A working paper on the Spiritual Formation Institute, Holy Light Church (English), Johor Bahru, Malaysia

1. Introduction

Holy Light Church (English), Johor Bahru is a Presbyterian church, part of the English Speaking Presbytery (ESP) in Malaysia. The theological stance is neo-Calvinism with a healthy mix of Arminianism. It is led by three pastors, elders, deacons and lay ministry leaders. The Senior Pastor has been with the church for 30 years. Key ministries are worship, nurture, mission, the Boys’ Brigade, children and youth ministries and fellowships.

The church has a membership roll of 435 members but at the Sunday service, the attendance averages 300 persons, inclusive of children. The members are mainly English educated middle class Chinese. There are a large number of professionals. There is a good mix of young children, youth, middle age and older adults. The ladies slightly outnumber the men. The level of commitment is good with many attending church service and activities regularly. A large number are involved in the cell groups.

Spiritual formation is defined as knowing and loving God, knowing and loving ourselves, knowing and loving our neighbours and living in the daily presence of God. This knowing and loving is grounded in the love of God the Father, the completed work on the cross of Jesus Christ the Son and the sustaining influence and power of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual formation is done in the context of a community of faith. Thus the community must provide the correct environment and employ the means of grace for spiritual formation to occur. In such a nurturing environment, a young Christian can grow to maturing and bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It must be recognized that growth is not constant but sporadic and depends much on choices, age, gender, and life circumstances. Growth occurs most in times of uncertainty and stress such as in life events, loss and pain. It is in such times that we learn to let go of our illusion and turn to God for help. It is during such ‘teachable’ moments that the Holy Spirit acts quickly causing a spiritual transformation or metanoia. The Spiritual Formation Institute is formed to create a nurturing environment for spiritual formation while looking for opportunities and allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us to spiritual transformation. The model I am proposing is for adult Christian education (CE) and is directed to a specific group of people within the church. It is tailored mainly to people between 18-60 years old, English educated middle class Chinese of both sexes.

2. Summary of Key Features of Model of adult CE for SHALOM.

The word SHALOM in this model is used both in the sense of the Hebrew word and as an acronym for Story, Heart, Action, Learning, Oneness and Maturity. The key features and educational goals of this model are summarized in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Feature</th>
<th>Key Concept</th>
<th>Educational Goals</th>
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| Story       | Meta-narrative | (a) To understand the Christian meta-narrative of God’s redemption plan for the whole of creation.  
(b) To appreciate our own faith journey.  
(c) To discover our vocation and calling in the Christian meta-narrative.  
(d) To develop a Christian worldview.  
(e) To appreciate and learn from 2000 years of our rich Christian heritage. |
The Apostles' Creed
Child Health and Nutrition
Biomedical Ethics
Spiritual Direction
Spiritual Formation
Spiritual formation communities
Retreats

Engaging Culture
- Bioethics
- Glocalisation
- Books and Reading
- A Writing Life
- Star Trek
- Science Fiction
- Comics
- Movies
- Gaming
- Photography
- The End is Near

Spiritual Formation Institute
My Notebook
- Favourite Quotes
- Illustrations
- Church
- Spiritual Formation
- Bioethics
- Medicine
- Study Notes

My blogs
- Random Musings from a Doctor's Chair
- Random Sermons from a Doctor's Chair
- Random Writings from a Doctor's Chair
- Random Spirituality from a Doctor's Chair
- Random Photos from a Doctor's Chair

Books Recommendation
- Spiritual Formation
- Euthanasia
- Abortion
- Bioethics

Bookstore
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Medical notes
Medical Students /Paediatric notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heart (orthopathy)</th>
<th>Emotions (orthopathy)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) To be able to appreciate our emotions and to control them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) To experience the Presence of God in our everyday life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) To be able to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives.</td>
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<td>(d) To set aside time for solitude and reflection.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Action (orthopraxis)</th>
<th>Ethical Christian Living (orthopraxis)</th>
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<td>(a) To understand that the Christian life is to be lived out in our routine everyday life.</td>
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<td>(b) To be able to reflect and apply Biblical principles in our lifestyles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) To be involved in helping the poor, sick and defenseless (injustice).</td>
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<td>(d) To be able to build in Sabbath rest in our lifestyles.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Learning (orthodoxy)</th>
<th>Right thinking (orthodoxy)</th>
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<tr>
<td>(a) To know the basic theological beliefs of our faith and denomination.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) To be able to study the Bible for ourselves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) To be able to apply Biblical principles from our studies in our lives.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) To be lifelong learners.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Oneness</th>
<th>Community</th>
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<tr>
<td>(a) To understand that Christian life is lived out in community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) To learn to contribute to our church and the community outside by giving our time, money, spiritual gifts, talents and skills and persistent intercessory prayers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) To celebrate the Christian year and special days.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) To learn about confliction management and forgiveness in our community.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Maturity</th>
<th>The goal of our CE is maturity in Christ (Christ-likeness)</th>
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<tr>
<td>(a) To understand and cooperate with the Holy Spirit for our spiritual growth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) To recognize that spiritual growth is a process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) To learn to know and love our Trinitarian God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) To learn to know and love our true self.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(e) To learn to know and love our neighbours.</td>
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This model has the integration as suggested by Harkness (1998)
- Community orientated rather than individualistic,
- Life-centered rather than school-based,
- Transformational rather than exclusively informational,
- Life-long rather than packaged and concentrated especially into the years of childhood and youth, and
- Equipping people for service, both in the church and in society.

The outcome of this CE model is a man/woman matured in Christ (Col.1:28). To be matured means being Christ-like, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, spiritually formed and nurtured in shalom/holistic process in a faith community.

3. The Approach to Education and Biblical/Theological Principles for SHALOM

The philosophical foundation of this model is neo-Thomism or perennialism (Anthony and Benson...
This model gives us a balanced view of the Christian life, acknowledging the weakness of idealism and naturalism and striking a balance between spirit and matter. This philosophical base is closer to the Hebrew approach to education. There is a need to move away from the dualistic teachings of the Greeks and reclaim the holistic teachings of the East (Rigalado 2001).

The word shalom was chosen because it encapsulates what CE is all about. Joldersma (2004, xiii) unpacking Wolterstorff’s vision of ‘education for shalom’ writes, “Shalom means people living in right relationships with God, themselves, each other, and nature- and taking delight in such relationships… Shalom is an ethical community where all the members have a full and secure place in the community”. This model uses shalom as the goal of CE and also as an acronym for its key features.

The story or Christian meta-narrative is an important part of our faith journey. It gives us a sense of identity of who we are as ourselves and as children of God. The telling and retelling of the exodus narrative is an example of the principle of using stories to educate in the Old Testament. The exodus narrative tells of God’s faithfulness, deliverance, protection and guidance (Exodus 3-20).

We are called to love our Lord with all our hearts (Matt. 22:37). Affective or experiential moments are important in the development of our spiritual life. We are created with emotions and part of our maturing process is to learn how to deal with our emotions.

A disciple is a learner. Our mind must be informed in the basic doctrines of our faith. The Bible should be our firm foundation and we need to study it. Like Timothy, our CE should produce workman and woman approved by God in their skillful use of the Word (2 Tim.14-15) and knowing the power of the Word for spiritual formation (Heb.4:12). Our mind must not only receive the Word but be transformed by it (Rom. 12:2).

All our theology must be translated into ethical living. It must be translated into action or it will be meaningless. James 1:22-25 teaches us not to be merely hearer but also be doers of the Word. That is why the reflective double-loop thinking of the theories of action (espoused and theories-in-use) is important in our spiritual growth.[2] (Smith 2001). This is similar to the examination of conscience of the Puritans and examen of consciousness of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Only in reflective or contemplative thinking that translate into action do we grow spiritually.

The context of Christian education is oneness in community. In the epistle to the Ephesians, Paul taught about one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God (Eph. 4:3-6). It is this oneness that forms a Christian community. It is in community that we are safe and able to grow in a holistic way (Palmer 2004, 25-29). The Acts 2 church is a fine example of a Christian community in action (Acts 2:42-47).

The goal of our CE is maturity in Christ (Col.1:28). To be mature in Christ is to be Christlike. To be Christlike is to love. In Matthews 22:37-39 Jesus summarized all the commandments of God into two- love God, love our neighbours and ourselves. All these are relationships. Unless we have love for God, our true undivided self (Palmer 2004) and for our neighbours, we would have failed in our maturing process. Paul placed love above all (1 Cor. 13). Hence the need to nurture love and relationships in our CE. Maturing in Christ is an “ongoing partnership with Spirit and in the direction of universalizing faith” (Fowler 2000, 60).

In summary, SHALOM is a model that has philosophical, Biblical and theological support.

4. Justification of the Appropriateness of the Model of adult CE for SHALOM

The model of adult CE for SHALOM is an appropriate model for adult CE in HLCE. In fact, with a bit of modification with respect to target participants, it can be used for other sub-groups in HLCE, for example in children’s ministries, man and woman’s fellowship and in the Boys’ Brigade. While there is no written philosophy of CE in HLCE, the philosophy of CE can be considered essentialism (Anthony 2003, 393-396) and the educational methodology of CE is schooling-instructional. While essentialism was useful in the past, times have changed. Members of the church are better educated and more knowledgeable and no longer willing to take the teachings of the CE teachers so readily. They are liable to question, suggest new approach of learning and even develop learning programs of their...
own. They are more open to change, do not regard themselves as empty vessels to be filled but rather as fellow pilgrim on a faith journey. Hence a CE model based on perennialism is more suited to the English educated members of the church. In relation to culture, this model can be considered incarnational as it does CE in the context of the Malaysian English educated Chinese culture.

This model is also in line with the Biblical and theological stance of HLCE. The neo-Calvinism teachings have always regarded justification and sanctification as being separate but assume one follows the other. Sanctification involves our faith meta-narrative. We need to know where we are involved God’s plan of redemption. Sanctification also involves development of right affections, right action and right thinking (cognitive) which are component of the process of maturing into Christ likeness. This is nurtured in the oneness in community and love relationships as represented in the SHALOM model.

It must be recognized that this model provides the infrastructure for spiritual formation. It prepares the mind, hearts and souls for these divine moments when the Holy Spirit intervenes in our lives, these transitional moments when we receive by means of grace, the spiritual transformation of our souls. We recognize fully the role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual transformation that draws us and conforms us into the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence there is a continual need for dependence on His grace and for interventional prayers.

The cultural and social ecology of HLCE is English educated middle class Chinese. As stated, many are professional and at the minimal, the education level is at a diploma level. Hence there should not be a problem using the SHALOM model provided the educational methodology (pedagogy) is appropriate (see appendix 1). The foundational basis of the educational methodology of the SHALOM model is that learning (formal, informal, ‘hidden curriculum’) is done in the context of the everyday life of the participants. It does not differentiate the ‘secular’ from the ‘sacred’ nor ‘church times’ from the workplace. All aspects of life are covered either at the church, small group and one-to-one level. It values the spiritual journey and the experiences we have on the way and uses it for our sanctification.

Dubay (1989, 74-75) summaries five reasons why Teresa of Avila thought it important that believers should understand their spiritual journey and their experiences that mark their way.

a. We need to know our destination.

b. We need support and encouragement for the difficult times.

c. We need to be able to recognize God’s blessing so that we may embrace them.

d. We need to know how to operate in the difficult stages of growth.

e. We need to be able to see that we are making progress.

5. Use of the model of adult CE for SHALOM for the Spiritual Formation Institute, Holy Light Church (English)

Vision

To develop Holy Light Church (English) into a community of disciples with informed mind, burning hearts and contemplative-in-action.

Mission

To conduct regular interactive teaching sessions that help participants

(1) to understand Scriptures,

(2) to understand our Christian Faith and Heritage,

(3) to develop a Christian worldview,
(4) to equip Leaders for Ministry,

(5) to transform their lives into Ethical Christian Living at the personal, family, church, workplace and the community level,

(6) to complement the other educational programs (pulpit ministry, the CELLS, children ministry, Ladies & Men Fellowship, YF, BB & GB) of the church. The goal is adult Christian education.

These are the six areas in which the content of spiritual formation will be imparted using the pedagogy of the model CE for SHALOM. To achieve the desired outcome of the above objectives in the mission statement, the content of the curriculum must be comprehensive. (Appendix 2).

Recognizing that spiritual formation and spiritual transformation takes time, the curriculum of the spiritual formation institute will be planned for a 10 year period. It is estimated that it will take 10 years to impart the content of the curriculum.

6. Prayer, discernment, evaluation for the curriculum of CE for SHALOM

The Spiritual Formation Institute is to nurture the people of God. Hence it must always be aware that in all humility we should carry out this ministry by prayer. Prayer is an important aspect of spiritual formation and it must be noted that the Spiritual Formation Institute was formed only after 5 years of prayers. Leaders and workers in this ministry must always pray and intercede for God’s kingdom work. The leaders and workers must also learn discernment and be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. There must be annual evaluation of the pedagogy and the relevance of the subjects imparted. Hence, while the contents for the whole curriculum still hold, there is freedom to choose the topics to be imparted each year. These topics should be chosen under the supervision of the Holy Spirit as He knows what will be appropriate and needful for spiritual transformations to occur.

7. Conclusion

The Spiritual Formation Institute exists to serve the Holy Light Church (English). It has narrowed its scope so as to focus on a certain segment of the church. It is hoped that in this way it will become more effective in its ministry.

Soli Deo Gloria

References


### Appendix 1: Educational Methodology for SHALOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Educational Activities</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<th>Whole church level</th>
<th>(a) Pulpit ministry</th>
<th>The pulpit ministry of the Word for informing the mind and an avenue for spiritual formation.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Celebration.</td>
<td>Building a faith community by having frequent celebrations over good/happy occasions and thanksgiving. Eating is always involved.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(c) Worship and the Christian year.</td>
<td>Worship build around the Christian church year is a powerful education tool based on the Christian metanarrative.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(d) SFI courses, seminars and conferences.</td>
<td>The SFI courses, seminars and conference are planned each year with these 5 themes in mind: (i) Christian spirituality/spiritual formation (ii) Ethical Christian Living. (iii) Developing a Christian worldview. (iv) Appropriating our Christian heritage. (v) Understanding theology.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Small groups level</th>
<th>(a) Cell groups</th>
<th>HLCE is a church with cell groups. Meeting weekly, its goals are for SHALOM.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Beginning Christian Life Studies (BCLS)</td>
<td>This is Bible study workbook (8 sessions) dealing with the basics of the Christian faith. It is also used in preparing new converts for baptism. To be in context with our CFC, this study is written by the author. It is held 4 times a year.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(c) Developing Christian Life Studies (DCLS)</td>
<td>This is a Bible study workbook designed to be used after BCLS to lead the participants into a regular walk in the Christian Life. Also will be held 4 times a year. Topics to be covered are: Ø Prayer Ø Bible study</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| (d) Advanced Christian Life Studies (ACLS) | Ø Fellowship  
Ø Sacraments  
Ø Evangelism  
Ø Spiritual Disciplines  
Ø Giving  
Ø Trinity  
A Bible study workbook helping the participants to experience the presence of God and to deepen their prayer lives. |
| (e) Covenant groups | This covenant group is made up of 3-4 persons who have covenanted to meeting regularly and hold each other accountable in their Christian life. This is similar to Parker’s “circle of trusted” (2004,29) |
| (f) Prayer retreat | This is a 8 weeks prayer retreat. Participants (no more than 5 per group) meeting with a spiritual director once a week for 8 weeks. It is done without the participants having to take time off. It is based on the Ignatian Exercises. |
| (g) Group spiritual direction | A group meets regularly with a spiritual director to discern the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives. |
| (h) Centering prayer group | A group that meet regularly to practice centering prayer together. |
| (i) Social Action group | A group that has a heart for social concern and are involved in the community. At times they will get the whole church involved with their projects. |
| (j) Leaders equipping group | This group meets for skills and spiritual leadership development. |
| (k) Mentoring group | This is a group of younger Christians with a mentor, e.g. young working adults, young couples with children. |
Appendix 2: Curriculum Content of Spiritual Formation Institute

1. Understanding Scriptures
   1.1 Bible Study Techniques
   1.2 Hermeneutics
   1.3 Old Testament
      § OT Survey
      § OT Themes
      § OT Geography
      § OT Book Study
   1.4 New Testament
      § NT Survey
      § The Synoptic Gospels
      § The Study of Paul the Apostle
      § NT Themes
      § NT Book Study
      § End Times Study

2. Understanding Christian Faith and Heritage
   2.1 Great Doctrines of the Christian Faith
   2.2 Confessions of Faith
   2.3 Church History
   2.4 Malaysian Church History
2.5 Christian Spirituality

3. Developing Christian Worldview
   3.1 Apologetics
   3.2 Contemporary Ethical Issues
   3.3 Understanding Islam
   3.4 Understanding Buddhism
   3.5 Understanding Hinduism
   3.6 Understanding Cults
   3.7 Christian and Just War
   3.8 Movies and Music

4. Leadership for Ministry
   4.1 Pastoral Care
      § Spiritual Leadership
      § Strategic Planning
      § Care and Counseling
      § Preaching
      § Leading CELLS
      § Mentoring & Spiritual Direction
   4.2 Spiritual Formation
      § What is Spiritual Formation?
      § Dynamics of Spiritual Life
      § Discerning God’s Will
      § Spiritual Disciplines
      § Prayer
      § Worship
   4.3 Mission and Evangelism
      § Personal Evangelism
      § Theology of Missions
      § Short Term Missions

5. Ethical Christian Living
   5.1 Personal
      § Stewardship
      § Rich Christian, Poor Christian
      § Dating
   5.2 Family
      § Christian Family
      § Positive Christian Parenting
5.3 Church
- Understanding Church
- Presbyterianism

5.4 Workplace
- Work, Vocation, and Calling
- Ethics at Work
- Bribery and Corruption
- Tent making ministries

5.5 Community
- Interpersonal Relationship
- Conflict Resolution
- Caring for the Aged


[2] As far as I know double-loop learning has not been applied to spiritual growth. It is mainly used for management: self and corporate development. I do see the potential in using this method.
treat, heal, and comfort always"

"spiritual forming disciples of Jesus Christ with informed minds, hearts on fire and contemplative in actions"

Spiritual Formation Institute Seminar on Chinese Beliefs and Culture. SFI Seminar 2011/2The Christian Approach to Chinese Beliefs and CultureDate: 2.00pm - 9.30pm, Saturday 9 April 2011Place: Berea, Holy Light Church 11-C, Jalan Gertak Merah, 80100 Johor Bahru, Malaysia Speaker: Canon â€¦ Continue reading â†... March 4, 2011 Leave a Reply.Â Twitter Updates. Error: Twitter did not respond. Please wait a few minutes and refresh this page. Facebook. SECURITY WARNING: Please treat the URL above as you would your password and do not share it with anyone. See the Facebook Help Center for more information. Kairos Spiritual Formation. 746 likes. Like Page Liked. You like this Be the first of your friends to like this. app-facebook. Kairos Spiritual Formation. on Thursday. of the church in spiritual formation is to provide wise and loving safety and. structure, teaching and guidance for Christians at all stages of their growth. and development as children in Godâ€™s family.Â If local churches focused on the spiritual formation of their members. rather than simply increasing their membership, might not the American. church recapture the Kingdom mandate of loving and serving God and othÂ Prayer and dependence on the. Holy Spiritâ€™s deep work of grace and inner transformation in the hearts of. the church members are therefore crucial. Chandler: Several obstacles inhibit the church from carrying out her. Spiritual Formation & Church Life. Theology and Social Engagement. Past Projects.Â Centers & Institutes. Articles. Practical Theology Bibliography.Â SFCL conducts academic research in the area of spiritual formation and spiritual practices, pursuing sustained reflection on the research data to offer proposals for the theological education context. Â SFCL administers funding for student personal renewal retreats in order to cultivate healthful habits of spiritual self-care during and after theological education. Claire Wolfteich, Director Susan Forshey, Coordinator Marc Lavallee, Project Assistant Holly Bezenhafer Redford, Project Assistant. © 2006-2018 Alex Tang