God challenges him, blesses him, and furthers his own glory. God cares for Elijah by providing food for his body and a word for his soul.[62]

In short, practicing sabbath is not only a means of feeling better physically and emotionally. It is a means by which Christians allow our lives to be re-oriented and re-energized for service to and fellowship with God.

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59. Ibid. Stucky also points out the communal nature of Sabbath.

60. Mesimer.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

Perhaps one of the best treatments of sabbath in its deeper theological context comes from Wirzba, who presents the case that sabbath is a celebration of God's creation and an affirmation of the rhythms and grace of God and his creation.

> Rather than being simply a 'break' from frenetic, self-obsessed ways of living, the Sabbath is a discipline and practice in which we ask, consider, and answer the questions that will lead us into a complete and joyful life. As such, the Sabbath is a teaching that has the potential to redirect and transform all our existence, bringing it into more faithful alignment with God's life-building and life-strengthening ways. . . . Put simply, Sabbath discipline introduces us to God's own ways of joy and delight. [63]

Sabbath is much more than passive rest. "The real issue is whether we can learn to see, and then welcome, the divine presence wherever we are," Wirzba asserts. Sabbath is therefore "a training ground for the life of eternity, a preparation for the full reception and welcome of the presence of God."[64]

Sabbath and Character Development

For a Christian, therefore, practicing sabbath is integral with spiritual formation and the development of Christian character. Metrics for measuring spiritual formation and character development are elusive. Yet Christian writers from New Testament times through the present have noted that developing character, like the development of any skill, is done step-by-step through time. In 2 Cor. 3:18, for example, Paul explains that in beholding the glory of God, Christians "are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." In tandem with Paul's description of spiritual formation being effected by God's Spirit, the New Testament writers also depict character development as a step-by-step process. Peter, for example, exhorts his readers to "make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-

63. Wirzba, 20.

64. Idem, 24.

control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love" (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

Thus while character is not easily quantified, it is nevertheless built stepwise and systematically. In our own day, N.T. Wright notes that

> the qualities of character which Jesus and his first followers insist on as the vital signs of healthy Christian life don't come about automatically. You have to develop them. You have to work at them. You have to think about it, to make conscious choices to allow the Holy Spirit to form your character in ways that, to begin with, seem awkward and "unnatural." Only in that way can you become the sort of 'character' who will react instantly to sudden challenges with wisdom and good judgment.[65]

Bonnidell Clouse identifies four avenues by which moral and spiritual growth are effected for Christians: "conflict, action, knowledge and potential."[66] Conflict forces us to move outside comfortable immaturity and grow, while taking action to live our faith not only involves the discipline of doing, but inevitably will add another opportunity for growth in the face of negative reactions from the world. Such faithful action is, of course, preconditioned on a right knowledge of God. Potential is an avenue of growth in that we are made in the image of God and are created with the potential to grow into our roles as coheirs with Christ.[67]

To Clouse's four avenues should be added intentional rest, which allows Christians time to reflect on God, his creation, and ourselves in ways that foster positive character development. As Brueggemann wryly notes, "Sabbath is not simply the pause that refreshes. It is the pause that transforms."[68] A central theme within biblical wisdom literature, for example, is the value of a

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65. N.T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 27-28.

66. Bonnidell Clouse, *Teaching for Moral Growth: A Guide for the Christian Community* (Grand Rapids: Victor Books, 1993), 36.

67. Ibid., 35-49.

68. Brueggemann, 45.

wise response to God and his creation, including "the response of reflection and instruction."[69] In practicing intentional sabbath, Christians "take the time that is required for the reflection, remembrance, and rest that is the prerequisite for faithful, responsive action in praise of God."[70]

Taking time for intentional sabbath—of any and all lengths from sabbath seconds to sabbatical years—contributes to at least nine identifiable benefits in spiritual formation. After here considering each of these nine benefits, the next chapter will briefly consider tangible methods for hospice chaplains—and all Christians—to implement sabbath rest into our lives.

1. Alleviating anxiety. In *Sabbath as Resistance* Brueggemann shows how Egypt of the Exodus—dominated by Pharaoh's insatiable demands for more bricks with less materials—is a paradigm of anxious, acquisitive, commodity-driven cultures such as our own. In Egypt Pharaoh demanded never-ending toil and ever-increasing production from Israel, while the Lord at Sinai considered rest for his people of such importance that he commanded it. That the Lord desired sabbath rest for his people is in keeping with his own taking of rest following creation. "YHWY is a Sabbath-keeping God, which fact ensures that restfulness and not restlessness is at the center of life."[71] Sabbath rest, not necessarily as one day each week but as a fractal principle infusing every increment of time, helps Christians to pause, reflect, and resist the world's demands for anxious effort. Tim Keller, who ministers in New York City, exhorts Christians pressured to live by the world's anxious demands to practice sabbath: "I have come to see that if you develop the foundation and inner rest of sabbath, it will not simply make you more disciplined about taking

69. Limburg, 133.

70. William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 328-29.

71. Brueggemann, 10.

time off, but it will also lead you to be less frantic and driven in your work itself."[72] This benefit of practicing sabbath is perhaps the most immediately relevant for hospice chaplains, as non-anxious presence is one of the primary gifts chaplains are trained to bring those to whom we minister. Truly being present non-anxiously with patients requires chaplains effectively to manage our own anxiety.

2. Overcoming greed**.** Brueggemann makes a compelling argument that modern anxiety and resistance to rest are rooted in an idolatrous culture of commodification, anxiety, and greed. Sabbath, on the other hand, "is the cessation of the widely shared practices of acquisitiveness."[73] Sabbath from ceaseless work is a reminder to Christians not only that we can survive with less, but that what we have is provided by a loving and generous God who desires rest and refreshment for his people.

> Such faithful practice of work stoppage is an act of resistance. It declares in bodily ways that we will not participate in the anxiety system that pervades our social environment. We will not be defined by busyness and by acquisitiveness and by pursuit of more, in either our economics or our personal relations or anywhere in our lives.[74]

Although the practice of hospice chaplaincy offers few incentives for practicing overt, monetary greed, the temptation for more subtle forms of covetousness are often present. Those coveting recognition and approbation, for example, may find that chaplaincy offers fewer tangible opportunities for recognition than the more task-oriented work of nurses, nursing assistants, and social workers. Practicing sabbath encourages chaplains to remember—whatever we may be tempted to pursue acquisitively—that because God gives, we need not grab.[75]

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72. Keller, 5.

73. Brueggemann, 84-85.

74. Idem, 31-32.

75. Idem, 45.

3. Resisting idolatry. The Apostle Paul equated greed with idolatry (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). That connection, as David Capes explains, is still present today, and sabbath is its antidote:

> The fatigue we experience in the modern world results from leaving behind the God of Moses and Jesus to embrace our own deities: materialism, consumerism, and individualism. Regrettably, our vision of ultimate things does not extend beyond commerce and material gains.[76]

In practicing sabbath, on the other hand, Christians refuse to allow our lives to be defined by idolatrous production and acquisitiveness. Brueggemann notes that

> Sabbath is a school for our desires, an expose and critique of the false desires that focus on idolatry and greed that have immense power for us. When we do not pause for Sabbath, these false desires take power over us. But Sabbath is the chance for self-embrace of our true identity.[77]

One of the most critical false desires for the chaplain to avoid is the need to be needed. Left unchecked such codependent desires can grow into rescue fantasies that, in the extreme, inject the chaplain into the position of the Savior. When functioning as true ministers for the goodwill of those we serve, however, chaplains do not allow the idolatry of our own self-centered desires stand in the way of being faithful servants of the Lord. Taking time for intentional sabbath helps us both to face our own limitations and accept the true created order of the one, true God.

4. Learning to live as an alternative community. For Christians, embracing our true identity can only be done within the community of faith, and that community must be shaped more by the Word than by the world.

> Sabbath-keeping is a way of making a statement of peculiar identity amid a larger public identity, of maintaining and enacting a counter-identity that refuses the 'mainstream' identity, which itself entails the anti-human practice and the worship of anti-human gods.[78]

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76. David B. Capes, "The Eighth Day," *Christian Reflection* 3, no. 3 (2002): 23-24.

77. Brueggemann, 88.

78. Idem, 21.

This sabbath-keeping is especially powerful if it involves taking a full day each week to rest from production and consumption. As Willimon declares, "Sabbath is how we put the world in its place. This is how we take over the world's time and help make it God's time. We remind ourselves that we are created, not for ceaseless work, but for worship, rest in God. Rest is eschatological."[79] For this reason intentional sabbath-keeping is especially important for hospice chaplains, who are in fact ministering within a corporate culture that, even in the field of healthcare, must by its nature include an awareness of efficiency and production.

5. Affirming what is unique to Yahweh. The deeper we grow in our knowledge of who the Lord actually is, the more that knowledge works to transform us into his image. And in taking time to reflect upon the origin and meaning of sabbath rest we discover that God's nature is one of beauty, grace, and love.

> Sabbath is a unique holiday for a distinctive deity, who defines the divine-human relationship by rest, not by work. . . . Sabbath rest is God's distinctive mark, a deep symbol of Israel's intimate relationship with the one who frees rather than enslaves, who offers lavish blessing rather than endless toil.[80]

The reality of ministering to those of different religions or of no religion can tempt a chaplain to begin thinking of spiritual care in generic or psychologically oriented terms. For the Christian chaplain, therefore, intentional Sabbath is a reminder that we are servants of the one, true God.

6. Developing godly humility. Learning humility through the practice of sabbath rest and reflection is two-fold. First, in reflecting honestly on our own weakness and on God's abundant, loving provision, we cannot help but to be humbled. Second, sabbath reminds us not only of the blessings we receive from rest, but of our need for that rest. Adele Ahlbert Calhoun describes

79. Willimon, 330.

80. Lowery, 12-13.

this reality well: "Sabbath reminded people that they were finite. They could not be constantly on the go. There were limits to their energy. And to honor those limitations was to honor the infinite God, who himself worked and rested."[81] Humility is essential for chaplains working closely and constantly with dying and grief. A chaplain who approaches patients or caregivers with rescue fantasies, for example, not only misses opportunities for effective, non-anxious service, but dramatically increases the probability of developing compassion fatigue. Only with the kinds of personal boundaries that accompany a healthy humility can chaplains maintain sustainable relationships with those we serve, and with ourselves.

7. Developing habits of faith and trust in God's provision. In the face of a dominant culture based on anxiety and acquisitiveness, Christians are challenged to trust that God will continue to provide for us when we lay aside our anxious striving. Dallas Willard asserts that practicing sabbath is essentially letting God be God.

> We strongly need to see the manifest hand of God in what we are and what we do. We need to be sure He is pulling the load, bearing the burden—which we are all too ready to assume is up to us alone. We must understand that He is in charge of the outcome of our efforts, and that the outcome will be good, right. And all of this is encompassed in one biblical term, 'Sabbath.'[82]

Like the Israelites in the wilderness, Christians today are tempted to doubt the value of taking a full sabbath day or its equivalent each week to refrain from our labors and accept that God will provide for our needs without our anxious striving. As Lowery notes, "Too many of us try to cram eight days of work into a seven-day week. Sabbath promises seven days of prosperity for six days of work. We get more out of life than we put into it. And in the surplus is the gracious

81. Calhoun, 42.

82. Willard.

mercy of God."[83] Learning to see and accept that gracious mercy, in turn, helps us to rest even more peacefully.[84]

8. Cultivating an intrinsically abundant life. All of the sabbath benefits mentioned so far have a cumulative and synergistic affect in the life of those who take time to practice the spiritual discipline of sabbath. Taking time to practice sabbath "is to remember the fundamental core of our faith," writes Brasher-Cunningham.[85] "God's volitional act of love gives us value. The call to Sabbath—to rest and worship—is a call to be still and get to know God, to wallow in the wonder of that love, to remember that we are not defined or determined by our culture."[86] For Christians, developing a full sense of God's love as shown in the call to sabbath must include a future, eschatological aspect.

9. Looking forward to our sabbath rest in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 3 and 4 describes the Christian's ultimate, eternal fellowship with Christ and the Father as a sabbath rest. In keeping with Hebrews' theme of the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old, this coming rest is shown as superior to the rest Israel was to find in the Promised Land. In the coming sabbath Christians will experience "no pain or suffering, no death, because they are in Christ, the true Sabbath."[87] Today, practicing sabbath can be an opportunity for Christians to reflect on the promised sabbath awaiting us at the end of our earthly journey.[88] One of the most powerful gifts

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83. Lowery, 14-15.

84. Parham.

85. Brasher-Cunningham, 53.

86. Ibid.

87. Tony Costa, "The Sabbath and Its Relation to Christ and the Church in the New Covenant," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 20, no. 1 (2016): 142.

88. Ferguson.

Christian chaplains bring our patients is a reminder of the Christian's hope even as we approach our own death. The Christian chaplain embodies and communicates this hope not so much in the words we say, but through the assurance inherent in a non-anxious presence infused by the reality of the risen Christ.

Conclusion

However we spend our time, in work or in rest, each one of us is choosing attitudes and actions that shape our character and our relationship with God. As M. Robert Mulholland Jr. observed a generation ago,

> Life is, by its very nature, spiritual formation. The question is not *whether* to undertake spiritual formation; the question is *what kind* of spiritual formation are we engaged in. Are we being increasingly conformed to the world, or are we being increasingly conformed to the image of Christ?"[89]

Without intentional resistance to the dominant culture, Christians by default allow our souls to be swept along by the demands of anxious, acquisitive and idolatrous forces. By taking time for sabbath rest and reflection, however, we not only resist the deformation that our culture would impose upon our souls, but we grow in love for the God who calls us to the joy found in rest and worship. "Sabbath is out of fashion, a relic of a time and pace of life that can't compete with our connected and conflicted world," Dobbs asserts. "Our calling is not to live up to the call of the world, but the call of God. Rest, friend. Unashamedly and in connection with God, seek Sabbath."[90]

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89. M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1986), 28.

90. Dobbs.

Chapter 3. Project Methodology

Before describing the details of building and executing the sabbath pilot program with Kindred at Home chaplains, a precise clarification is in order about terminology used within the company—and within this dissertation—for individual offices therein. Since 2014 I have worked for Avalon Hospice, one of the subsidiary hospices formerly under the umbrella of Curo Health Services. In 2018 Curo merged with Kindred at Home, which also operated hospices in Tennessee. As of 2020 Curo is no longer a business unit within Kindred at Home, but the Avalon name has continued to be used by hospice offices that were already operating under that name. Kindred at Home had fewer hospice offices in Tennessee, but for the most part Kindred hospice offices have continued to operate under the Kindred name. For the purposes of this dissertation, therefore, Avalon Hospice and Kindred hospice will be used for the offices operating under those names while Kindred at Home will be used for the parent organization encompassing both.

Choice of Tennessee Chaplains as Survey Group

The choice to offer this program primarily to chaplains, as mentioned in the first chapter, had to do with the unique stressors on pastoral care clinicians and the relative paucity of published research on self-care for hospice chaplains. The decision for offering this pilot program to chaplains from Kindred at Home's Tennessee offices was a natural and reasonable choice for a variety of reasons, related both to business operations and personal relationships.

Tennessee, divided organizationally into east and west sections, has long been a distinct business unit for Avalon Hospice and currently is managed by an associate vice-president for the twenty-eight Kindred at Home offices included therein. The number of chaplains serving in Avalon and Kindred offices in Tennessee is around thirty. This pool of potential participants offered the likelihood of having enough participants to receive useful feedback for the pilot

program without becoming too burdensome for me to coordinate while continuing with the already demanding schedule of a full-time hospice chaplain.

Relationally, the pool of Tennessee chaplains was also a logical choice in terms of obtaining permission to contact and work with the chaplains in the area. The vice president for Kindred at Home's Tennessee operations was promoted to her current position after serving as the first patient care coordinator and later director of the Murfreesboro Avalon office, where I have worked since the year the office opened in 2014. As such she and I have six years of working together well, and she was willing to give permission to try the pilot program in her region. Plus, as one of the longer-serving chaplains for Avalon Hospice in Tennessee, I had gotten to know a number of chaplains through area- and state-wide chaplains meetings and through providing initial training for several Avalon chaplains.

Participants were of a variety of denominations, but all identified themselves as Christian. Further breakdown of denomination affiliation is not included in this report because, given the relatively small population of chaplains from which participants were drawn, in several cases identifying a participant's denominational affiliation would also identify the chaplain.

I made initial contact with chaplains primarily by email. Working with a list of the twenty-eight Avalon and Kindred offices in Tennessee, I began by calling each office to ensure I had the correct name of the chaplain or chaplains now working in that office. Once I had the name for each chaplain I was able to find that man or woman's email address through the company's internal email directory. This process was complicated somewhat as a consequence of corporate COVID-19 restrictions that have prevented clinical staff members from entering Kindred at Home offices since March 2020. As such I was unable to make these calls from our office land line, from which those receiving the calls would be able to see before answering that

the call was indeed coming from another Avalon office. I therefore called from my personal cell phone, which does not reveal my name even if the one receiving the call has caller ID. Nevertheless, after identifying myself and the purpose of my call representatives from almost every office were willing to give me the name of the chaplain or chaplains serving in that office. Staff at one office refused to give me the name of that office's chaplains, but both later contacted me after I left my email. With only one office was I unable to contact any chaplain.

Choice of Six Weeks for Pilot Program

This pilot program was intended to help hospice chaplains better cope with the stressors on time, mental energy, and emotional wellbeing that the job demands. As a hospice chaplain myself, and one familiar with the particular stressors several of my fellow chaplains face, I am well aware that any voluntary program perceived as adding to the attention burden of a hospice chaplain would likely be doomed to failure before it began. As such, everything within the program was done with an eye to minimizing additional expenditures of time and mental energy by participants. Six weeks may not be of sufficient length for developing a new, long-term habit or practice.[1] It did however, offer substantial time for piloting the program—particularly in identifying elements that might hinder participation in a future program.

The choice of project length had a theological component as well. Forty-two days allowed for an even number of weeks while being as close as any number of full weeks can be in days to the biblically significant number of forty. As Bible readers have long noted, the number forty is associated in the lives of Noah, Moses, Elijah, Jesus, and others with fasting, testing, and

1. The idea of twenty-one day habit formation is widely repeated but probably erroneous. See, for example, Jason Selk, "Habit Formation: The 21-Day Myth," *Forbes*, April 15, 2013, accessed November 22, 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonselk/2013/04/15/habit-formation-the-21-day-myth/; and "Think it Takes 21 Days to Make a Resolution a Habit? Double That," NBC News, January 2, 2014, accessed November 22, 2020, https://www.nbcnews.com/health/body-odd/think-it-takes-21-days-make-resolution-habit-triple-n2881.

purification. While this theological element was not the primary driver for a six-week pilot program, it is worth noting as one factor included in the choice.

Adaptations for COVID-19

As originally planned, this project would have begun and ended as much as possible with face-to-face, in-person interviews with chaplains. Corporate COVID-19 restrictions, however, prohibited in-person gatherings of field staff. Almost all communication, therefore, was done from a distance by email. Although video conferencing options were possible, I chose to limit most communication to email not only to abide by corporate restrictions but to choose a less technology- and time-demanding alternative. As mentioned in the first two chapters, a common theme found both in earlier research, and from my own experience, is that recent explosions in communications technology have contributed to the need for sabbath rest away from the "anxiety systems" fostered by such technologies.[2] For that reason, therefore, the communication media used in this project—email messaging, attachments to be printed and filled out, in-person interviews when allowable—was intentionally but not conspicuously less-than cutting edge.

Building a Group and Gaining Buy-in

My first emailing inviting participation in the pilot program was sent September 1, 2020, via internal company email to thirty-six chaplains in twenty-six offices. The initial email briefly described the pilot project as a program to help both initial participants and those who might later benefit from our experiences to avoid compassion fatigue through cultivating intentional sabbath. This mailing also mentioned the collaborative nature of the project and that all information that might identify participants would be kept confidential. In keeping with all mailings during the project, I attempted to minimize the amount of time and effort required to participate in the

2. The term "anxiety system" comes from Brueggemann, 35. For treatments of the sabbatical benefit of breaks from technology, see Calhoun, 44-45; Wells, 118; and Comerinsky.

program. In this and subsequent mailings I therefore attempted to follow, with varying degrees of success, the one-screen rule, whereby the entire text of an email message can be viewed and read without scrolling. Text of this and all following group emails is included in Appendix A.

Of the thirty-six chaplains initially contacted, fourteen eventually responded by email requesting more information. In addition, one nurse and two social workers also requested information to begin collaborating in the pilot project. Beginning September 3, 2020, these seventeen enquirers received the second email, with participants included as blind carbon copy recipients to provide anonymity even among participants. This second email included the following attachments—included here in Appendix A—in MS-Word format: one-page program overview; one-page informed consent form and one-page, seven-question initial survey, both to be completed and returned; and one page of ideas for getting started with developing a personalized sabbath program. Returning the informed consent form and, ideally, the initial questionnaire constituted the beginning of formal participation in the program.

Ideas for developing a personalized sabbath program included suggestions for weekly, daily, and hourly sabbath practices. Weekly practices included such ideas as setting aside one day each week to wake up without an alarm, limit or avoid electronic media, be present with family, pray, and spend time outside to contemplate the beauty of creation. Suggested daily practices included scheduling times each day to turn off phone and other media, practicing calming breathing, and taking ten- to twenty-minute breaks each day for praying, listening to music, or napping. Suggested hourly practices included taking a minute or two before or after visiting each patient to relax and pray.

Of the seventeen—fourteen chaplains and three others—who requested and received more information in the second emailing, ten chaplains, one nurse, and one social worker

eventually returned informed consent forms. Of those returning consent forms, all but one, a chaplain, also returned responses to the initial survey. I also took part in the pilot program both as organizer and chaplain participant, bringing the initial number of participants to thirteen.

Each Week's Email

Each Tuesday morning beginning September 8, 2020, I sent a short email to each of the participants encouraging them in their efforts. Four of these six weekly emails included a question for participants to answer, both to gather information about strengths and weaknesses with the project itself and to encourage participants to reflect meaningfully on their own experiences. In these emails participants' addresses were included only in the blind carbon copy field so that their identities would remain confidential even from other participants. What's more, I sent these weekly mailings from my Harding email account to lessen any concerns that responses would be monitored by corporate management on the internal email system. In turn, two of twelve recipients chose to receive emails on their personal, rather than company, email accounts.

In an effort to avoid fueling any possible idea that this sabbath self-care project is something we should view as work or effort, I made a point in early emails to avoid any use of words such as work, effort, and the like. But after email conversations with my academic advisor and several informal conversations with participants, I began in the fifth week's email to face head-on the reality that finding time for sustaining rest may take a little work.

Texts of each week's emailings are included in Appendix A. Participants' responses, lightly redacted to remove identifiable information, are also included.

Final Survey

Of the thirteen total participants who began the pilot program, nine completed all six weeks up through returning the final questionnaire. A copy of this final email text, along with survey questions, is included in Appendix A. Results of all survey questions along with evaluations and recommendations for offering a sabbath self-care program to a wider group within Kindred at Home, are included in the following chapter.

Additional Follow-up

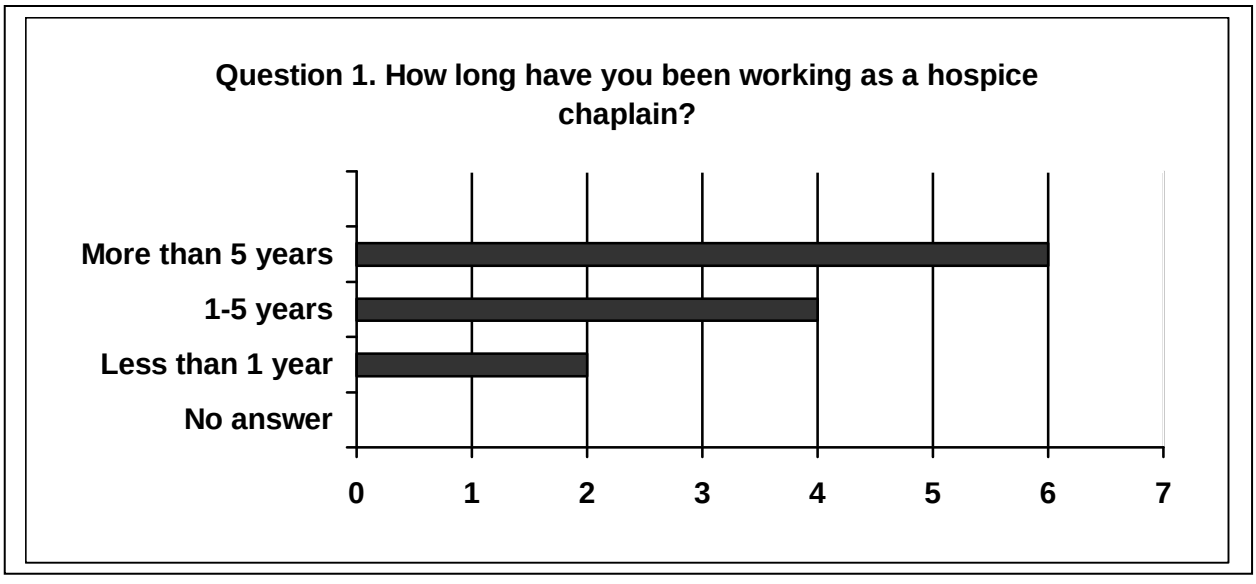
I also spoke by phone or in person with three participants who began but did not complete the six-week pilot program. Their responses are also summarized and evaluated in the following chapter.

Chapter 4. Results and Ideas for Going Forward

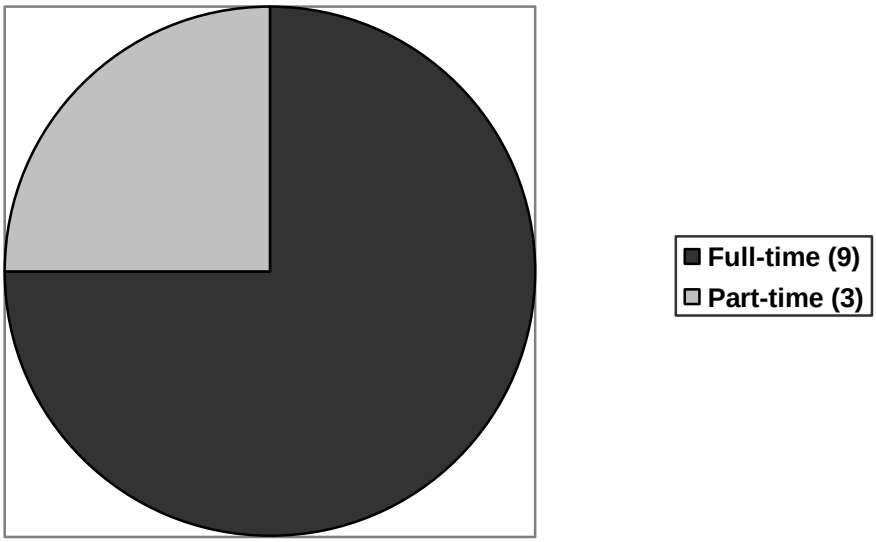
Responses to Initial Survey

Of the seventeen chaplains and others who responded to the first, invitational email and received information on beginning the program, twelve returned an informed consent form, and of those twelve, eleven completed the initial, seven-question, multiple-choice survey. I also completed the survey and am including my answers along with the other responses.

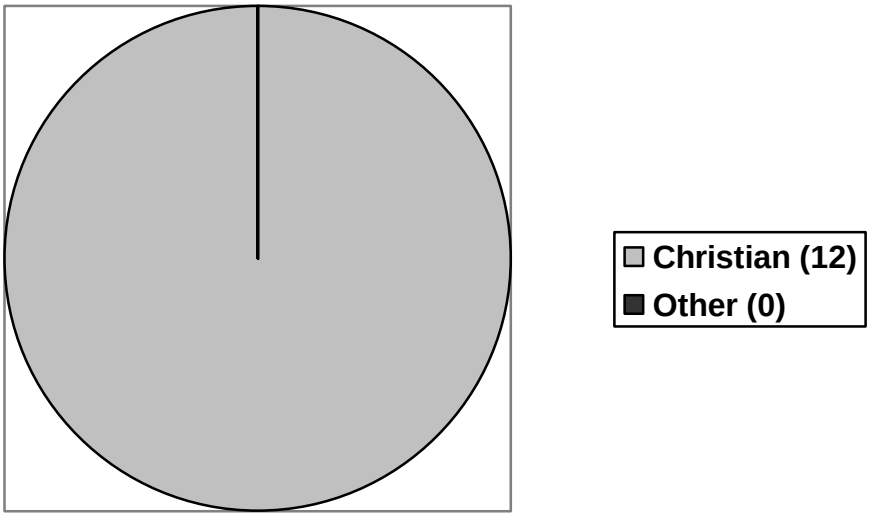
The first three questions of the survey gathered cursory demographic information on participants. Of twelve participants responding to the survey, two had worked in hospice for less than two years, four had been working in hospice from one to five years, and six had more than five years experience in hospice. Nine participants work full-time in hospice while three work part time. All twelve participants identify as Christian. These responses are summarized in the following three tables.



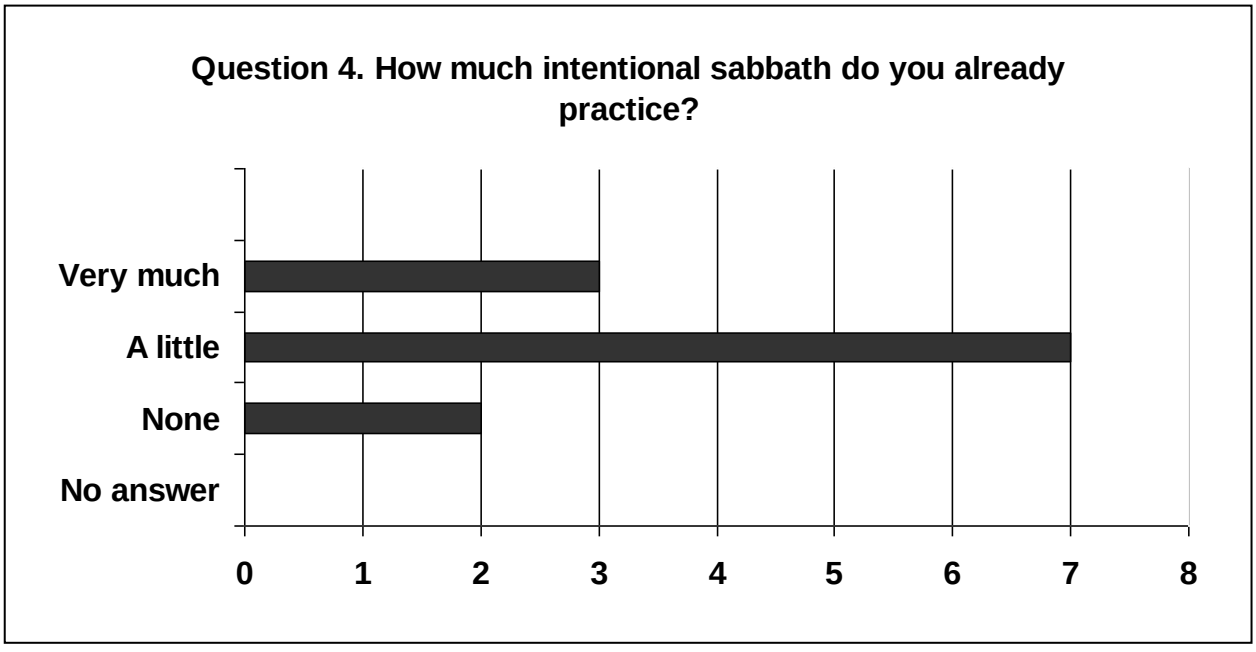
Question 2. Do you work full-time or part-time in hospice?

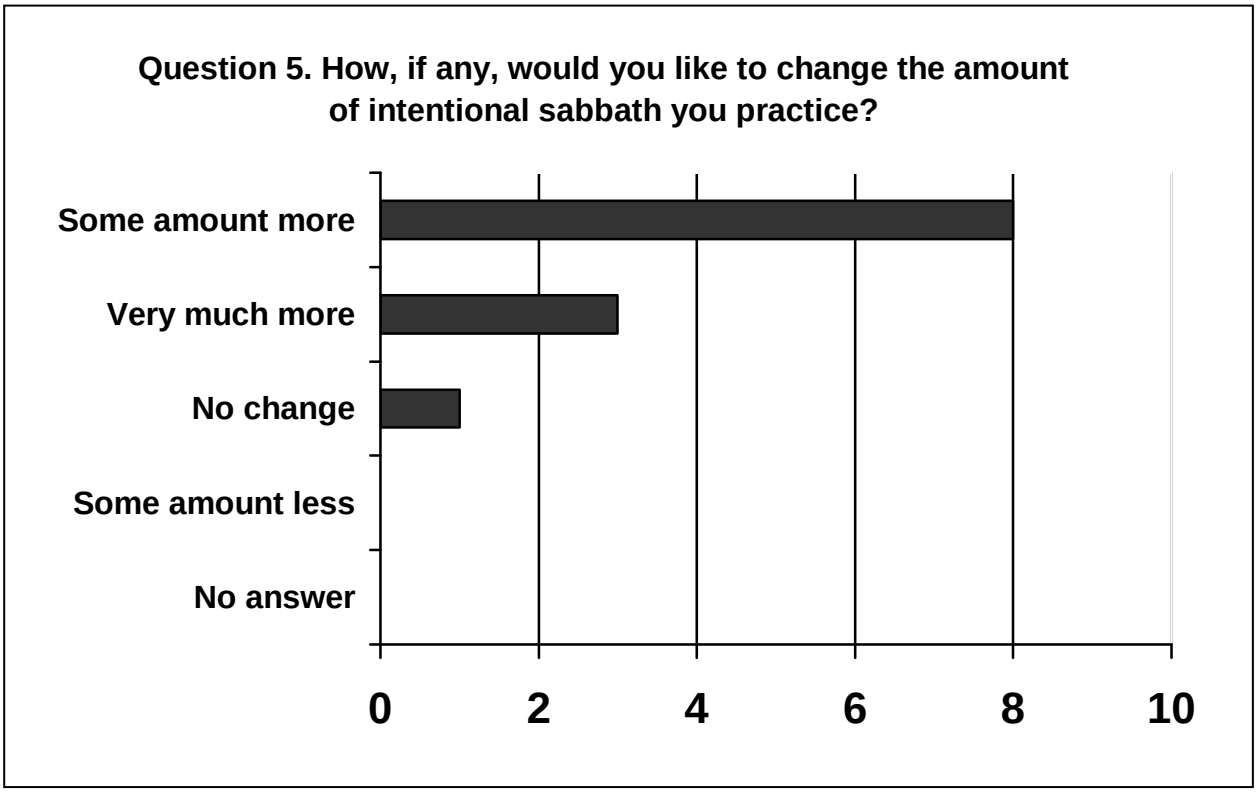


Question 3. What is your faith affiliation?

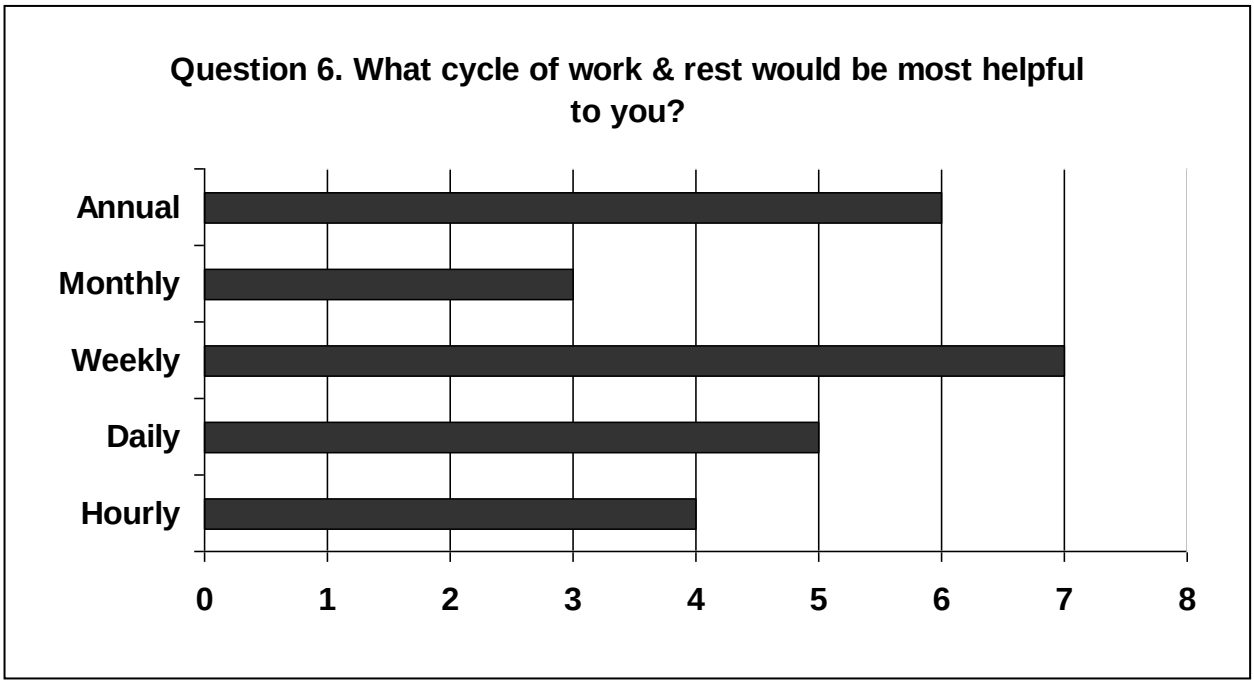


The final four survey questions relate to participants' attitudes toward and practices of sabbath, along with their expectations of benefiting from participation in the pilot program. When asked how much sabbath he or she already practiced, three participants reported already practicing very much intentional sabbath, seven reported practicing a little, and two reported practicing none. When asked whether or not he or she would like to change the amount of intentional sabbath practiced, eight responded that they would like to practice some amount more, three stated a desire to practice very much more, and one selected the choice, "Neutral – no change." Responses to questions 4 and 5 are summarized in the two following tables.

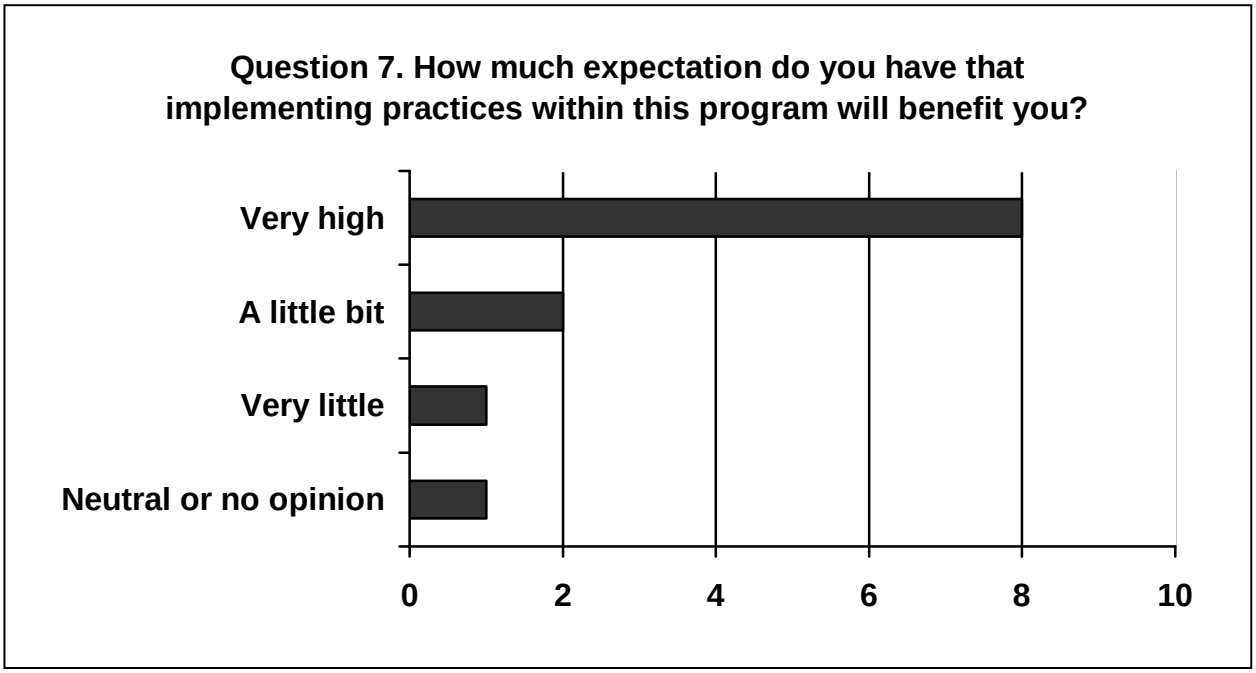




Those who desired to practice more intentional sabbath were asked to indicate what time-frame of an intentional sabbath cycle would be most helpful. Participants were allowed to choose more than one time frame, and one participant chose all five options: annual, monthly, weekly, daily, and hourly. Because each participant could choose more than one answer, the number of replies for this question is greater than the number of those responding. The most-chosen answer, at seven, was weekly sabbath: one day of rest or renewal each week. Six participants chose annual sabbath: a week or two of vacation or retreat every year. Five chose daily sabbath: an hour or two each day to unwind and refocus. Four chose hourly sabbath: a few minutes each hour to relax, stretch, and clear the mind. The least chosen, at three, was monthly sabbath: a weekend retreat or similar activity each month. These responses are summarized in the following table.



The last initial survey question asked participants how much expectation they have that implementing practices within the pilot program will be helpful in their own hospice work. Eight of twelve participants chose "very high expectation," two chose "a little bit of expectation," and one each chose "very little expectation," and "neutral or no opinion."

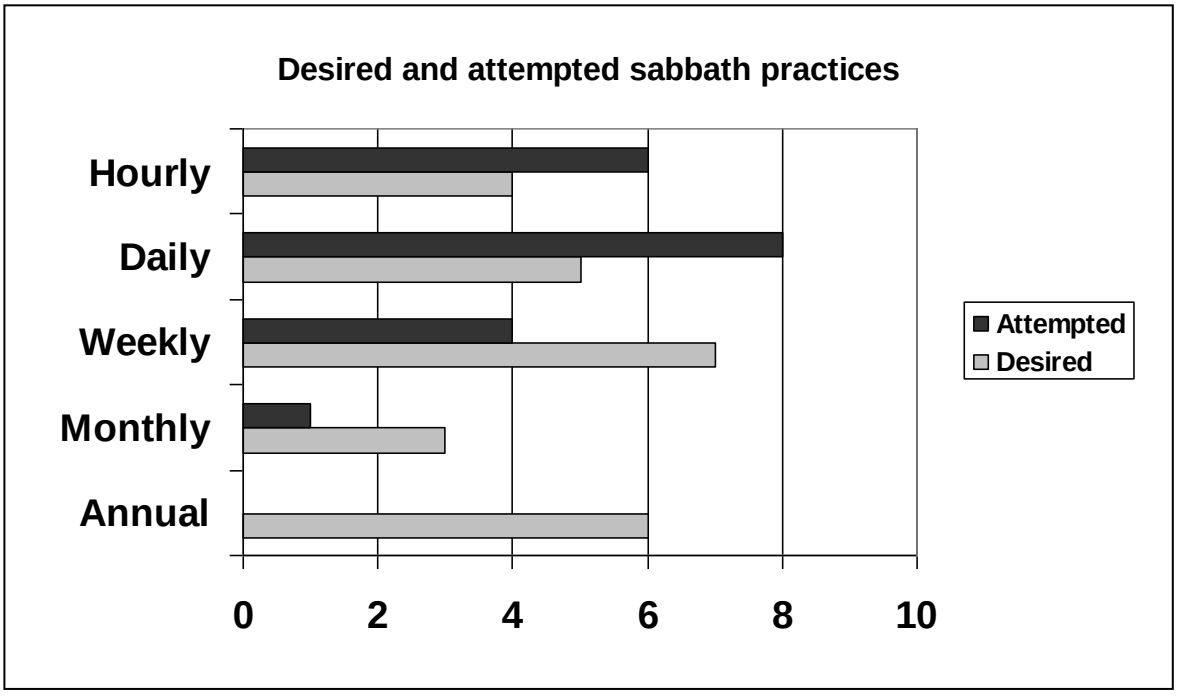


Responses to Weekly Email Questions

Four weekly emails—weeks 1, 2, 4, and 5—requested responses from participants. Those responses are summarized here. Complete responses are included in Appendix A.

Week One (Eleven of twelve participants responding)

The week one email asked each participant to explain briefly what his or her sabbath plan includes. Responses generally corresponded with desired sabbath practices expressed by participants in the initial survey with a couple of unsurprising exceptions: monthly and annual sabbath. Although three participants expressed a desire to add monthly weekend retreat to his or her sabbath practice, only one attempted to do so. And although six participants in the initial survey expressed a desire to practice sabbath in the form of a week or two of vacation, none reported scheduling a vacation during or as a result of this pilot project. A summary of participants' desires for sabbath practice—including my own—both before beginning the project and what they subsequently chose is shown in the following table.



The differences between desired and attempted sabbath practices along all given time frames may be interpreted in a variety of ways. For monthly and annual sabbath, the fact that fewer participants attempted these practices than desired to do so is likely no more than a result of time limitations inherent in a six-week program. That more participants attempted hourly and daily practices may well be a result of sharing my own plan, at the beginning of the program, for doing sabbath practices in those time frames. The fact that more participants expressed a desire to do weekly sabbath practices than actually did so is not as easily explained but may be a result of an unstated but perhaps implicit understanding that the program was focused on finding intentional rest during work days.

The most common level of sabbath practice was daily with eight participants choosing this time frame. Daily sabbath practices took a variety of forms. Four participants either added or continued morning quiet times for Scripture reading and prayer, particularly prayers of gratitude for blessings or "for peace and refreshment." Two participants planned to eliminate screen time in early mornings and late evenings. One participant committed to taking a walk at the end of each work day, and another participant included "recreation" as part of sabbath practices. Another chose to add instrumental music during the drives between home visits. One participant committed to "going to bed at a decent hour to be prepared and rested for the next day."

Four participants chose to add or continue weekly sabbath practices. For one participant this level of sabbath takes the form of "driving as little as possible on the weekends to give me a break from being in my car so much during the week." Another participant chose to walk in the park each week with his or her dog. One participant incorporated reflective writing of one or two hours each weekend. Another committed to "travel to a nature site for a four-hour time of solitude, meditative prayer and journaling." One participant planned to "[s]et aside time weekly

to do something fun/nourishing activity apart from home or work responsibilities."

Six participants chose to practice "micro sabbaths": a minute or two of quiet time before or after each visit to pray for wisdom and grace. Two participants planned to practice meditative prayer, intentional breathing, and centering during these micro-sabbaths.

Week Two (Seven of twelve participants responding)

This email, sent September 15, 2020, asked participants how COVID-19 related adaptations affected chaplains' need for sabbath. These adaptations included the mandatory wearing of masks, gloves, and goggles on all visits. Prohibitions on entry at many if not most assisted living and skilled nursing facilities also required chaplains to find other ways to visit patients and families through window, phone, and video visits. Only six participants, all chaplains, responded to this survey. I am including my responses here as well.

Four chaplains reported having a greatly increased need for sabbath rest as a result of COVID-19 adaptations. One chaplain commented that "Adjusting to new protocols and distance can be exhausting." Two chaplains reported a somewhat increased need or desire for sabbath rest, while one reported being neutral or having no opinion.

Week Four (Seven of twelve participants responding)

Seven participants, including me, responded to this email, which simply asked, "How is the intentional practice of Sabbath going for you so far?"

Three participants reported that protocols and requirements ostensibly instituted in response to COVID-19 were adding a level of stress that, while increasing the need for sabbath practice, made the follow-through more difficult. One participant went to some length at describing these difficulties:

> I have noticed a difficult time practicing my daily Sabbath, or even weekly opportunities. I think I am feeling too mindful of other things, namely my practice in the midst of the

> pandemic and all the company is requiring of me outside of my usual presence and support. It seems exhausting and I think that unfortunately bleeds over into the intentional time of rest. I am working on this anew in the days to come.

My own experience was quite similar to this chaplain's with the exception that my daily sabbath practices did not suffer as much as the micro-sabbaths I attempted to practice for a minute or two before each visit.

Several other participants also shared that they were having most trouble with daily and hourly practices. But several expressed that taking the time and effort yielded benefits. All participants' email responses are included in Appendix A.

Week Five (October 6, 2020) (Seven of twelve responding)

The email sent to participants at the beginning of week five asked, "What have you found to help in staying on track in practicing intentional Sabbath?" Seven participants, including me, provided responses.

Helpful practices including adding sabbath practices to one's to-do list, leaving home to rest, making sabbath part of one's routine, and simply remembering to do it. One participant reported planning to put a note on his or her vehicle's dashboard as a reminder to practice micro-sabbaths. I tried this suggestion as well and found that it worked for a few days but soon became part of the background and something I simply ignored. One participant noted that an increased number of deaths made following the sabbath plan more challenging. Responses to this week's email are included in Appendix A.

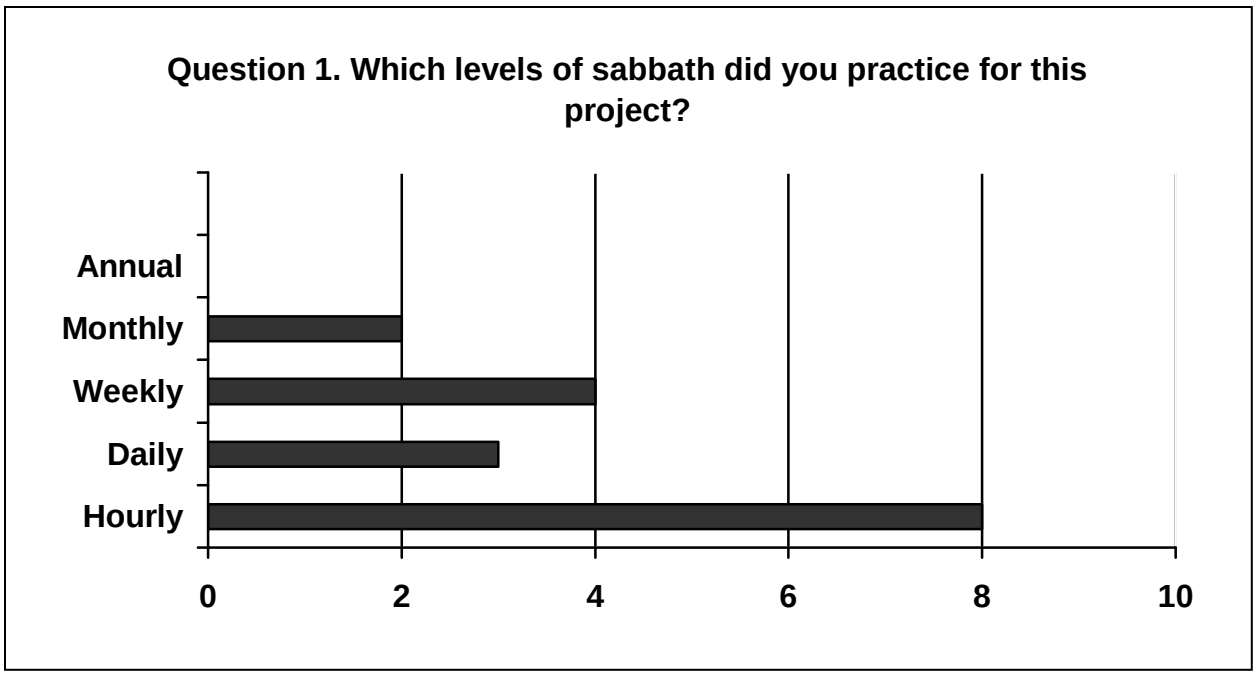
In addition to these initial responses, several participants added information informally either in follow-up emails or in-person discussions. These follow-up communications with participants revealed that several found the weekly, Tuesday-morning emails to be encouragement to continue in the program. Another noted that the emails provided a sense of

virtual community in a time when clinicians were feeling isolated from many patients, family, and staff due to COVID-19 protocols.

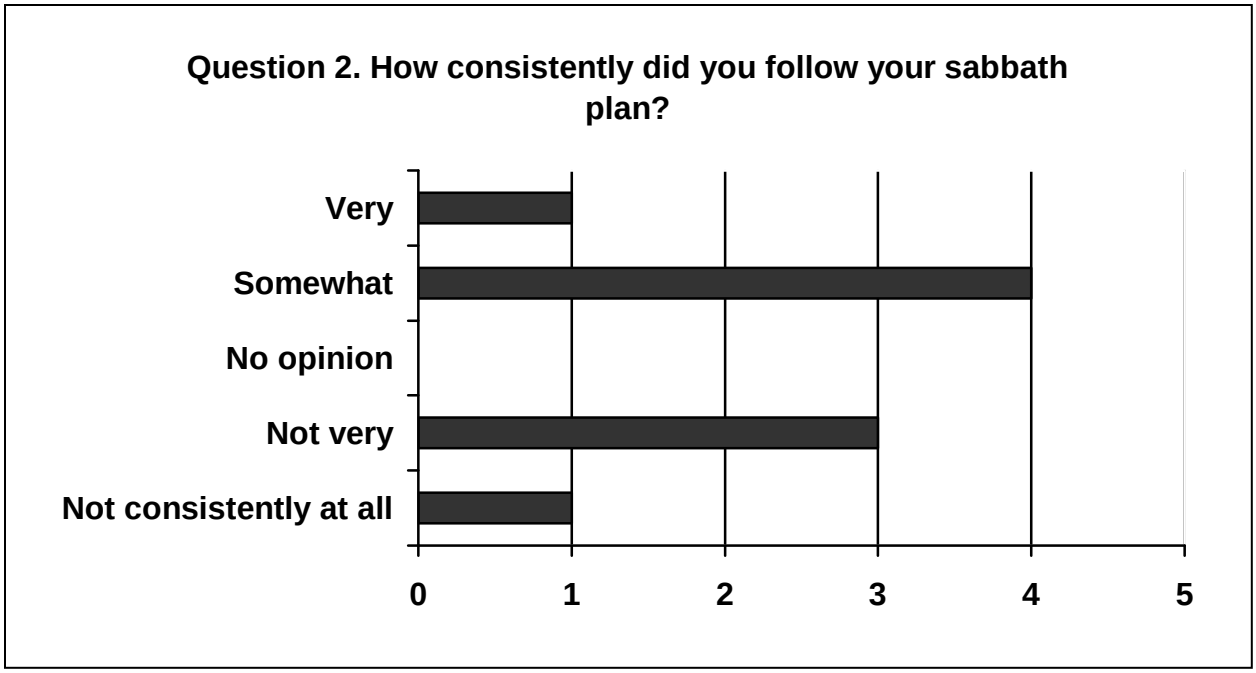
Responses to Final Survey

The final survey was completed by nine participants, all chaplains. The survey included six multiple-choice questions followed by six open-ended questions. Because all communication was electronic, participants were encouraged to answer each open-ended question at whatever length he or she desired. One participant also provided essay-length responses to several of the multiple choice questions. Because these essay-length responses contained a substantial amount of information unique to that participant, it is included in this report only in relevant part.

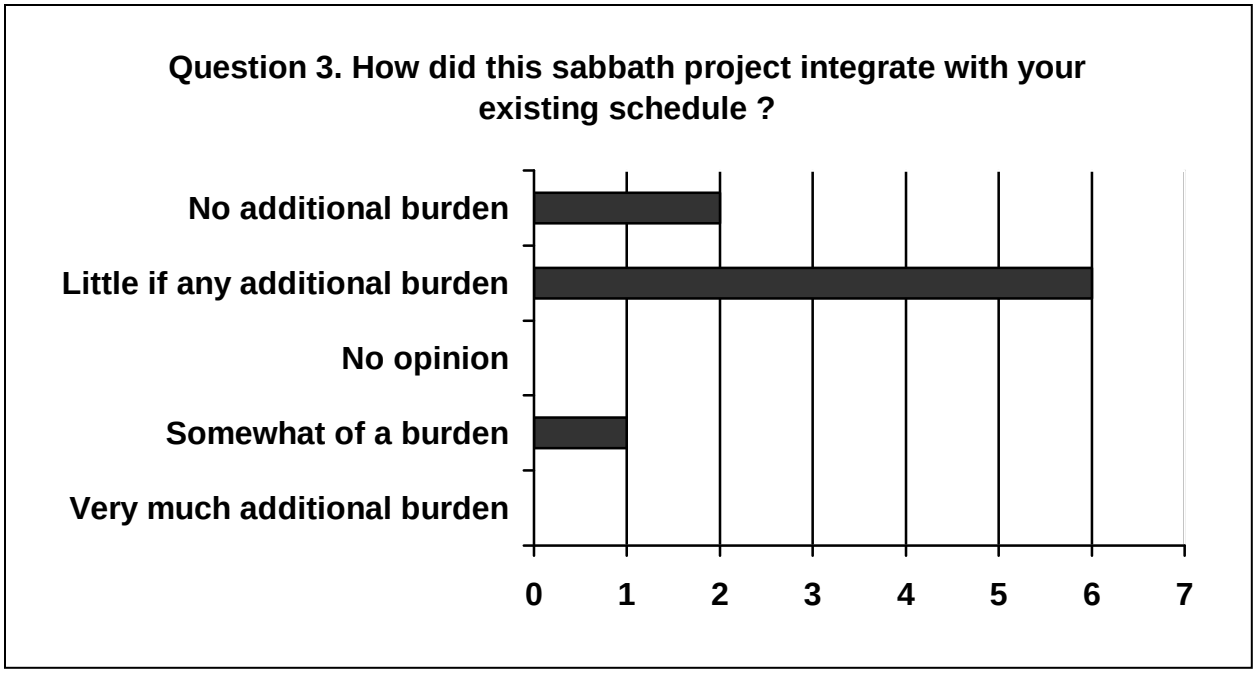
The first multiple-choice question on the final survey asked participants what levels of sabbath he or she attempted to practice for the project. The most common level, with eight of nine participants attempting this type of intentional sabbath, was hourly: a few minutes through each day to relax, stretch, and clear the mind. Four participants practiced weekly sabbath with one day or rest and renewal each week. Three practiced daily sabbath: an hour or two each day to unwind and refocus, and two practiced monthly sabbath: a weekend retreat or similar activity each month. None practiced annual sabbath during this pilot project. Responses to this question, including mine, are shown in the following table.



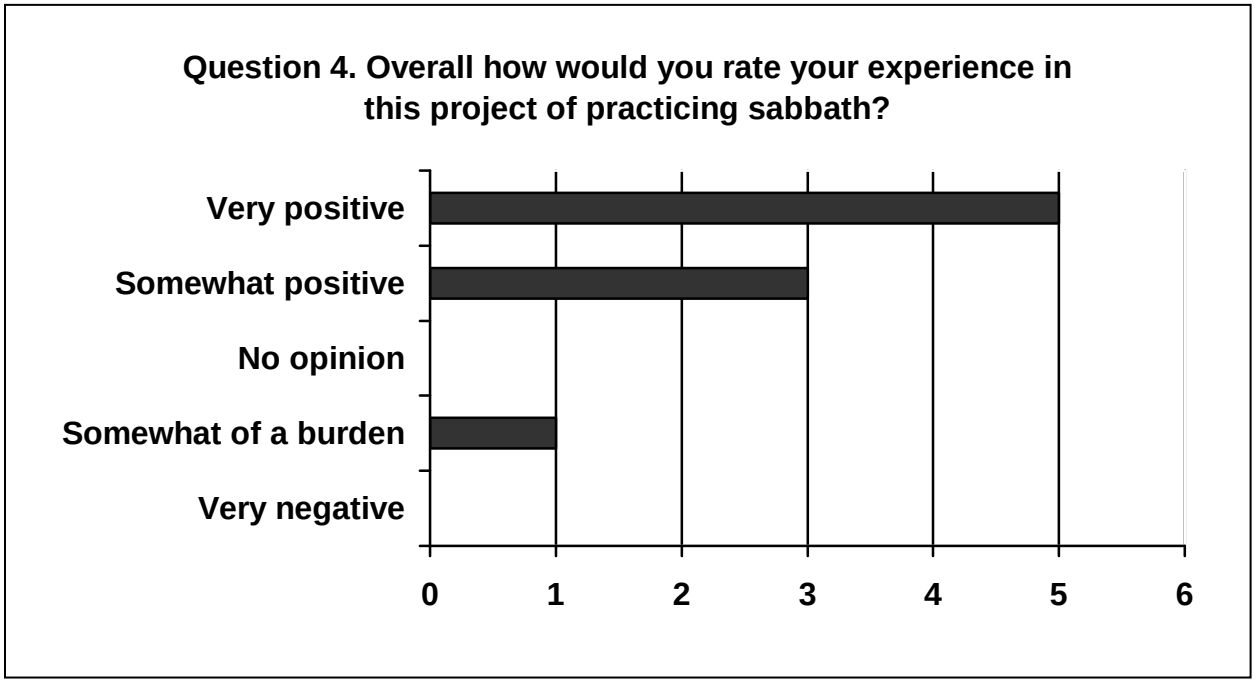
The second survey question asked participants how consistently he or she followed the initial sabbath plan. Out of nine participants completing the program, only one reported following a plan very consistently, four reported following somewhat consistently, and four reported being not very consistent or not consistent at all.



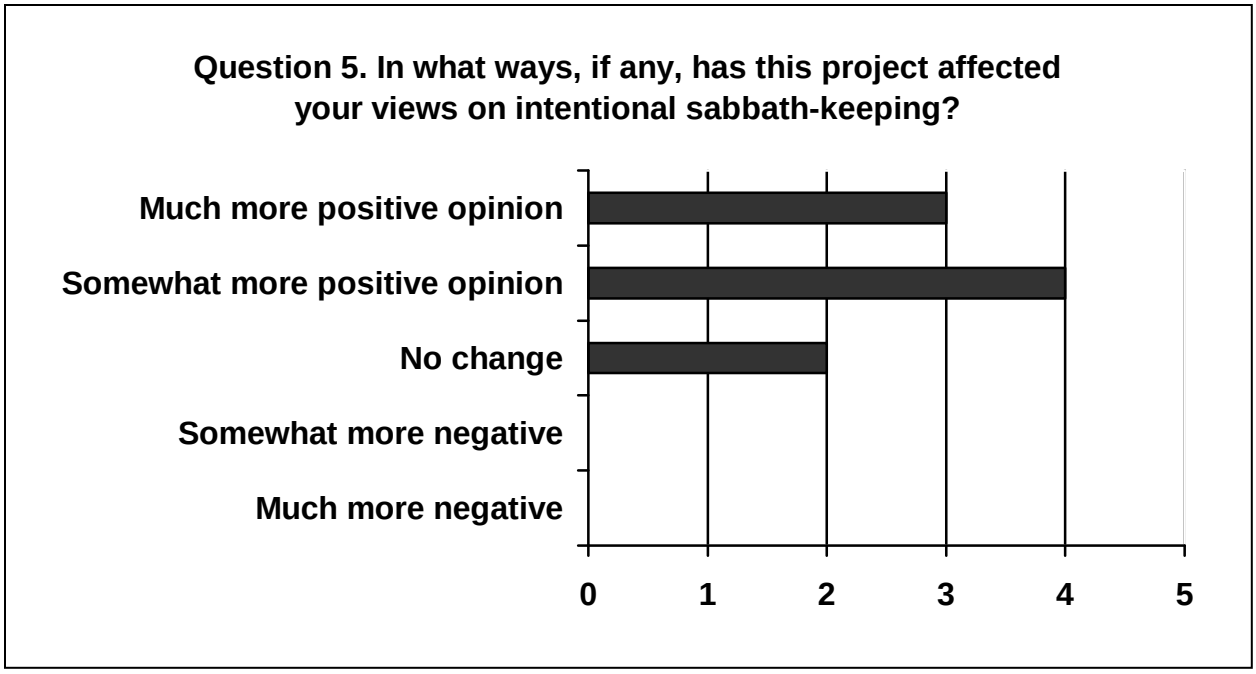
When asked how much burden the sabbath project was in relation to each participant's existing schedule, none reported it being very much additional burden and only one reported it being somewhat of a burden. The majority, six participants, reported that the project added little if any burden, and two responded that it constituted no additional burden. Results of this question are included in the following table.



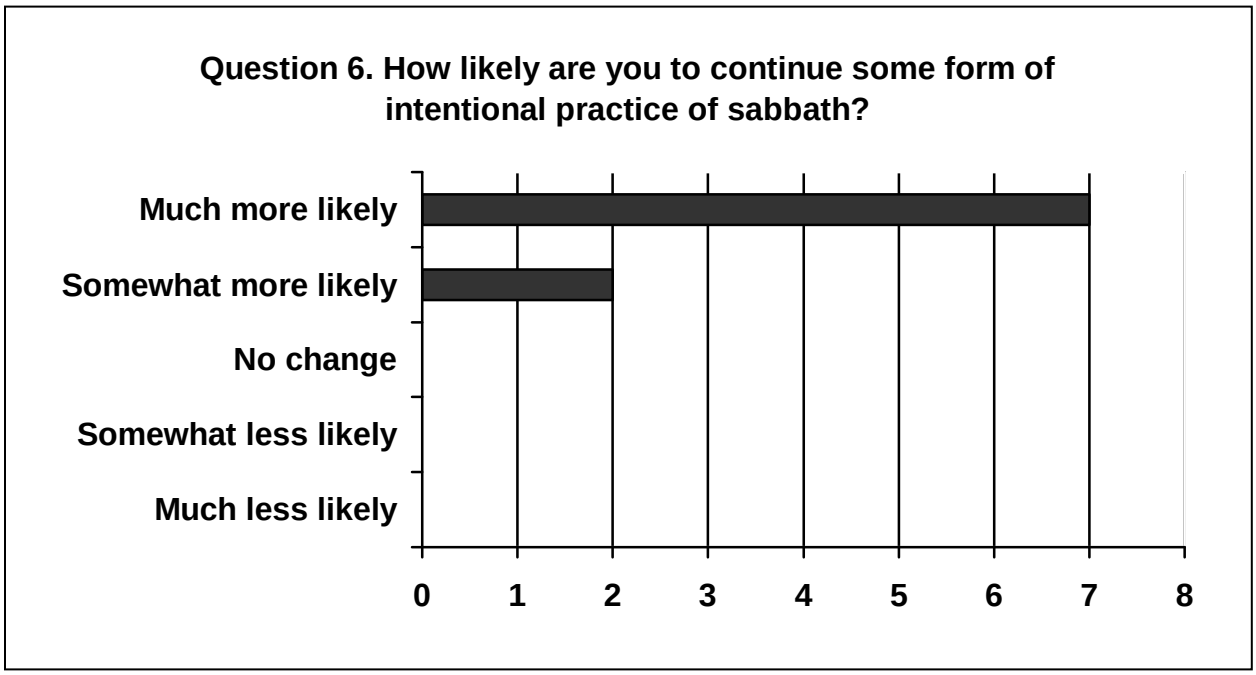
Question 4 asked participants to rate their experience in terms of how positive or negative the experience was overall. The majority, five, reported a very positive experience, and three reported a somewhat positive experience. One participant described the experience as somewhat negative, and none chose very negative as a response.



When each participant was asked how the project has affected his or her views on the value of intentional sabbath-keeping, three reported a much more positive opinion, four expressed a somewhat more positive opinion, and two responded with "Neutral or no change." No participant reported having a more negative opinion of sabbath-keeping as a result of the project. Responses to this question are summarized below.



Regarding how likely each participant was to continue practicing some form of intentional sabbath, all responded in the affirmative. Two reported being "somewhat more likely to continue" while seven of nine responded with "much more likely." These results are shown in the following table.



Questions 7 through 12 were open-ended requests for input. Responses are summarized here, based primarily on survey responses but in some cases also on follow-up conversations and emails. Because this portion of the survey evaluates process, my own answers are not included with those of the eight other chaplains who completed the pilot project. Complete survey responses are included in Appendix A.

When participants were asked what they found most helpful about the project, half responded that the weekly, Tuesday-morning emails were most helpful. Three participants suggested that the reminders on the importance of resting, and particularly practicing new time-frames such as "micro-sabbaths," was helpful. One participant "found the invitation to participate and practice for a defined period of time most helpful," and another chaplain noted the helpfulness of self-care during the stresses created by COVID-19 practice limitations.

When asked what was least helpful, several participants had little to offer other than to comment on the difficulties of their own discipline, diligence, and follow-through. One participant noted that "Chiding myself for not being more 'successful' at my practice was the least helpful aspect of my experience." Most relevant for going forward with future sabbath programs was the suggestion of "providing a more extensive list of suggested practices and/or reading materials."

Question 9 asked participants if anything surprised them about efforts at practicing sabbath. The most common response, from half of participants, was how difficult sustaining their practices turned out to be. One participant discovered that "I have more of a drive to power through than slow down and make intentional efforts at rest." Another participant commented on the restrictiveness of his or her corporate context is practicing intentional sabbath. One participant expressed surprise in looking forward to the Tuesday morning emails.

The next survey question asked participants what they might have discovered "about yourself, others, or God that might be helpful to those in future Sabbath self-care programs." Responses were wide-ranging and included discovering the absence of sabbath rest in one's own life, the difficulty in slowing down, and the benefits of setting attainable goals and adding rest to one's life.

The final two survey questions were open-ended appeals for recommendations regarding future programs. One participant enjoyed being able to formulate his or her own sabbath plan. Another reiterated the helpfulness of weekly emails. Another participant suggested offering a "reading list of resources." One participant suggested anonymous sharing of other participants' experiences "as a way from learning from one another." One participant suggested prompting

participants to do more writing and to consider incorporating Parker Palmer's Circle of Trust process.[1]

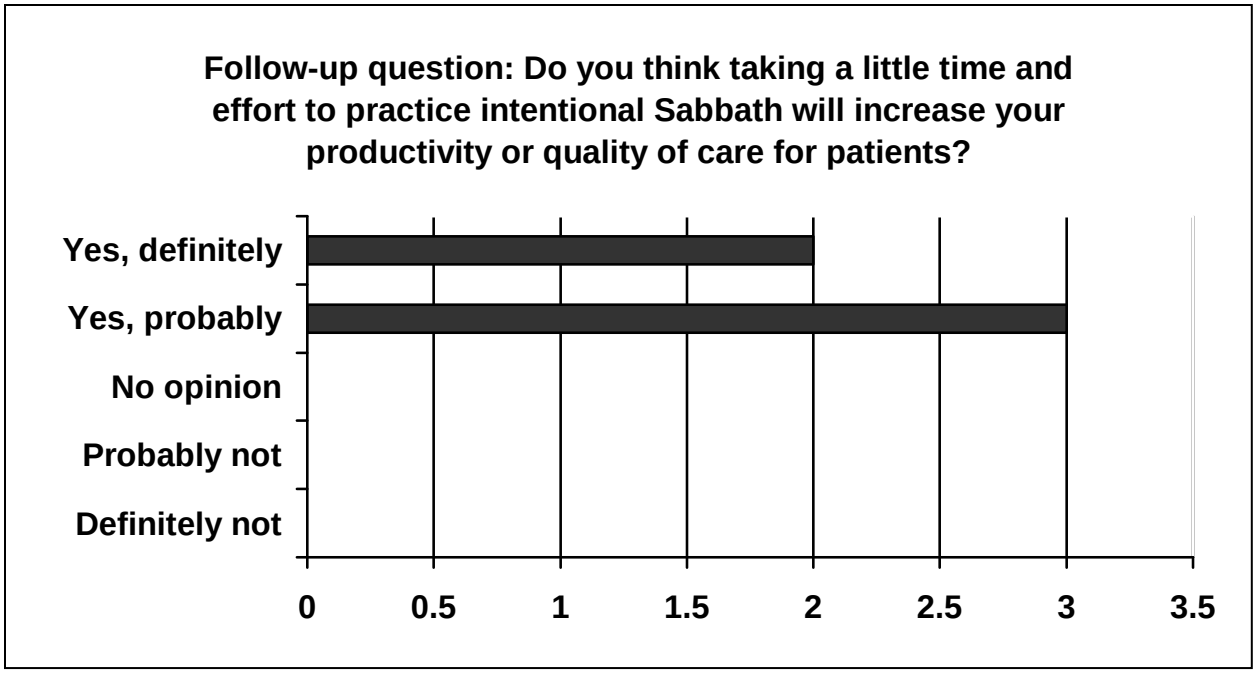
Informal Survey of Those Not Completing the Program

Following completion of the pilot project I was able to speak with three hospice workers who did not complete the program to find out why they had not done so. In all three cases, interviewees stated that they already had what amounted to regular sabbath times built into their routines. Two described their daily routine of working more or less non-stop during the day and then relaxing at home in the evening. The third described taking quiet prayer time before the beginning of each work day with a special time set aside one night each week to spend with fellow Christians.

Follow-Up Question

A follow-up email, sent six weeks after project completion, asked participants who completed the program whether or not they predict practicing intentional sabbath within the context of hospice chaplaincy will increase productivity or quality of patient care. Four of eight chaplains completing the program responded to this follow up question with all reporting that they believe practicing intentional sabbath will improve productivity or quality of patient care.

1. For information on the Circle of Trust process, see "The Circle of Trust Approach," *Center for Courage and Renewal*, accessed January 9, 2021, http://www.couragerenewal.org/approach/.



Evaluation – What Worked Well

A primary purpose of this pilot program was to investigate the feasibility of implementing the program to a wider corporate community within Kindred at Home. What follows, therefore, is a summary of both what is worth retaining in a future program, and areas for potential improvement.

Perhaps this project's most significant take-away came clear through both the pilot project itself and informal discussions with participants. That is that chaplains and other hospice workers are hungry to receive what sabbath practice offers: a more peaceful presence among anxious situations, relief from corporate-culture pressure, and a break from a widespread and overpowering electronic media landscape. Although participants almost without exception admitted that following their sabbath plans had been difficult, most also acknowledged that the effort helped them to discern the benefits of intentional sabbath and to see the need for continued sabbath practice.

The most appreciated elements of this pilot program, according to participants, was the gentle weekly reminders in the form of short, encouraging emails. At the outset of this pilot project I had hoped to eventually develop a stand-alone program that chaplains and other hospice clinicians would simply be able to download online and then implement individually, at their own time, at their own pace, and in their own way. As a result of this program, however, I see that the emails were gentle reminders and encouragers to participants that would be well to carry forward into any future programs. What's more, these emails suggested the need for expanding the communal aspect of the project in future iterations. Ideas for creating a more consciously communal project are included in the following section.

Participants also expressed appreciation for being able to shape their own plans, set attainable goals, and make the effort of changing habits within a predetermined period of time. Theologically, participants also showed no difficulty in accepting the idea of sabbath as a spiritual discipline for Christians and not merely a legalistic vestige of the old covenant.

Evaluation – Areas for Improvement

Based on participants' evaluations of their own experiences, the pilot project was generally successful in helping participants deal with the stresses of hospice chaplaincy in their own practice. As discussed above, several of the components from the pilot project should be included in future programs. In addition to revealing what should be retained, however, the project also yielded information on areas in which any future program could be made stronger. These areas for improvement for future sabbath programs are theological, practical, and a combination of both.

Theological Considerations

Theologically, this program did not initially face the issue on whether or not sabbath should be equated quite so uncritically with self-care. As the project began I assumed that because "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath," that self-care was an adequate foundation for practicing intentional sabbath. Subsequent research, however, as discussed here in Chapter 2, revealed that the entire issue of sabbath as self-care is an issue of substantial theological debate. In fact, self-care may be an important element of sabbath practice, but certainly no more so than those of Christian obedience and character development. Future self-care programs, especially for chaplains, should therefore include a deeper discussion of this richer theological context and avoid blithely positing self-care as a central purpose of sabbath.

Adding a richer theological background to future sabbath self-care programs might have the unintended consequence of limiting the appeal of the program to other hospice disciplines, such as nurses, social workers, and nursing assistants. Two points should be noted in that regard, however. First, the program was initiated specifically with chaplains in mind. Secondly, within this pilot project, which included the lightest of theological background, all non-chaplain employees who expressed an interest in the program either did not follow through in beginning the program or dropped out before its completion.

None of these considerations are to say that non-chaplain clinicians or non-Christian chaplains should be excluded from future programs. In fact, few adaptations would be needed to help those of other disciplines participate in the program. But one conclusion of the pilot program is that something is needed for chaplains per se.

Practical Areas for Improvement

From a practical standpoint, those chaplains with whom I had a previous relationship were much more likely to finish the program. Although the project sample was small, these results, along with expressions of appreciation for weekly emails, suggest that interpersonal relationships within any future sabbath-care group would play a part in that group's effectiveness.

Another practical area for improvement is providing a more extensive list of recommended sabbath practices at the outset of a sabbath self-care program. Although participants in this pilot project generally expressed an appreciation for being able to develop their own programs, at least one participant suggested that more examples of sabbath practices might be helpful. The following table, therefore, is an expanded version of the "Getting Started in Practicing Sabbath" handout given to participants at the beginning of the program and included here in Appendix A.

Suggestions for Sabbath Practices

Weekly Sabbath. Set aside a day or part of a day without work, screen time, or worry.

- Turn off your alarm; sleep until you're ready to wake up.
- Avoid looking at phones, tablets, and television, especially at meals.
- Pray and meditate. Focus on thanksgiving, adoration, and praise.
- Be present with family, but avoid letting "family time" become work and worry.
- Spend time outside or looking out a window and contemplate the beauty of creation.
- Take a walk without pushing yourself to reach a destination or achieve a certain level of exercise. Simply enjoy what God has made and all that surrounds you.
- Spend time with friends, especially fellow Christians. Don't center the gathering around work or accomplishment; simply be together, possibly for a meal.
- Choose a purposeful but relaxing activity to do with others but one that does not slide into striving or competition. Relevant activities are whatever works for you—singing, telling stories, or reading the Bible or another book out-loud together.
- Have a family reading time where family members gather together in one room but each reads his or her own book silently.

Daily Sabbath. Choose one or two periods of 10-20 minutes each day for refreshment.

- Turn off your phone and tablet at set times each day, such as early morning, supper time, or late evening.
- Practice deep, calming breathing for a few minutes each day.
- Take a 10-minute break during the work day to listen to music.
- Take 15-minute breaks morning and evening to pray for peace and refreshment.
- If you have a daily quiet time, be alert for your thoughts drifting into thinking of work, and turn them back to prayer, meditation, or Bible reading.
- Take a 20-minute lunchtime nap.
- Set aside time each day for one "nourishing activity" of 10-20 minutes. Activities might include talking to friends or family, listening to music, reading, or prayer.
- Take time at the end of each day to journal. Think of one or more ways God has blessed you that day and write them down.

Hourly Sabbath. Develop a routine for incorporating "micro-Sabbath" into your day.

- Take one or two minutes in your vehicle before each visit to set down the tablet and breathe deeply and slowly. Pray to be present with patient and family. Ask God to make you a minister of peace, reconciliation, and love.
- Take a minute or two after each visit to pray for grace to those you have met.
- When working at home or in the office, set an alarm each hour to spend five minutes disengaging from screen time, breathing deeply, and giving thanks to God.
- Whenever you feel yourself becoming anxious, close your eyes, breathe deeply, and give silent thanks to God for life and love and redemption in Christ.
- Every time you sync your tablet, close your eyes, relax, and silently repeat to yourself an encouraging Bible verse or line from a hymn.

One of the strengths of this program was the effort taken to avoid leading participants to view rest as labor. In fact, however, it does take effort to find rest, especially in the hurried world in which we live. In the future, therefore, it would also be wise to face this reality directly and make the most of the truth that rest takes work.

A related area for improvement is to address the topic of compassion fatigue more directly and consistently throughout the project. Although initial readings introduced the concept of compassion fatigue, follow-up questions did not directly address the topic by that term. This lack of emphasis on compassion fatigue per se was done to avoid demanding a level of personal and professional analysis that might easily have become burdensome to participants. If the purpose is to help chaplains avoid compassion fatigue, however, then future programs should address the topic more consistently, albeit with a light touch that does not demand excessive intellectual expenditure by participants.

Other possible areas for improvement include incorporating writing, sharing experiences among group members, and providing participants with resources for further reading. With permission of participants, future programs might also benefit from the shared experiences of those who participated in this pilot program.

Practical and Theological Considerations

Another area of improvement is fostering community in the practice of sabbath. Participants' input throughout the program has pointed up the benefits of practicing sabbath within Christian community rather than alone. I began the pilot program with the goal of developing a stand-alone sabbath program for individual clinicians. As initially envisioned, participants would download material such as background readings and perhaps a workbook, and then move along each at his or her individual pace. Week five responses in particular, however,

reinforce a theme that arose throughout the pilot project: that setting up some kind of program for isolated practitioners simply isn't the best way to proceed. Hospice chaplaincy can be lonely at times, and fostering a community of support is not only practical but, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, theologically sound.

Final Thoughts

Although the idea of encouraging workers to rest on the job may appear counter-productive, the practice is already being implemented by a number of companies.[2] Unilever, for example, offers employees a "wellbeing zone" for "mindfulness, meditation, and recovery."[3] Other corporations, including Ben and Jerry's, Nike, and Zappos, offer nap rooms, while Google provides "nap pods" for employees to rest during the workday.[4] Making space for rest is intended to help employees be more productive in the long run by allowing them to "recharge and get ready to work at full productivity."[5] Results of the current study are a small-scale affirmation of that concept.

During this study several participants shared that they did not follow their sabbath plan very consistently, and I was one of those. As much as hospice chaplains strive to care non-anxiously for our patients, their families, and ourselves, we are in fact part of a corporate culture that expects and rewards performance. But even as my own sabbath performance was lacking, through the work of this project I nevertheless developed an increased appreciation for the

2. See, for example, Lisa Evans, "Why You Should Let Your Employees Nap at Work," *Entrepreneur*, August 24, 2014, accessed February 25, 2021, https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/236755.

3. Joseph Barberio, "10 Companies With Incredible Office Health and Wellness Zones," *Working Mother*, March 2, 2017, accessed February 25, 2021, https://www.workingmother.com/10-companies-with-health-and-wellness-zones.

4. National Sleep Foundation, "Sleeping at Work: Companies with Nap Rooms and Snooze-Friendly Policies," *Sleep.org*, October 21, 2020, accessed February 25, 2021, https://www.sleep.org/sleeping-work-companies-nap-rooms-snooze-friendly-policies/.

5. Barberio. See also Eric Markowitz, "Should Your Employees Take Naps?" *Inc.*, August 12, 2011, accessed February 25, 2021, https://www.inc.com/articles/201108/sleeping-on-the-job-should-your-employees-take-naps.html.

beauty of God's creation, his love for that creation and especially his people, and the wisdom of better self-care. Based on the input from other participants, I was not alone in receiving these blessings from this self-care pilot project. It is my hope and prayer that others within Kindred at Home may one day also be blessed from an improved and expanded program.

Appendix A: Emails and Attachments

Text of First Email to Chaplains, September 1, 2020

This is Milton Stanley, chaplain with Avalon Hospice in Murfreesboro. I'm contacting you about a six-week pilot project with the potential to help chaplains find more refreshment in our work and serve patients and families more effectively. The ideas arose from my own struggles to overcome compassion fatigue. They are now my D.Min. project, and I have gotten approval for reaching out to fellow Kindred at Home chaplains in Tennessee for help putting these ideas into practice.

I hope you will be part of this project for incorporating practices of Sabbath rest into our work as chaplains—Sabbath not simply in the sense of one day out of seven, but as intentional practices of rest throughout the day. The program is simple, and I sincerely hope what little time it requires—how much, exactly, is up to you—will be more than repaid in personal refreshment and more compassionate care. The program is also collaborative. If you choose to participate I will provide suggestions for ways to incorporate Sabbath rest into the routines of your day, but the program's real strength will come from the practices and insights you, my fellow chaplains, share. At the end of six weeks I will compile what we have learned along with recommendations for possibly expanding the program to benefit others within Kindred at Home.

If you've read this far and the idea of adding one more to-do to your list sounds like another burden, then please be at peace in passing on this one. Being a part of this project should first of all be a blessing and help to you.

Participation is completely voluntary and confidential. If you are interested in more info, please reply by individual email to either alstanley@avalon-hospice.com or astanle2@harding.edu, and I'll share how to get started next week. I hope you will give it a try--not only for your benefit, but for others who one day might also be blessed from our experiences during the next six weeks.

Thanks for your time and for the blessings you bring to those we serve.

Milton

P.S. I've tried to include all Tennessee KAH chaplains in this mailing. If you find I've missed anyone, please let me know. Future mailings will include participants' addresses in BCC only.

Text of Second Email to Chaplains, September 3, 2020

Thank you for your interest in this chaplains' self-care project. Nine chaplains have expressed an interest in the program, and I hope after reading over material in this mailing you will choose to participate. With this email is everything you'll need to get started. The number of attachments may look daunting, but the good news is once you're finished with this week's material you will have done about 75 percent of all the paperwork required for the whole six weeks. Here's what's included:

Informed consent form. Informed consent is required for you to begin the project. It's a wordy requirement but essentially says your answers will remain confidential and you can drop out any time without penalty. You can either sign the form and send it back to me or simply reply with an email saying, "I have read and understand the research consent form."

Initial survey of seven questions. Please return your answers by whatever means works best for you.

Suggestions for beginning. One page of guidelines includes principles for Sabbath practice along with a few suggestions for getting started. I hope you adapt these suggestions to suit your own needs, and please feel free to change what you do as you go along. It is important however, to decide on a few specific practices, however modest, at the start. The weekly email for September 15 will ask you for a brief description of your personal plan.

Project overview. In case you're interested, this is a one-page summary of the project's prospectus.

That's all for now. Please send along your survey responses and acknowledgement of informed consent as soon as convenient. The technology for communicating in this project is a little retro by design, but please don't let it be a hassle. Let me know if you prefer to receive this information in another format (e.g., in-line email text rather than attachments). Thanks again for your time, and may you and others be blessed by what we do over the next six weeks.

Program Overview, Included in Second Emailing

The Problem of Compassion Fatigue and Sabbath as a Potential Solution

Pilot Project Overview -- Kindred at Home Chaplains, Fall 2020

Compassion fatigue is distinguished from burnout in that burnout is typically a stress reaction to secondary demands that get in the way of caregiving while compassion fatigue is a reaction to the caregiving itself.[1] In other words, compassion fatigue grows out of doing the work we enjoy in serving others, but it can lead to even the most compassionate caregiver developing a reduced capacity for empathy. If unaddressed, compassion fatigue can lead to a wide range of problems in both our professional and personal lives.

A healthy practice of Sabbath is one strategy for avoiding compassion fatigue and is the focus of this pilot project. Developing a healthy, theologically sound concept of Sabbath is especially challenging today as Sabbath is a neglected area of emphasis in many if not most American churches and nearly all of the broader American culture. This loss of Sabbath, however, stands in contrast to the rich tradition of Sabbath, in its broadest sense, found from start to finish in Scripture.

In the Old Testament, Sabbath is presented as essentially fractal in nature. A fractal is a geometric structure whose pattern remains unchanged regardless of what size sample of the overall structure is being observed; the same pattern repeats at both the smallest and largest extremes and at every element in-between. In the Torah the fractal nature of Sabbath is suggested in that Sabbath rest occurs not only in days, but in weeks (Lev. 23:15-21), years (Lev. 25:1-7) and Sabbaths of years (Lev. 25:8-11). Such a fractal structure, along with its origin at creation, reinforces the idea of Sabbath rest as what Richard Lowery has described as "woven into the very fabric of the universe."[2] Sabbath's fractal nature thus suggests its ongoing significance well beyond the confines of the Mosaic law.

In looking at Sabbath as an intentional part of present-day work it is helpful to consider exhortations within the Law and the Prophets that Sabbath is a time to remember Israel's liberation from the slavish work demands of Egypt. God made this point explicit through Moses (Deut. 5:12-15), and later Ezekiel (Ezek. 20:12-16). One intention of this reminder, as Ellen F. Davis has noted, is that "Israel is not to be a total-work culture."[3] Walter Brueggemann has shown succinctly but convincingly that Egypt of the Exodus is paradigmatic of the acquisitiveness, "anxious productivity" and commodification of humanity in subsequent coercive systems, including our own.[4]

Chaplains who volunteer to collaborate in the current project will spend six weeks integrating more intentional practices of Sabbath into our work and our lives. Along with this project overview you will receive a one-page survey to assess your current views and practices of Sabbath and a brief outline of suggested ways for practicing Sabbath in your work as a hospice chaplain. You are encouraged to make these suggested practices your own by adapting them to your own individual life and work. On Tuesday morning of each week you will receive a brief email with two or three questions to assess how your practice of Sabbath is going and to encourage you in the process. At the end of six weeks you will receive a one-page survey for assessing your experiences. Survey responses in turn will be complied for use in developing a program of Sabbath practice to benefit others.

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1. Peter Huggard, "Compassion Fatigue: How Much Can I Give?" *Medical Education* 37 (2003): 163.

2. Richard B. Lowery, "Sabbath, a 'Little Jubilee,'" *Christian Reflection* 3, no. 3 (2002): 13.

3. Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 143.

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Informed Consent Form, Included in Second Emailing

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Sabbath and Self-Care for Hospice Chaplains
Kindred at Home, Tennessee, Fall 2020

This study on Sabbath and self-care for Kindred at Home (KAH) chaplains in Tennessee is a six-week pilot project intended to help you and other KAH chaplains integrate Sabbath intentionally as part of self-care in the practice of hospice chaplaincy. It is being done as research for KAH chaplain
A. Milton Stanley's doctor of ministry project through Harding School of Theology, and the results will be published in a dissertation to be made available to the public.

For the purposes of this program Sabbath is not necessarily a given day of rest each week; rather Sabbath here refers to regular, intentional periods of rest of whatever length. In addition to choosing one or more Sabbath practices to implement during the next six weeks, you will be asked to complete and submit brief surveys before and after the project. You will also receive short, weekly emails that include questions for personal reflection. Your responses in these surveys will be used in developing a program with the potential to help other clinicians within KAH practice better self-care.

There are no anticipated risks associated with this project's practices or with the associated surveys. You will receive no additional compensation for this project beyond wages or salary you already receive from KAH.

At no time will you be asked to provide any HIPAA-protected or patient-related information. Although you will be asked to respond to survey questions by email, the researcher will never share your personally identifiable information with KAH or with anyone outside the three-member dissertation committee. Although the researcher may print copies of your email responses for personal use in evaluating and publishing responses, these hardcopies will not be printed or stored at any KAH facility but will be printed offsite and stored in a locked, offsite container when not being actively referenced. Your responses will not be made available for other research projects without further written consent. The only exception to strict confidentiality provisions in this study is in the unlikely event that your responses suggest an imminent threat against yourself or others.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty. In fact, the researcher will not inform KAH which chaplains do or do not participate in the program.

For further information regarding this study, your rights, or in case of injury, please contact A. Milton Stanley by email at alstanley@avalon-hospice.com or astanle2@harding.edu, by fax at 615.956.7795, or by phone at 931.409.5436 (cell) or 615.956.7436 (Avalon Murfreesboro office). You may also contact the dissertation committee chairman, Dr. Dave L. Bland, at 901.432.7750 or dbland@harding.edu.

If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the Harding University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to speak with someone independent of the research team. The IRB may be reached at 501.279.4024 or irb@harding.edu.

I have read and understand this research consent form.

Signature: _____ **Date**: _____

Printed name of participant: _____

Initial Survey, Included in Second Emailing

Initial Survey on Sabbath Practices

Instructions: Please choose the best answer for each question and return your responses to alstanley@avalonhospice.com or astanle2@harding.edu or by fax at 615.956.7795.

1. How long have you been working as a hospice chaplain?
    a. Less than one year
    b. One to five years
    c. More than five years
    d. I prefer not to answer

2. Do you work full-time or part-time in hospice?
    a. Full-time hospice (including chaplain-bereavement)
    b. Part-time hospice
    c. I prefer not to answer

3. What is your faith affiliation?
    a. Christian
    b. Other
    c. I prefer not to answer

4. How much intentional Sabbath do you already practice in your work and life?
    a. Very much
    b. A little
    c. None
    d. I prefer not to answer

5. How, if any, would you like to change the amount of intentional sabbath you practice?
    a. Very much more
    b. Some amount more
    c. Neutral - no change
    d. Some amount less
    e. Very much less

6. If you desire to practice more intentional Sabbath, what cycle of work and rest would be most helpful to you? You may choose more than one answer.
    a. Annual: a week or two of vacation or retreat every year
    b. Monthly: a weekend retreat or similar activity each month
    c. Weekly: one day of rest and renewal each week
    d. Daily: an hour or two each day to unwind and refocus
    e. Hourly: a few minutes each hour to relax, stretch, and clear the mind

7. Overall, how much expectation do you have that implementing practices within this program will be of benefit to you in your hospice work?

a. Very high expectation
b. A little bit of expectation
c. Very little expectation
d. Neutral or no opinion

Ideas for Getting Started, Included in Second Emailing

Getting Started in Practicing Sabbath

Walter Brueggemann calls Sabbath "the great festival of freedom." In our day, Sabbath should not only be a rest from work, but a break from screens and other media noise. For chaplains Sabbath may also be a time of rest from the attention required in being present with others. In a general sense, Sabbath is simply a process of intentionally taking time--of whatever length, and however often--to disengage from the flow of work, care, and worry, and simply be. There is no particular technique to practicing Sabbath. The process itself is amazingly simple--just slow down, take time, and rest--but the challenge comes in actually following through. Here are a few possibilities for incorporating intentional Sabbath rest your own life. Please pick and choose, adapt, and augment as you see fit.

Weekly Sabbath. Set aside a day or part of a day (even a couple of hours) to refrain from work, screen time, and worry.

- Turn off your alarm; sleep until you're ready to wake up.
- Avoid looking at phones, tablets, and television, especially at meals.
- Pray and meditate. Focus on thanksgiving, adoration, and praise.
- Be present with family, but avoid allowing "family time" to become work and worry.
- Spend time outside or looking out a window and contemplate the beauty of creation.

Daily Sabbath. Choose one or more times each day for rest and refreshment.

- Turn off your phone and tablet.
- Practice deep, calming breathing.
- Take a 10-minute break to listen to music.
- Take 10- to 15-minute breaks morning and afternoon to pray for peace and refreshment.
- If you have a daily quiet time, be alert for your thoughts drifting into thinking of work.
- Take a 20-minute lunchtime nap.
- Set aside time each day for one "nourishing activity," even if only for 10 or 20 minutes

Hourly Sabbath. Develop a routine for incorporating "micro-Sabbath" into your day.

- Take one or two minutes in your vehicle before each visit to set down the tablet and make a point of breathing deeply and slowly. Pray to be present with patient and family. Ask God to make you a catalyst for peace, a minister of reconciliation, and a bearer of God's love.
- Take a minute or two after each visit to pray grace for those you have met.
- When working at home or in the office, set an alarm each hour to spend five minutes disengaging from screen time, breathing deeply, and giving thanks.

Keep it simple. Develop a plan that is simple and modest, one you will be able to sustain. Here, for example, is my own plan, in its entirety, for the next six weeks.

1. Don't look at phone, tablet, or other screen before 6:30 in the morning or after 9 at night.

2. Take two minutes in the driveway before each visit to set down the phone and tablet, breathe slowly and deeply, and pray to be an instrument of God's grace and love.

That's it. Nothing great or fancy required. Just choose what works for you, commit to it, and give it a try. And don't hesitate to change plans as you discover what does and doesn't suit you best.

May God bless your journey into "the great festival of freedom."

Text of Email to Project Participants, Week 1

Good morning! Today is the first day of six weeks for intentionally incorporating rest into our regular routines. I am praying daily for each of us to be blessed in the process.

Here is the question/request for this week: Please explain briefly what your Sabbath plan includes. Remember, it need not be ambitious or complicated--just small, simple steps.

If you still haven't solidified a plan, don't worry; you still have time. For a little help making a plan, please give me a call at 931.409.5436.

You are receiving this first weekly email because you expressed interest, and some have not yet responded to the second email describing the project. If I haven't gotten notice of your informed consent by Tuesday of next week I will assume you've looked over the material and decided it's not for you, and that's quite all right. In that case this will be your last email on the project.

Peace, y'all.

Participants' Responses to Week 1 Email (10 of 12 Responding)

Please explain briefly what your Sabbath plan includes.

Participant 7: "First one part of my Sabbath keeping has to do with my phone. I'm trying to not look at the stupid thing before 6:00 am and after 9:00 pm. Being more aware of my phone time as it relates to how much time I spend on a tablet or computer screen. . . . it really adds up quickly. So less screen time if possible and second I want to do more with exercise. I know I feel so much better when I get up off my butt and move. So to that end my new Sabbath keeping practices will be centered around less screen time and movement. Thanks, I look forward to learning new ways to help keep my Sabbath."

Participant 9: "Every morning before I get out of bed I take time to say what I'm thankful for. I also meditate and read the bible to start off the day. In the evenings I do yoga and play stupid mindless games on my phone before I go to bed."

Participant 10: "Continued daily Quiet Time with the Lord in reading Scripture, Prayer, and Reflection and intentional goal of a weekly Sabbath day for rest and recreation"

Participant 11: "My Sabbath plan includes daily morning quiet time before work to read Scripture and pray, take a few moments before entering a visit to pray for wisdom and grace,

going to bed at a decent hour to be prepared and rested for the next day."

Participant 12: "My sabbath plan is to take a daily walk at the end of the workday and before getting wrapped up in household responsibilities. . ."

Participant 15: "Take a few minutes after a visit to rest before driving to the next visit. Something I've already doing and plan to continue is driving as little as possible on the weekends to give me a break from being in my car so much during the week."

Participant 16: "1. I will spend time outside weekly with my dog and without my phone. I will take a walk in the park near my house. 2. I will spend 10-15 minutes each morning and afternoon in prayer for peace and refreshment."

Participant 13: "The Plan:
1. To reengage in spiritual writing for 1-2 hours each weekend as sabbath. 2. To practice micro sabbaths, reframing my pre-visit prayer routine as hourly prayers, a minute or two to pray or meditate regardless of whether I'm doing visits or desk work."

Participant 17: "1. At least once during the next five weeks travel to a nature site for a 4 hour time of solitude, meditative prayer and journaling. 2. Practice meditative prayer with breathe for 2 minutes prior to patient/bereaved contact. 3. Set aside time weekly to do something fun/nourishing activity apart from home or work responsibilities."

Participant 14: "1. Stop and breath deep, pray and "center" myself before each visit – taking no more than 2 minutes 2. Listen to instrumental music during my drive time, rather than the normal Christian stations I listen to – to see if difference in music helps me "rest" during the journey between visits. No talk, just music, no words, just music"

Text of Email to Project Participants, Week 2

"*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*." - Jesus (Mark 2:27)

Today we begin our second week of the chaplains' self-care pilot project. If your first week was like mine, you've already missed a few days of following your Sabbath plan. Please be encouraged, though, and let's extend to ourselves the grace we show our patients and families. However much time we rest and take to be refreshed can be a blessing to us.

Here is our question for this week.

How have COVID-19-related adaptations (masks, gloves, facility access restrictions, virus testing, etc.) affected your need or desire for Sabbath rest?

A. Adaptations have **greatly increased** my need or desire for Sabbath rest.
B. Adaptations have **somewhat increased** my need or desire for Sabbath rest.
C. Neutral or no opinion
D. Adaptations have **somewhat reduced** my need or desire for Sabbath rest.
E. Adaptations have **greatly reduced** my need or desire for Sabbath rest.

We now have ten chaplains along with two clinicians from other disciplines participating. I continue to pray not only for all of us, but also for those who may later benefit from what we learn, to be blessed in this project of practicing Sabbath.

Participants' Responses to Week 2 Email (6 of 12 Responding)

A. (greatly increased need) was chosen by three participants.
B. (somewhat increased need) was chosen by two participants.
C. (Neutral or no opinion) was chosen by one participant.

No participants chose D or E.

One participant, who chose A, added the following comment: "Adjusting to new protocols and distance can be exhausting."

Text of Email to Project Participants, Week 3

Sabbath is woven into the very fabric of the universe, the thread that holds the world together. - Richard H. Lowery

Today we begin the third week of our six-week self-care project. I don't have any questions for you to answer this week, but I do pray you are continuing to practice Sabbath rest--not only for this project, but for your own spiritual well-being. Thank you again for participating in this project. May you be blessed in the effort.

Text of Email to Project Participants, Week 4

That divine rest on the seventh day of creation has made clear (a) that YHWH is not a workaholic, (b) that YHWH is not anxious about the full functioning of creation, and (c) that the well-being of creation does not depend on endless work. - Walter Brueggemann

We are now half way through our six-week self-care experiment, and I pray you are beginning to experience the benefits of taking care of yourself in this way. I have found that the same personal tendencies that make me need Sabbath so badly are making it challenging to practice it now. But I'm looking forward to adjusting and adapting over the next three weeks and pray those days will be fruitful for all of us.

For this week here is one question for you to answer as briefly as you like: How is the intentional practice of Sabbath going for you so far?

[Link: https://www.amazon.com/Sabbath-Resistance-Saying-Culture-Now/dp/0664239285]

Participants' Responses to Week 4 Email (6 of 12 Responding)

Participant 10: "Doing well my friend. Sabbath day per week And Quiet Time per day."

Participant 11: "I have noticed a difficult time practicing my daily Sabbath, or even weekly opportunities. I think I am feeling too mindful of other things, namely my practice in the midst of the pandemic and all the company is requiring of me outside of my usual presence and support. It seems exhausting and I think that unfortunately bleeds over into the intentional time of rest. I am working on this anew in the days to come."

Participant 14: "Sometimes I remember to rest and breathe; sometimes I forget. I'm just starting on the music one, so no real feedback for that, yet."

Participant 15: "It's easier to include Sabbath in my days that are less busy than others. When I do include Sabbath my day is less stressful."

Participant 16: "I am much more consistent with weekly practices than daily, though I believe daily practices are the ones I need most."

Participant 17: "I find myself having to stop and remind myself to take the 2 minutes of Sabbath rest before each client contact, but I sense the divine more fully in my care of others as a result of the brief time spent."

Text of Email to Project Participants, Week 5

Self-care is usually categorized as "worldly" or in another camp outside of our spiritual practices. The idea of Sabbath, though, is the inherent concept of self-care. ***Self-care is not selfish****. Self-care is integral to having a healthy, flourishing faith in Christ.* - Jessica Briggs

We have two weeks to go in the self-care project. I've found it surprisingly challenging to simply take time to rest a minute or two during the work day. How about you? Isn't it ironic that it takes a little work to get a little rest? I'm finding, however, that since beginning this program I'm a bit more able to enjoy down-time throughout the day. I hope you are beginning to see some benefits, too.

Here's a question for this week: What have you found to help in staying on track in practicing intentional Sabbath?

Thank you again for being part of this effort to develop a program to help both ourselves and our fellow hospice chaplains.

Participants' Responses to Week 5 Email (6 of 12 Responding)

Participant 7: "[O]ddly enough, writing it down seems to help me more than I thought. I can check it off of my list…but it kind of stops me in my tracks "Hey stop"."

Participant 10: "I have started intentionally leaving our house
Every Sabbat to have rest bc if I stay home I know I will work on some home project or upkeep. Thus, I go Cycling or hiking. . . to rest, read my Bible At stations, enjoy God's creation and in my situation get away for Outside peace and quiet bc with 8 neighbors I have 25 dogs all total that surround our residence (had to Call police just the other night). Sigh. So peace and Quiet rejuvenates me"

Participant 14: "The hard part: Just remembering to do what I said I would do. I haven't done this yet, but I will put a sticky note on my dash in my car to help me remember – big bold 1-2 to remind me to take a minute or two before each visit, and maybe add MUSIC to the note to remind me to play instrumental music while I drive. These visuals should help remind me to stop and rest and center myself." Comment: I did this myself, and it worked for about three days before I began ignoring it."

Participant 15: "For me what has helped is staying mindful of taking that minute or two after a visit to rest."

Participant 16: "Routine has been the most helpful for staying on track with intentional Sabbath. Establishing a daily pattern for my practice, instead of just trying to fit it in when I have a moment, has been important."

Participant 17: “I found this week to be difficult. We have had an extraordinary amount of deaths and I have found myself forgetting to take the 2 minutes as I rushed to the next contact with clients.”

Text of Email to Project Participants, Week 6

"*Rest, in the most Christian sense, is not the temporary act of escaping the rat race, nor is it the lazy reach for the remote on Sunday afternoon. It is bound up in the story in which we are immersed weekly: in our corporate reading of the Scriptures, in the waters of baptism, at the table of Christ, in our prayers for God's name to be hallowed and his kingdom to come. The narrative arc of the Sabbath points beyond our anxious preoccupation with rent and groceries, college tuition and retirement savings, and grounds us in the eternal certainty that God is on the throne*." – Jen Pollock Michel

Today we begin our final week of the Sabbath self-care project. Based on the responses you've been sending, I'm not the only one finding it a challenge to take time for resting during the work week. But it's good to see we're still working at resting! I don't have any questions for you today but do look forward to hearing your experiences when the project concludes seven days from now. I'll be sending out a short survey asking for your thoughts and input for developing a project to benefit a broader group of participants. Till then, may you be blessed in both work and rest.

Text of Final Email to Project Participants, October 20, 2020

We now come to the end of our six-week self-care project of practicing intentional Sabbath. Although I didn't always follow my plan as closely as I intended over the past six weeks, I think I have cultivated a more Sabbath-oriented attitude that incorporates rest more fully with faith in God.

How about you? A short survey is attached to help assess your experiences and develop recommendations for offering a Sabbath program to others. Please take a moment to answer each question candidly and as thoroughly as you like. As always, your identity will be kept confidential. Thank you again for helping with this project, and may you be blessed by the work we have done in learning better to rest.

Post-Project Evaluation

1. Which levels of Sabbath did you practice for this project? (Choose all that apply)
    a. Annual: a week or two of vacation or retreat every year
    b. Monthly: a weekend retreat or similar activity each month
    c. Weekly: one day of rest and renewal each week
    d. Daily: an hour or two each day to unwind and refocus
    e. Hourly: a few minutes through the day to relax, stretch, or clear the mind

2. How consistently did you follow your initial Sabbath plan?
    a. Very consistently
    b. Somewhat consistently
    c. No opinion
    d. Not very consistently
    e. Not consistently at all

3. Overall, how did this Sabbath project integrate with your existing schedule?
    a. Very much an additional burden
    b. Somewhat of a burden
    c. Neutral or no opinion
    d. Little if any additional burden
    e. No additional burden

4. Overall how would you rate your experience in this project of practicing Sabbath?
    a. Very positive
    b. Somewhat positive
    c. Neutral or no opinion
    d. Somewhat negative
    e. Very negative

5. In what ways, if any, has this project affected your views on the value of intentional Sabbath-keeping?
    a. Much more positive opinion on the value of practicing Sabbath

b. Somewhat more positive opinion on the value of practicing Sabbath
c. Neutral or no change
d. Somewhat more negative opinion on the value of practicing Sabbath
e. Much more negative opinion on the value of practicing Sabbath

6. How likely are you to continue some form of intentional practice of Sabbath?
   a. Much more likely
   b. Somewhat more likely
   c. Neutral or no change
   d. Somewhat less likely
   e. Much more likely

7. What did you find most helpful about this project?

8. What did you find least helpful?

9. Did anything surprise you about your efforts at practicing Sabbath?

10. As a result of this project, what did you discover about yourself, others, or God that might be helpful to those in future Sabbath self-care programs?

11. What other recommendations do you have for a future Sabbath self-care program?

12. Any other thoughts?

Participants' Responses to Final Survey Questions 7-12

7. What did you find most helpful about this project?

"Accountability" (Participant 10)

"I felt the intention of the project and practice was timely for the current climate we are in and rest that feels needed as a result" (Participant 11)

"The continual check in." (Participant 12)

"I found the invitation to participate and practice for a defined period of time most helpful. Right on the heels of that, I found the Tuesday emails from Milton to be helpful and encouraging." (Participant 13)

"Recognizing the need to rest or to focus during the day on Sabbath Rest Idea. Helped me to be aware of taking time during the day to rest in the Presence of God" (Participant 14)

"Reminding me of how important self-care is as I continue my ministry for my patients and coworkers." (Participant 15)

"I greatly appreciated the weekly check in with this project. It was also helpful to explore different frequencies of practices than I normally would on my own." (Participant 16)

"Making me aware of stopping to take 2 minutes prior to rushing into next client contact" (Participant 17)

8. What did you find least helpful?

"No opinion" (Participant 10)

"Least helpful was me getting in the way of me in diligence of practice. :)" (Participant 11)

"NA" (Participant 12)

"Chiding myself for not being more "successful" at my practice was the least helpful aspect of my experience. " (Participant 13)

"Nothing really: I made it fairly easy on myself to accomplish the "Sabbath Rest" during the day." (Participant 14)

"I can't think of anything." (Participant 15)

"My own lack of discipline with my practices." (Participant 16)

"Would suggest providing a more extensive list of suggested practices and/or reading materials" (Participant 17)

9. Did anything surprise you about your efforts at practicing Sabbath?

"Sustainability." (Participant 10)

"I was a bit surprised by my inability to keep with my practice some days, especially more difficult days. It seems I have more of a drive to power through than slow down and make intentional efforts at rest." (Participant 11)

“I was surprised about how restrictive I felt my current context is on Integrating an intentional Sabbath into my day” (Participant 12)

"I was surprised by how much I came to look forward to the Tuesday emails. There was encouragement, challenged, connection and community in Milton’s words. " (Participant 13)

"No. Just reminding myself each day to do what I promised to do, was actually refreshing" (Participant 14)

"It's not as easy as it sounds!" (Participant 15)

"I was much more consistent with weekly practices than daily practices." (Participant 16)

"How difficult it was sometimes to stop and slow down for the 2 minutes between client contact" (Participant 17)

10. As a result of this project, what did you discover about yourself, others, or God that might be helpful to those in future Sabbath self-care programs?

"Mental health and well being." (Participant 10)

"I learned I should make goals I can keep, and that a little rest can go a long way." (Participant 11)

“I became more aware of the absence of intentional rest in my life.” (Participant 12)

"The invitation to practice without judgement was most helpful to me. It reminded me God desires to share time with me and extends that invitation always. God waits for me to engage without judgement, in contrast to some poor Christian education I may have experienced over the years about this matter." (Participant 13)

"That a plan, or commitment, or promise helps to accomplish what I needed to do. It was something I needed to do, so that I didn’t “rush” from one place to the next" (Participant 14)

"For me, staying mindful of taking a few moments for myself throughout the day." (Participant 15)

"Getting creative with Sabbath is incredibly helpful. I don't think about the impact nature has on my connection with God and feelings of peacefulness until I prioritize it regularly." (Participant 16)

"How often I rushed from one task to another throughout the day." (Participant 17)

11. What other recommendations do you have for a future Sabbath self-care program?

"No opinion." (Participant 10)

"No other recommendations." (Participant 11)

“NA” (Participant 12)

"I hope, Milton, you will compile your learnings and continue to facilitate this approach, teaching other leaders, too, what you learn over time. I believe you’re on to something that will bear additional fruit.

"I’d consider, too, the possibility of having a reflection/writing prompt with each email, along with your encouraging words and even, at times, self disclosure. " (Participant 13)

No answer (Participant 14)

"Perhaps include anonymously what other participants are doing for Sabbath Keeping as a way of learning from each other." (Participant 15)

"The weekly quotes and encouragement was very helpful." (Participant 16)
+
"Reading list of resources." (Participant 17)

12. Any other thoughts?

"As Jesus said, “Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” (Participant 10)

"Thanks for the opportunity!!" (Participant 11)

“I became more aware of the difficulty of fitting spiritual practices into organized work that has a strong corporate mindset.” (Participant 12)

"It seems to me the Circle of Trust work of Parker Palmer is always invitational—that is, participants on these retreats can do the given prompt exercise or spin off in a direction the spirit is moving them toward. I wonder if Palmer’s work might be helpful as you continue to research this project?

"I welcome a diversity of voices speaking into my spiritual practices, but I have limited awareness of perspectives from women and people of color. I wonder if the research contributing to this project could help expand the conversation? That said, I am aware of an essay on sabbath by Dorothy Bass in her anthology, Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People. Phyllis Tickle may also be an additional source.

"I'm grateful to have participated in this project. I hope my thoughts are helpful.

"Thank you, Milton, for extending an invitation!" (Participant 13)

"Glad I did this project." (Participant 14)

"You did a good job giving us things to think about as we journeyed through our Sabbath Self-care. I like that we could form our own plan based on our individual needs." (Participant 15)

"Thank you! Participating in this project has been especially helpful at the beginning of my hospice chaplaincy journey because it challenged me to be more intentional with my time while I am adjusting to a new schedule." (Participant 16)

"Thank you and congratulations on your work" (Participant 17)

Text of Follow-up Email, December 10, 2020

One more thing that would be very helpful to know about your experiences with the Sabbath project:

Do you think taking a little time and effort to practice intentional Sabbath will increase your productivity or quality of care for patients?

A. Yes, definitely
B. Yes, probably
C. Neutral or no opinion
D. Probably not
E. Definitely not

Thanks for taking time to answer one more question; this one will be part of my recommendation to management about whether or not to try something like this again. I'm still working on rolling up results and should have something for you to look at before Christmas.

Appendix B – Recommendations for Kindred at Home Hospice Management

Tiffany:

This email is a report on the recent self-care pilot project for KAH chaplains in Tennessee, along with recommendations for offering the program to a wider pool of chaplains within the company. For this program sabbath is defined not as one day of rest each week, but as intentional periods of rest and refreshment of whatever length.

Eight chaplains and I completed the six-week program of practicing intentional sabbath as a means of self-care. As a result of ongoing and follow-up surveys, several positive findings have become clear:

- Chaplains are hungry for the benefits that come from intentional sabbath practice: relief from job pressures, reduced anxiety, and a more peaceful clinical presence;
- Intentional sabbath practice improves productivity and quality of patient care;
- Participants developed a deeper appreciation for practicing sabbath and the benefits it brings.
- Almost all participants found the project experience to be positive, and all stated they expect to continue practicing some form of sabbath self-care going forward.

Attached is a draft report of pilot project results (Chapter 4 of my doctor of ministry dissertation).

Suggestions for potentially expanding the self-care program include the following:

- Forwarding these results to Amanda Graham, who gave initial approval for this pilot project, to see if there is interest in expanding the program beyond Tennessee;
- Contacting Amy Anderson, corporate point of contact for chaplain training, about presenting project results at a quarterly Relias training for chaplains;
- Offering this program, with appropriate adaptations, to other hospice disciplines within Kindred's Tennessee operations, beginning with bereavement coordinators and social workers.

I am grateful to both you and Amanda for your support in making this project possible, and I look forward to your guidance on potentially going forward with any or all of these recommendations.

Peace,

Milton

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