



## Issue #54: Winter 2024



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## Editors' Note:

As Allie and I began planning this issue, we were both disappointed that we'd be unable to attend this year's NADCE Conference and we knew many others would be in a similar situation. We aimed for this issue to serve as a bridge to the conference to help those who couldn't attend get a sense of what those in attendance experienced and learned.

In this issue you'll find highlights from Dr. Mayfield, the conference keynote speaker, as well as overviews from a few of the sessions offered. Early registrants to the conference received Dr. Mayfield's book, *The Path to Wholeness*, so we asked one of them to provide you with a book review! We hope you're encouraged by the words of wisdom shared by some of this year's NADCE Award recipients and that you'll find new motivation to discover and use your gifts to God's glory - even in retirement!

The NADCE Board and countless volunteers did a remarkable job planning such a valuable event. The authors who contributed to this issue clearly gained new insights and ideas through the NADCE Conference, and I pray that even more DCEs will be blessed through their contributions.

*Please note: this will be the final issue for our NADCE Quarterly Assistant Editor, Allie Urberg. We thank her for the creativity, diligence, and thoughtfulness she has brought to the Quarterly over the last year. God's blessings to you, Allie!*

With JOY in Jesus,

**Michaela Seeliger**

*Editor*



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## In This Issue...

### **Reflections on Dr. Mayfield's Keynote Sessions**

Kelly Buckwalter

One of the highlights of each NADCE Conference is the keynote sessions and this year was no exception. Kelly details Dr. Mayfield's main points and offers further insights into his ideas.

### **Session Review: Recognizing Generational Patterns in Traumatized Organizations**

Brenda Schmelling

Brenda shares with readers the takeaways she found most valuable from one session offered at the NADCE Conference. This highly-relatable article is sure to help you think through ways to improve your own unique ministry.

### **Session Review: The Space Where Joy is Found**

Paul Nelson

While we already know our true joy comes from Jesus, Paul shares details from a session at the NADCE Conference that helps explain how joy and neuroscience are connected. His article features several resources to help you continue to find joy each day!



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## **Making Space for YOU: A Review of *The Path to Wholeness* by Dr. Mark Mayfield**

Benjamin Simmons

Dr. Mayfield shared plenty of wisdom during the keynote sessions at the NADCE Conference, but Benjamin helps readers unpack further thoughts and ideas based on Mayfield's book, *The Path to Wholeness*.

## **Making Space for Retirement**

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Playing off the theme of the NADCE Conference, Christine shares ideas and resources for those DCEs who are nearing retirement from professional ministry.

## **NADCE Award Recipient Interview**

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At each NADCE Conference, a few outstanding DCEs are recognized for their service to God's Kingdom. Two of the award recipients share words of wisdom to encourage your ministry.

## **Quarterly Question, Issue Notes**

NADCE Editors

Discover the topic for the next issue and read the latest news from the NADCE Board.



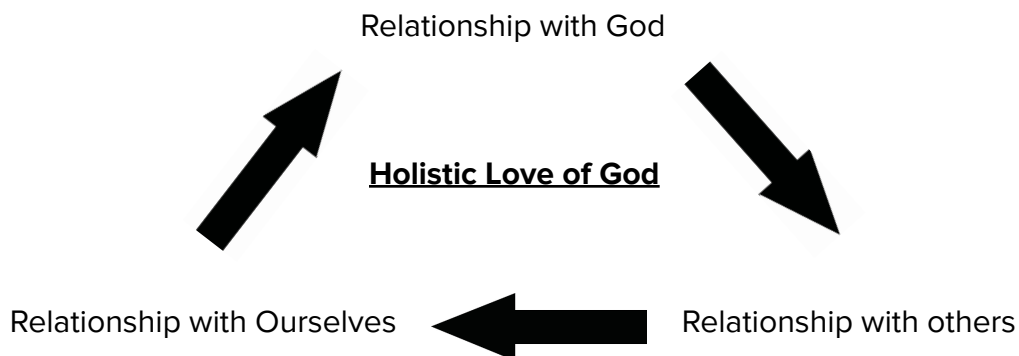
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## Reflections on Dr. Mayfield's Keynote Sessions

Kelly Buckwalter

I had the privilege to attend the NADCE Conference in Houston, Texas. Our three days centered around the theme of Making Space, a chance for DCEs from all over the country to come together and hear from tremendous speakers giving their expert insights. Each day, we opened with an amazing worship set from Tribe & Tongue, and then heard from Dr. Mark Mayfield, the keynote speaker. Dr. Mayfield, an author, speaker, leadership coach, counselor, and professor, gave three keynote session talks that walked participants through three main topics – Clearing, Creating, and Cultivating.

In Dr. Mayfield's first session, he told a story about helping a friend clear space on his land to build a new structure. They had to clear out all the underbrush and vines, chop down the trees, dig up the roots, and finally burn all the debris. This was an excellent reminder that we have to be ready to clear room in our own lives or there's no possibility for new things to grow. Next, we looked at Matthew 7:1-5 and discussed how DCEs are in the business of caring for others and discerning what might be going on in their lives. It is incredibly important that we are able to recognize our own logs so we can care for their specks. Another great takeaway from Dr. Mayfield's first session was the idea of holistic love of God. Stemming from Matthew 22:34-40, Dr. Mayfield showed us this graphic:




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If we are not loving ourselves as well as we love others or God, then we will be out of balance. Sometimes we must clear things out of our lives to regain that balance. Dr. Mayfield also helped us see that sometimes clearing things out means addressing broken parts. And if we don't have a developed sense of self-awareness of those broken parts, it will impact everyone around us. In order to heal the broken parts, we must step into a vulnerable space. We learned that trauma can only be healed within the context of relationships. Dr. Mayfield encouraged us to make sure that we all have five people who can help us with the process of clearing out and help us define and recognize our emotions and feelings. Who are your five?

On Thursday, Dr. Mayfield opened the second keynote session by picking up where the first session left off – emotions and feelings. He explained that they are two separate things. Emotions are our physiological response to things happening internally or externally while feelings are the meaning we make from that process. The second session continued with the theme of creating. We learned about the key difference between conforming and transforming. Conforming is passive while transforming is intentional action. I found this particular portion really impactful from a DCE standpoint.

Dr. Mayfield compared transformation to a paintbrush loaded with paint – as we make intentional actions to change, we rub off on the others around us. Our co-workers, students, families, fellow congregation members, and everyone else we encounter are witnesses to any individual transformations we make, positive or negative, whether we realize it or not. Sometimes these transformations are an attempt to define our identities. Dr. Mayfield convicted us with the knowledge that if we aren't finding our identity in Christ, we will find it in something else. Here are some questions to ask yourselves – With whom or what do I identify presently? Is it a conforming or transforming identity?



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Dr. Mayfield then encouraged us to think about the steps needed to form an identity, make a change, and how to set that goal. Dr. Mayfield shared with us five steps to do so:

- 1) Self-reflection
- 2) Set clear goals
- 3) Create a vision board
- 4) Develop a plan
- 5) Take action

We learned that the brain is the only organ that doesn't have to deteriorate with age. My favorite part was the video Dr. Mayfield showed us of a neural pathway forming in the brain! We were encouraged to use three cycles of 30 days each to form that pathway, to make a habit. He told us that it takes 100 hours to become an expert on something, which can boil down to only 15 minutes a day! But we can't do it alone – we need our five people.

On Friday morning, Dr. Mayfield used the third session to dive into the final aspect – Cultivating. We began by remembering back to the analogy he used in the clearing session – clearing a plot of land. When the ashes of the burned debris are worked back into the ground, they breathe new life back into the soil. This led us to learn about rhythms of rest and renewal. In Matthew 11:28-30, God reminds us that His yoke is easy and the burden is light. When we are weary and weakened, we can come to Him, stop fighting, and hand our problems, worries, and burdens over to Him. Dr. Mayfield also helped us see that rest can't be forced, because then it isn't rest. We were given the analogy of the tires on our cars – when do we notice them? Probably not until they're flat, and by then, it's too late. We must notice and prevent the issue before it arrives on our doorstep. However, rest and renewal must contain some element of growth, for when rest is forced, it can turn into laziness.

Dr. Mayfield finished this session on cultivating by discussing the importance of boundaries. He outlined three types of boundaries:



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Fence posts – people know where the boundary is, but it doesn't necessarily keep them out

Walls – keep people out but also don't let things in

Chain link fences – you can still communicate with people on the other side of the fence

It is important for us, especially as church workers, to be able to identify which boundary will be best suited for each individual we encounter. He then ended with a great reminder and challenge: when we choose to be in a profession where we work closely with others, we must aim to be healthy, so that we can help others around us to be healthy.

These three sessions were all incredibly insightful and helpful in the context of doing Christian Education ministry. I know that every listener came away with some next steps and ways to improve their ministry areas and personal lives as well. Bravo, NADCE Board, on a fantastic keynote speaker!



*Kelly Buckwalter has served as the Director of Youth Ministry at St. Luke in Mesa, Arizona, for ten years. Kelly grew up on a grain farm in central Illinois and has lived in Arizona for the past twenty years with her husband, Erich, and her two fabulous children, Hannah (10) and Samuel (7). Kelly is passionate about volleyball, cruising, and helping empower and encourage the next generation of Gospel-spreaders!*



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## Session Review: Recognizing Generational Patterns in Traumatized Organizations

Brenda Schmelling


*Session Description: You may have experienced a leader who was hurtful to the church. You may have taken a call to a church after the traumatization. Have you ever wondered why the organization reacts in a certain way with new beginnings or new leadership? It could be that a cycle was formed after the church trauma, even if it happened years ago. In this session we will discuss toxic leadership, how it affects the organization, and how we can recognize the patterns of behavior in the church.*

Under normal circumstances, it can be difficult to be vulnerable with someone, and even more so with a larger group. The NADCE Conference in Houston, TX provided and created the space necessary to share our joys and hurts with one another. One of the ways this happened was through sessions, an avenue I'm grateful was used to speak into harder topics.

Amy Hubach's courage to speak on the topic of "Recognizing Generational Patterns in Traumatized Organizations" was needed by many attendees at the conference. As it turns out, there are more of us than we may have realized who are struggling to process and deal with the effects of trauma, especially as it relates to being second-chair to someone who can be characterized as a "dark leader."

The organizational trauma could have happened before we arrived at our congregation, but can be generally defined as: "stressful, frightening, distressing, out of our control, and collective." An entire congregation could be reeling and hurting together from the effects of a traumatic event or unhealthy leadership. The characteristics of a traumatized organization could be: "closed boundaries, insider relationships, contagions, identity erosion, depression, and loss of hope."

As these descriptors of organizational trauma were shared by Amy, it was clear by the collective sounds of agreement around the room, nodding heads, and raised hands that




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many in our DCE community have or are currently dealing with the effects of trauma in their congregations. Often, these are things we do not feel safe talking about within our congregations, often for fear of repercussions. On the other hand, it's also tricky to find safe people to talk to outside of the situation for fear that they won't understand or that our sharing will be viewed as gossip. That's why this session was invaluable for so many church workers at the conference; it allowed us to feel seen and validated in our experiences. That validation alone can be enough to encourage someone going through a tough season in ministry.

One question raised by Amy was, "How do we process trauma as a congregation?" Sometimes we take a call to a church that has clearly experienced trauma, but no one will talk about it. It's clear that there is hurt and distrust, yet it seems easier to move forward and try to forget. The problem is that the after-effects of unresolved trauma tend to pop up when discussing change or when other conflicts arise. Overreactions and sharp words lash out in response to those unresolved conflicts, leaving one confused and defensive moving forward. Clearly, these are not helpful approaches to processing (or not processing) trauma as a congregation.

Another question raised in the session was, "What does conflict resolution and reconciliation look like in the church?" Many of us shy or run away from conflict. Personally, conflict makes me very uncomfortable and I try to avoid it as much as possible. Still, conflict is sometimes exactly what is needed for healthy change to occur. How do we handle conflict with one another though? How do we handle it in our congregation or as a larger church body?

Historically, we have not handled it well. Unfortunately, that means that we've lost too many DCEs, pastors, and church workers. Our unwillingness, lack of tact, or lack of outside support in handling conflict resolution has made choosing to leave professional ministry altogether the healthier and more obvious course for many. We can't really blame anyone for prioritizing their physical, mental, and spiritual health in those moments either. I do, however, wonder what steps we could take in the future to help avoid those extreme responses to trauma.




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Reconciliation and forgiveness are not something we simply strive for because it's a "good thing," but because we are called and instructed to forgive others as we have been forgiven (Eph. 4:32). Again, it's one thing to process our hurts and forgive an individual, but how do we process together for collective reconciliation?

Sometimes, it just takes time. One beautiful example of reconciliation and forgiveness that stands out in my mind dealt with the closure of a Lutheran school. The school had been a staple in the community for a long time and was seen as a main form of outreach for the church it was associated with. Similar to other schools, enrollment numbers had been declining for years – so much so that financially it simply didn't make sense to keep it going. This stirred up many emotions, especially for those who had attended the school themselves or had enrolled their own kids there. Questions were brought up about the direction the church was heading, as well as whether they cared about outreach into the community or not. Distrust and anger toward the senior pastor were shared during town hall meetings and were the underlying tone of many emails to church leadership. When the school eventually closed down and the school building was sold, many families left the church.

It took some time for the dust to settle and for the congregation to learn to trust the church leadership again. I remember one family in particular who had been very vocal about their anger and disagreement with the school closure decision that did eventually come around. The father of that family reached out to the senior pastor to apologize. He recognized that he had responded out of fear and anger, a tough and brave admission to make. The pastor responded somewhere along the lines of, "Brother, if we can't receive forgiveness here in church, then where else is it going to happen? I love you and we're good."

How beautiful would it be if the church was, in fact, the place where we could model reconciliation and forgiveness to the rest of the world? The Holy Spirit works through us to make this possible, but that doesn't mean that there aren't those of us who are still in the thick of it, feeling like we are barely surviving.



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Amy shared a few suggestions for those looking to go beyond survival into a mode of resilience. One was “facing down reality,” where we accept people, places, and things for what they are. Another was to “search for meaning,” taking an individual and collective journey into our values and beliefs. In other words, it means asking, “Who are we?” and “What matters to us?” Perhaps in discovering and sharing our values and beliefs, we will find more common ground with those we are in conflict with than we thought.

We must continue to create safe spaces to be vulnerable and share the real, the hard, and the real hard things that we are dealing with in our own ministries. We have not been called to isolation, but rather to community. Let’s continue to make space in our own contexts to seek that community and prioritize it. I’m thankful to Amy for putting in the work to ask the tough questions and do some of the ongoing work needed to process trauma together in a healthy way.

It’s been a couple of weeks since the conference ended and I am still feeling a strong nudge to reach out beyond my congregation and connect with other church workers in my area, especially those who are in more isolated spots. There are times when I need encouragement, but if I haven’t been vulnerable to share my own struggles, there is little opportunity for others to walk alongside me. This thought was from a different session at the conference, but it applies here as well. “If I don’t admit that I need comfort, I won’t get it.” Intentionally set-aside spaces, like the NADCE conference, are a great place to give and receive encouragement, but I’d like to encourage us to find and create more of those spaces for each other outside of conferences. No one should feel alone, isolated, or “stuck” in traumatic or unhealthy situations. Let’s be a safe space for each other.



*Brenda (Segovia) Schmelling is a DCE serving as the Director of Family Life and Community Engagement at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church in Federal Way, WA. Brenda, her husband Adam, and their cat “Kitty,” have loved exploring the greater Seattle area since they moved from Texas in 2020, and are excited to welcome their first child this spring!*

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## Session Review: The Space Where Joy is Found


Paul Nelson

When it comes to the NADCE conference, the main reason I go is to connect with other DCEs, glean from them, and feel refreshed from our discussions. While that certainly did happen, there are other valuable resources at the conference such as the keynote speaker, worship, table talks, exhibits, prayer time, coaching, and sectionals. I was going into the NADCE conference planning to write my reaction to a different sectional, but “The Space Where Joy is Found” with Seth Gehrke ended up sparking post-conference conversations and had practical resources to take home.

When I was planning what sectionals I wanted to attend, I noticed the title included the word *joy*, and my first thought was, “What is joy?” Often there’s confusion about the difference between joy and happiness, and that was what I thought this sectional was going to focus on. However, going with the conference’s theme, Seth focused on making space for finding joy. He did it by focusing on where we see joy in Scripture, what we’ve learned in neuroscience, how we get stuck without joy, and why we need it.

Seth opened up with an activity where we were to greet 8-10 people and say, “I’m happy to see you.” Like most social interactions at NADCE, there was a pleasant vibe in the room since so many people were eager to greet one another. I, however, tend to relate with youth who complain of such icebreakers; I greeted the necessary 8-10 and then sat down.

This connected to Seth’s definition of joy that he took from Wilder & Hendricks’ *The Other Half of Church*: “Joy is what you feel when you see the sparkle in someone’s eye because they’re happy to see you.” There certainly is joy when someone is authentically happy to see you. When I see my wife, child, parents, a friend I haven’t seen in a while, or my youth each week, it genuinely brings me joy. While this isn’t exactly how I would define joy, it fit into Seth’s message.



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Joy is very present in Scripture.

*For the joy of the Lord is your strength. Nehemiah 8:10*


*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13*

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:2-3*

Seth brought us back to the Hebrew word “paniyim” which could be translated as “face,” “presence,” or “to come before.” The example used was a literal translation of Psalm 21:6: “You make him happy with joy with your face.” We were reminded that God is happy to see us and be with us. We are His beloved. Most importantly, we were reminded that joy’s fuel is found in the face of God. When we prioritize spending time with God through prayer, study, and worship, we find joy. God is our source of joy and so when we make space for Him, joy is found.

Seth has been on a journey to look more closely at neuroscience and how our brains work. Dr. Allen Schore from UCLA found that joy is literally the fuel our brains run on and that people scan a room for joy as soon as they enter it. It happens subconsciously. When we scan the room for joy, we’re using the right side of our brain to notice whether people are happy to see us and if we’re safe. Then the left side processes whether we should stay or go. Joy is a critical piece of how our brains function and what we do.

These findings were connected to ministry through the book, *The Other Half of Church*, written by Dr. Jim Wilder and Michel Hendricks, which focuses on how churches often feel lonely and that community can be shallow. It argues that we need to not only focus on the rational half of the church, but the relational as well. So how do we have balance *and* better relationships? Joy is a core piece. “Joy helps us regulate our emotions and endure suffering. Joy does not replace unpleasant emotions (and replace it with false happiness), but it combines with my emotions to keep me emotionally connected in



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distress.” (Hendricks, *The Other Half of Church*, pg. 60) When we have a Church that exhibits joy well in our small groups, worship, Sunday Schools, and more, we create a culture where people feel like they belong, are stable, and freely share their hearts with God and others. After all, one of the fruits of the Spirit is... joy.

So what are some practical ways to apply this sectional? One of my greatest difficulties when I listen to someone speak is how I can take what I hear and bring it back to my ministry. Many times, the speaker is philosophical in nature and I struggle to figure out what to do with it practically. Seth closed with a slide explaining some practices and included a link to access a Google Drive of resources. In the folder link below, you can find Seth’s PowerPoint as well as a number of guides of practices to help us spend time with God and make space for joy.

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VSqeEXjHaxDTCTc0k7m7whv7QGpAzAzP?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VSqeEXjHaxDTCTc0k7m7whv7QGpAzAzP?usp=drive_link)

As a group, we practiced making “Golden Memories” — a simple practice where you think about a memory that gave you joy, contentment, or peace. You then nickname the moment. If we stopped there, we’d have a “Golden Memory” to look back on. However, we continue and turn this into a “Golden God Memory.” You spend some time in prayer asking God where He was active in that memory. Then ask Him, “What do you want me to know about You and Your character?” Personally, I thought of a time when my wife and I were on vacation and did a devotion on the Appalachian Mountains in North Carolina in the fall of 2020. I nicknamed it “Mountain Top.” During our prayer together, it felt like God was reminding me of how He took care of my wife and me in 2020 and how much of a blessing and gift she is. It was a reminder that God is our provider even when we don’t recognize it.

A couple of days after I returned home from the conference, I had a meeting with my youth board. We always start with a devotion and one of my members shared a devotion on her struggle with finding happiness. This segued perfectly into a discussion on this sectional and looking to God to fuel our joy. We practiced Golden God Memories and



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each one of them had a special moment to share from a recent memory demonstrating how God has been active in their lives. It was a powerful practice for us as a group and there were not many dry eyes around the table. I'm not usually a self-reflective person, but this was a resource I can see myself using in the future, especially for retreats or Bible studies.

As that sectional ended, we closed with prayer and Seth recommended a number of books that deal with neurotheology. They include: *The Joyful Journey* by Wilder and Loppnow, *RARE Leadership* by Wilder and Marcus Warner, *Renovated* by Wilder, and, of course, *The Other Half of Church*.

Joy is an essential part of our lives. Seth brought into focus the fact that joy comes from God. We were reminded that God is happy to see and be with us. We are His beloved. We are safe with Him. These are constant reminders we need as we go through life and ministry. I am thankful that I was able to go to the NADCE conference and not just hear from Seth, but all the speakers on making space for God to clear, create, and cultivate in our lives. I hope this gave you insight into the sectionals provided at NADCE and encourage you to attend more of them at the next conference.



*Paul Nelson is the Director of Youth Ministries at St. John's Lutheran Church in Buffalo, MN where he lives with his wife, Abigail, and their daughter, Amelia. Paul loves opportunities to help youth connect faith to their everyday lives, have a good laugh, and baseball.*



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## **Making Space for YOU: A Review of *The Path to Wholeness* by Dr. Mark Mayfield**


Benjamin Simmons

We can all admit: it's been a rough couple of years. From COVID, political tensions, racial divisions, spiritual deconstruction, mass shootings, and overseas wars, it is no surprise that there has been a rapid increase in anxiety and mental health challenges in society and within ourselves. As Christians, we are back to asking the age-old question, "What does this mean?" and as church workers we ask, "How do I take care of myself in all this when I am so invested in taking care of others?"

Dr. Mark Mayfield, a licensed counselor and former pastor, suggests that the answer to this concern of increased anxiety in ourselves could be finding a proper language to interpret our emotions. In his book *The Path to Wholeness* (2023), Mayfield uses his research and personal experience to show that wholeness starts with understanding our emotions so that we can embrace the path of suffering, looking to Jesus as our guide.

For those of us who are in the helping profession, making space for ourselves can be difficult. We often find ourselves so invested in the lives of our congregation members or those we serve that we rarely take the time to "put our own mask on first." Sound familiar? Sadly, this framework for managing our mental health is damaging and only leads to serious physical, social, or emotional distress. Change needs to happen; the problem is we can recognize the need for change but often we possess little knowledge or self-control to make it happen. The process of change begins by looking at our own experiences throughout our lives and the role they play in our emotional responses.

Mayfield proposes that "in order for something to change, it must be brought to the surface" (p. 21). This sentiment is explored throughout the whole book as each chapter ends with questions and action steps to reflect and bring emotions to the surface.




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Our experiences, in addition to the way we were raised, have an impact on how our brain responds to the situations we face each day. Whether we realize it or not, these experiences have a profound impact on the ways that we interact with our emotions in the present. Dr. Mayfield asks this question early on: “What was your first emotional memory?” (p. 33). For me, I remember being five years old, sliding down a static-filled blue slide at my local playground. I spent what felt like hours tracking chunks of mulch up the staircase to the top for just one more go on that most amazing slide. On the tenth—or maybe the hundredth — trip down the blue slide, I realized too late that the person in front of me was still sitting on the bottom lip waiting to exit. Crashing into the little kid was much worse for him than for me and he began to cry. I ran away to my dad who had been watching the scene play out from a nearby park bench. “Go over and apologize,” he encouraged me with a gentle nudge. I remember feeling embarrassed and angry, kicking the mulch with tears streaming down my face. It wasn’t even my fault; I didn’t want to apologize. I cleverly conceived a way to lie to my dad and say I had apologized when really, I went to play in another area of the playground.

Before I was aware of what my feelings meant, I figured out a way to work around them—I created a responsive reflex. Only now do I truly realize the impact of that first emotional memory. Throughout my life, I have had trouble confronting people when I do something to hurt them. Often, I find ways to work around the trouble I caused or even lie to get myself off the hook of facing that feeling again. Only after spending time reading this book and reflecting on that experience did I realize the impact it had on me. Imagine if we learned to reflect this way on all our past experiences.

Another principle Mayfield points out is the way we cope with our emotions only delays the process of our reaction, making us even more frustrated in the end. We can begin to bring emotions into the light by “becoming old friends” with them (p. 84). This can be an abstract process, but if we take the time to define, describe, and literally draw our emotions by their features—like an old friend—we can start to make sense of how they show up in our minds.




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Being able to properly identify what these emotions look like is a crucial step to being able to stop our reflexes from becoming patterns.

A component of this book I especially found to be beneficial for me was its consistent connections to Biblical truths. Dr. Mayfield uses important faith principles to explain psychological concepts—bringing a spiritually-grounded, clinically-researched, and personal approach to self-help. One of the ways He does this is by discussing the theology of suffering as a means for us to care for others and ourselves. What better way to talk about this concept than to view it from the perspective of the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings chapter 19. Elijah was responsible for caring for the nation of Israel and taking care of those in his community. Even after the great prophet witnessed God send fire from heaven to light his altar, He became scared of Jezebel's wrath and fled into the wilderness.

While Eijah wrestled with severe depression, God did not take the threats or challenges away. Instead, He gave Elijah a nap and a snack—my typical post-Sunday worship routine. God wants us to understand that human life is not meant to be without struggle, challenge, or pain. He uses our experiences to teach us that we must be willing to fully rely on Him to provide us with comfort amidst the challenges of this world. Jesus makes this same point, explaining that we will suffer in this world, but He has overcome the world, making our temporal suffering pale compared to the eternal alternative (John 16:33). Mayfield asserts that to take care of others, we must allow ourselves to find God in the stillness of our stillness. Only when we reach an understanding of our story, our emotions, and our suffering can we find a path to wholeness (p. 115).

The closing chapter gives a handful of useful tools that can help put the principles of this book into practice. I particularly enjoyed the emotion wheel which acts as a lexicon for our emotional language. When we experience a response, using this wheel can enable us to determine which emotions those reflexes are coming from. We will never get rid of our emotional struggles, but if we can deepen our emotional intelligence and learn to live with them, then we can reach a place of wholeness (p. 130).



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During the NADCE conference this past February, over two hundred other DCEs and I had the privilege of listening to Dr. Mayfield lead the conference keynote discussions on the topics of clearing, creating, and cultivating mental space for ourselves. In his keynote, he mentioned the importance of identifying five people in your life to help when you face an emotional roadblock. This point stuck out to me. I began thinking, “Do I know who those people are in my life?” He went on to explain that these are the people who are a door knock, phone call, or text away when you are in need. Taking the time to figure out who those people are and surrounding ourselves, physically or digitally, with them will help ground us through any challenge we face. Satan does his best work when we convince ourselves that we are alone in our callings. If you can’t identify those people, try reaching out to some of these communities: your family, local DCE groups, district groups, pastoral circuit, and even the NADCE Facebook page.

We might not always have the answers to help ourselves, but I found that Dr. Mayfield’s *The Path to Wholeness* is a pocket dictionary that can give language to us when things feel out of control. Whether you are using this for your own emotional processing or giving it to a parishioner, this book is a key resource for emotional intelligence. The process of identifying emotion is the only way we can truly learn to live with the tension of what it means to be human.

*Work Cited:*

Mayfield, M. (2023). *The Path to Wholeness: Managing emotions, finding healing, and becoming our best selves*. NavPress.



*Benjamin Simmons is a 2023 graduate of the DCE program at Concordia University Chicago. Previously he served as an intern in Pensacola, Florida, and is now serving in his first Call as a Director of Youth and Family Life Ministry at King of Kings Lutheran Church in Chesterfield, Missouri. Benjamin is also newly married to his lovely wife—and built-in editor—Michelle. Benjamin enjoys rock climbing, traveling, disc golfing, writing, laughing, and just having a good time.*

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## **Making Space for Retirement**

Christine Eid


You would think that in retirement it would be easy to “make space.” After all, you’re not working and you have more control over your schedule, right? But just as in any stage of life, activities can pile up, new responsibilities pop up, and there are so many opportunities available that can lead you to realize the peace you anticipated isn’t there. And then there’s the question of using your gifts even though you are “retired” from ministry. Sometimes it’s an empty feeling – wanting to serve but not sure where or how.

At the recent NADCE conference, we were challenged to “make space.” How do we do that in retirement? The same as everyone else:

Clear  
Create  
Cultivate

I was encouraged to read the book entitled *The Uncommon Guide to Retirement*. I read it prior to retiring, and then again one year into retirement to regroup and think about what was next. It’s amazing how closely the book relates the conference keynote speaker’s thoughts on life and ministry, and I recommend it to anyone approaching or in the retirement phase.

First, “Clear.” Prior to retirement, there is a time of “clearing.” There are all those things you’ve accumulated through years of ministry; especially for those of us who started prior to computers, and everything was paper copies! What to do with it all? Do I throw it out? Do I keep it? Do I give it away? There’s not an easy answer, but in the clearing, it’s a time to make room for other things. As Mark Mayfield said in his keynote, by clearing, we are making room for something else. And sometimes the clutter of resources and “things” get in the way of what we need to do for ourselves in the next steps of ministry.




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Part of clearing might also be giving yourself time. Take time for sabbath, which sounds easier than it is. When we're working, we think how nice it would be to just have some sabbath time, but then when the time actually comes, it is really hard! In our culture, we have to give ourselves permission to just *be*. We always think that we should be doing something, so when we sabbath and spend quiet time, we don't think we're accomplishing anything, and then we feel guilty. But, Sabbath is God given. It's a time to clear our minds and to take the time with our Heavenly Father to wait and see what He has planned next for our lives.

The time of Sabbath might be a month. Or, in my case, my Sabbath was closer to two years. It was hard! But as each day, week, and month passed, I saw how God was using the time to refresh me and have me turn back to Him for what His intentions were, not mine.

The second focus of the conference was "Create." In *The Uncommon Guide of Retirement*, the authors share that in this new generation of retirees, going out to golf each day or vacation may not be enough. Retirement is a time to do something different, or to use some gifts that have been on hold for a while. But what does that look like?

The blessing of retirement is that there is nothing telling you that you can or can't do something. Wait to see what God places on your heart and then go for it! Use your time to create and to be what God wants you to be. Know that if it doesn't work out initially, there is time and space to change and move forward on whatever God wants next. It may seem like a time of intimidation, but it's also an exciting time! During the conference, I realized that during parts of my ministry, my creativity was pushed down. I didn't have the flexibility to really do what I wanted to do. And in this time of retirement, I now have the opportunities to use gifts that God has given me which have been dormant for a while. What does that look like? I'm not sure. But, it's exciting to think about and fun to anticipate what God has in mind. Embrace the time to create and see what God does with it.



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Finally, “Cultivate.” We never stop growing. There is always something new to learn. Even if we have retired, there are ways to learn. It’s different for everyone, but I encourage you to continue in your journey to learn and cultivate your gifts and talents and use them for what God wishes you to do. It may be that pile of books that you said you’d read some day or it might be listening to podcasts. Identify how you can continue to learn and move ahead.

But cultivating doesn’t just mean personal growth. It might also mean that there is someone that God has brought into your life that you are to help in their spiritual walk. Who is that person? Take time to pray and see who God is bringing into your life at this time and place who you can help cultivate as well.

Making space means intentionality. It means thinking through what God wants for you next in life and moving toward it. Retirement does not mean that God is done with you yet. It may take time to find out what that next piece is, but God has a plan and a way to use the gifts you have, and so I encourage you to make space through worship and study of His Word to see what that is.

So, what does “making space in retirement” look like? It’s different for everyone. But, as you move to the next chapter of what God is calling you to do, be open. Wait to hear His voice and He will guide you to continue to serve Him in so many fun and individual ways!



*Christine Eid retired from full-time DCE ministry in January 2021. A graduate of Valparaiso University, Concordia River Forest, and Concordia St. Paul, she served four congregations and in paraministry for 38 years in DCE ministry. Since retirement, Christine has helped in the early childhood center of her church and assists with the curriculum portion of children’s ministry, while participating in small groups and Bible study with her husband. Her passion is children and families learning together to grow in their faith.*

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## NADCE Award Recipient Interview


Various Authors

*The NADCE Quarterly Editing Team interviewed some of the 2024 NADCE Award Recipients. We hope their answers will help you learn more about the NADCE Conference, their ministries, and how you can apply their ideas to your own ministries.*

### ***What was your biggest takeaway from the NADCE Conference?***

Jim Bradshaw: The NADCE conference, once again, lived up to the organizational mission to provide advocacy, professional connections, and resources for Directors of Christian Education. It was wonderful to observe DCEs offering support across the generations, especially through the table talk sessions and informal conversations. I was joy-filled to have been a part of those discussions.

Madison Patrow: The theme of "Making Space" stuck with me. It was a much-needed reset. Making space, especially when to-do lists are long, can be difficult. Being a leader in ministry is a challenging vocation that often requires putting others' needs before your own, not always getting a day off each week, and constantly having a list of what you need to do (or already should have done) running through your head. It sometimes means not having much time or energy to make space. However, as this conference reminded me, making space is necessary and extremely beneficial. When we make space, we step away from the distractions and lies of this world. When we make space, we remember what is most important. When we make space, our relationship with Jesus, ourselves, and others improves. This was the biggest takeaway I had from the NADCE conference and a much-needed reminder as a fairly new DCE.





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***What are some ways that someone “made space” to encourage, support, and equip you in your ministry?***

Jim Bradshaw: As I enter the next chapter of life into “refirement,” (in other words, He is not done with me yet. His Spirit is ‘refiring’ me for the next chapter of my life) there were several individuals who took the time to pour into me from their experience base. I was heartened to know that a great cloud of witnesses is cheering me on. I am going home with greater confidence to truly finish well knowing that God has a plan when the page is turned!

Madison Patrow: The fellowship of believers and mentors in faith is an incredible gift God gives us. This is especially true for leaders in ministry. I have been incredibly blessed to know many amazing and faithful leaders who help me make space by praying for me, serving alongside me, encouraging me, and gifting me with their wisdom, experiences, and ideas. We are not meant to do this life alone, and we are certainly not meant to serve and lead by ourselves. I am so thankful for my DCE, Tim Stroming, who joyfully serves others and encouraged me to follow this call. I am grateful for many DCEs, pastors, and influential lay leaders along the way who mentored me in my fieldwork and internship experiences. I am extremely thankful to the staff and faculty at CSP for equipping me to serve, exemplifying the Gospel, and continuing to grow in faith alongside me. I am also so blessed to lead with a strong and faith-filled team and congregation at Messiah who graciously serve, encourage, and love others. In my short few years in ministry, I have been given many opportunities to learn from and be blessed by many members of the body of Christ, young and old, who have made space for me and helped me grow immensely.

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***What's a piece of advice you would pass on to someone new in DCE ministry that you wish you had known when you first started in ministry?***


Jim Bradshaw: As a baptized child of God and as second chair ministry leader, FIRST always remember who you are and *whose* you are in Christ. That is your identity. There will be ups and downs in ministry. Hang in there. Daily live life knowing that you are grace-filled in Christ. He is truly faithful, and He will surely do it!

Madison Patrow: One piece of advice I would give to someone new to DCE ministry is to reach out to others and be open to sharing your vulnerabilities (while still upholding healthy boundaries). God did not intend for us to do ministry or life alone. Each of us has unique gifts and passions as well as experiences and backgrounds. When we come together, share these things, and work together, the outcome is much better. This can be a difficult thing to do, but it is key. Even when it may be uncomfortable or intimidating, reach out for help or advice. Having a strong community is crucial, especially for church workers. Building up your network of mentors and trusted friends in ministry is one of the best things you can do as a new DCE.

***How has NADCE benefitted your ministry?***

Jim Bradshaw: Since its inception, NADCE has been a leading advocate for DCEs in our church body. By telling the story and impact of DCE ministry, congregations across the Synod have a clearer understanding of the role and benefits of the ministry of the Director of Christian Education.

Madison Patrow: NADCE has benefitted my ministry by introducing me to more leaders in ministry, connecting me to a platform where ideas and resources are shared, and providing a stronger community to walk alongside me in this calling. It is a blessing to be a part of this group. NADCE is a positive community that cultivates key Christian relationships and provides leaders with opportunities to learn and grow.



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***What are you excited to see in DCE ministry over the next 5-10 years and how do you see yourself being part of it?***

Jim Bradshaw: My passion is for all church workers to be well! I want to support organizations whose mission is caring for their workers. If God desires for me to volunteer my time towards these efforts, His still, small voice will lead me down that path.

Madison Patrow: In the next 5-10 years, I am excited to see DCE ministry grow and adapt as we exemplify and share the Gospel in the current context, build up and equip more Christian leaders, and continue loving and serving others. I pray that DCE ministry will continue to focus on Christ as our example and the Holy Spirit as our guide. I will be excited to find new ways to connect with our people, see trends that emerge regarding events and outreach opportunities, and discover more interactive ways to teach the same faith to our children and youth. I am assuming that the culture will be very different in 5-10 years, as it has changed even within the few years I have been in ministry, but I look forward to seeing how God continues to unfold His plan and press on with the hope of the Good News of Jesus. I will continue shining Christ's light and am excited to see how the Holy Spirit guides me to do so!





*James P. Bradshaw earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education with DCE Certification in 1982 at Concordia Teacher's College, Seward, NE. He completed a Masters in Family Life Science in 2001 at Concordia University – Nebraska.*

*Bradshaw has served as the assistant to the president for education and youth for The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) Kansas District since March 2005. He is the Superintendent for the Lutheran Schools of Kansas. Prior to his work with the LCMS Kansas District, he served as a Director of Christian Education for 23 1/2 years in three states: Texas, Minnesota, and Kansas.*

*Jim has served on a variety of Synod committees, initiatives, and LCMS Youth Gathering teams. He is one of the founding members of both NADCE and the Concordia Center for the Family at Ann Arbor. He is also a 2004 KINDLE Associate and 2018 Finishing Well Associate. He served two terms on KINDLE's Board of Directors. In addition to receiving the 2024 National Association of Directors of Christian Education – Dale Griffin Master Statesman Award, Bradshaw was conferred the title of Master Educator in 2023 by his alma mater. In 2003, the Lutheran Education Association awarded Jim the title of Master DCE. He was also recently inducted into the Kansas Association of Independent and Religious Schools Hall of Fame. Jim and his spouse, Joanna, have been married for 42 years. They have been blessed with three adult children, their spouses, and seven grandchildren.*



*Madison Patrow, originally from Grand Rapids, MN, is a Spring 2022 graduate of CSP and Director of Christian Education serving at Messiah Lutheran Church in Lakeville, MN. She is now in her second year of full-time ministry. At Messiah, she oversees children's and youth ministry. Outside of work, Madison enjoys spending time with her family and friends, enjoying Minnesota nature, and traveling. Madison is the recipient of the Outstanding New DCE Award.*

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## Quarterly Question


What was the best part of the NADCE Conference?

Hailey Jo Miller: The content. It was useful for my personal and professional life. Also, the worship team. They were incredible.

Jolene Siebarth: I appreciated the keynote speaker and the challenge statements he presented. It was a great time of encouragement, refocusing, and reminding. One quote that stuck with me was, "When we are mentally, emotionally, spiritually, relationally, and physically healthy, those around us will have a better chance of being healthy, too." The host church was amazing as well!

Scott Rauch: Wonderful colleagues, youthful and experienced, conversing together around the table.

Jason Phelps: I LOVED the Wednesday night reception around the fire pits! And Tribe and Tongue!



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## Coming in Our Next Issue:

In our next issue, we'll be highlighting ministry to older adults! If you have insights to share, we'd love to hear from you! If you'd like to contribute to the Spring issue, please contact the editors with your proposal by March 10th at [nadceeditors@gmail.com](mailto:nadceeditors@gmail.com).

## Notes from the NADCE Board

- *Have you listened to [NADCE's podcasts](#)? We are currently in our Lenten Season Podcast Devotions brought to you by your DCE peers in ministry. Keep an eye out for a new podcast episode featuring Mark Mayfield, our keynote speaker from the NADCE Conference.*
- *NADCE Board Elections will be taking place April 2-8, 2024. You will receive a list of candidates at the end of March in your email.*



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## NADCE Quarterly Editing Team

### Allie Urberg, Assistant Editor

Allie Urberg graduated from Concordia University Nebraska in 2015 and Concordia University Irvine in 2022 and currently serves as Director of Youth Ministry at Peace Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Working with 6th-12th grade students, Allie especially loves the raw honesty and unrestrained joy of her middle and high school students in Confirmation and youth group.

Allie spends her free time reading as many novels as possible, talking with friends across the country, thrift shopping, and spending time with her husband Adam!



### Michaela Seeliger, Editor

Michaela Seeliger graduated from Concordia University Texas in 2016 and now serves as Director of Christian Education at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Wichita Falls, TX where she enjoys working with children, youth, and family ministries. She especially loves VBS, confirmation ministry, and helping equip parents to teach the faith at home.

Michaela enjoys spending time with her family and friends, reading, and gardening. Although Texas has been her home for many years now, Michaela will always consider herself an Oklahoma girl.

