



# Progoff™ Ministry Newsletter

Winter, 2007

an *Entry*™ Publication

Vol. 1, Issue 1

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Dear Friend:

The role of ministering can be a demanding and stressful existence. Counseling individuals, coping with financial constraints and dealing with competing personalities are just some of a minister's many challenges.

Ministers need to nurture and support their personal beings to be more effective to those they serve as well as to avoid burnout.

The *Intensive Journal* method has been a valuable resource for ministers. In our premiere issue, Rev. James Miller and Rev. Wally Chappell explain how our method has made profound

differences in their lives. Sabbatical programs, such as The Oblate School of Theology's Ministry to Ministers Program, have hosted *Intensive Journal* programs.

We will explore why the *Intensive Journal* program can help sustain and renew ministers in meeting the challenges of modern day ministry.

I welcome your interest and involvement.

Jonathan Progoff

## Using the *Intensive Journal* Method in Ministry: An Interview with Rev. Dr. James D. Miller

by Abi Scholz

**Abi Scholz:** Tell us about yourself and your work in ministry.

**Jim Miller:** I have served as a pastor in Reading, PA United Church of Christ congregations since my graduation from Yale Divinity School in 1963. I have been at my present congregation, Trinity United Church of Christ in Mt. Penn, Pennsylvania since 1966 and continue to serve as senior pastor currently, though hoping to soon cut back to half time or retire altogether. My work has heavy time and energy demands caring for a congregation of over 500 members and its ministries including a 200 student/childcare ministry, food pantry and other normal activities involved in church life these days.

I have been married since 1960 to my wife, Janet, and we have three children and six grandchildren. My family and my church continue to be the two primary foci of my life and I have found the *Intensive Journal* program to be a great help in balancing the two and keeping me aware and moving in good directions with both.

**AS:** Why did you become interested in Progoff's methods for self-development?

**JM:** I learned about the *Intensive Journal* work of Dr. Ira Progoff while attending a Shalom Retreat at KirkrIDGE Retreat and Study Center in 1972. The retreat leader, Dr. Gerald Jud, then head of the national Department of Evangelism of the United

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# Renewing Ministers Through Sabbatical Programs

by Jon Progoff

Dialogue House has a long history of conducting *Intensive Journal* workshops as part of sabbatical programs for ministers. The method is well-suited to the needs of sabbatical programs in learning practical tools for renewal and enrichment.

By using the *Intensive Journal* procedures to experience the inner continuity of our lives, Ira Progoff states that we “reintegrate and renew our life perspective... [which] has a transforming and spiritually renewing effect.” We are “reopening the possibilities of life, giving perspective for the past and guidance for the future” so that something additional happens, connecting us with the meaning of our personal existence. We are better able to answer the question: “Where am I in the movement of my life?” As we connect with our inner resources and capacities, we are better equipped to sustain ourselves and make future decisions.\*

For 20 years, the *Intensive Journal* program has been held at the sabbatical program of The Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas that is called “Ministry to Ministers.” Created in 1981, it is a four month residential program focused on renewal and enrichment through a series of workshops and mini courses that cover theological, integrative spirituality and other related components. Attracting participants worldwide, the Ministry for Ministers program is designed for seasoned ministers who seek renewal, to broaden their horizons, and thereby become better equipped for taking the next steps in their lives.

For the past six years, Sr. Annette Covatta, SNJM, has conducted the *Intensive Journal* program on behalf of Dialogue House. Sr. Annette has seen participants “gain insights” and “connect to potentials and possibilities for life that are latent and have not yet been able to be lived.”

One participant concludes “I came away...with a clearer sense of focus and purpose. Thanks to this intuitive process, I was able to make the murky waters still and see what was happening.” Similarly, Sr. Kathleen Murphy, OSF, who attended during a time of transition from one position in ministry to another, concludes:

“Of all of the programs... the one that I found the most interesting and beneficial to me was the *Intensive Journal* program...The dream work... was particularly helpful to me, and I came to a deeper understanding of what was going on in my unconscious through my attempts to write a conversation with a person in the dream... I would certainly recommend the *Intensive Journal* program for other sabbatical programs.”

Sr. Imelda Grimes, rmdm, says the *Intensive Journal* workshops “provided me with tools to deepen self-knowledge and to articulate some of my experiences...”

In essence, the *Intensive Journal* method provides an active methodology for renewing ourselves in an ongoing way, and as Progoff states, become “dancers joining the dance of our life.”\*

\* *At a Journal Workshop*, by Ira Progoff, (1992 rev. ed. Penguin Putnam), pp. 15-17.

## Contributions

We wish to thank everyone who has supported the *Intensive Journal* program by acknowledging the following foundations for their donations:

- The Aloha Fund
- The Atlanta Foundation
- Community Foundation of New Jersey
- Kitchel-McLaughlin Family Fund
- New Hampshire Charitable Foundation
- Wells Fargo Community Support Campaign

# ***The Intensive Journal Program:*** **A Spiritual Tool for Modern Times**

**by Rev. Wallace (Wally) Chappell**

*Rev. Wally Chappell is an associate pastor at First United Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas where he has served in ministerial capacities for 60 years. As a certified leader of the Intensive Journal method, Rev. Chappell has brought the program to many Methodist congregations. Rev. Chappell describes why the Intensive Journal method is a valuable resource for ministers and the congregations they serve.*

The *Intensive Journal* process has been, for the years, one of the primary “tools” for my own inner journey in a life of ministry.

Most of the great spiritual writers across the centuries stress being silent, listening, and attending to the voice of God. But the fact of life for busy pastors is the incessant schedule pressure which almost excludes quiet moments. It is hard enough to settle into silence, and even harder to linger there until God “speaks.” Our personal depths become as churned up as our life schedules. The result is very little serenity, meditation, or sense of God’s presence in what was intended to be a religious life.

Within this condition of constant demands and endless doings it is great to discover a modern system for achieving the deeper listening that brings a sense of God’s presence, peace, and will. The *Intensive Journal* program has been that for me. It gives us something to do, on the way to our deeper self. That doing, that deeper awareness, and the power for Godly living that flows from it, is a practical way of speaking of the *Intensive Journal* method. The method is proven by the results. The *Intensive Journal* process “works” for religious people who don’t live in a monastery.

Details are too extensive for this testimony, but the result is beyond question:

- Current issues clarify themselves;
- Old relationships are healed;
- Next steps define themselves;
- Old agonies are dealt with;
- A deep energy flows into life;
- The “voice” of God stirs in our thoughts.

And this takes place at an experiential level, a level that underlies the intellectual structure of creeds and doctrines. You trust what you “hear.”

Laity find the method powerful, not only in reconciling a troublesome past, but also in the discernment of next steps in life. In the language of classic spirituality, the *Intensive Journal* method is a work of discernment. Many also discover an “inner counselor” that leads them into a capability for living life without frequent pastoral ‘hand holding.’ One middle-age woman was ecstatic and thrilled to put to rest old issues with her father. She said, “It was like he was here talking to me.”

The *Intensive Journal* program has been one of the foremost “pieces” of my own inner life for so long I wonder what I did before I found it. Of all the spiritual disciplines that I have used across the years, this one has been the most dependable in keeping me on track, energized, and focused. I recommend it to all pastors and the congregations they serve.

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## **Update on Continuing Education**

Dialogue House is an approved provider of continuing education programs in counseling, employee assistance and social work. We are also approved by the National Organization for Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy (NOCERCC).

## **Website Enhancements**

We’ve significantly upgraded our website. The area of Ministry now describes the method’s relevancy for ministers, articles, details about the Progoff Ministry Committee, and more. Please visit our website at [www.intensivejournal.org](http://www.intensivejournal.org).

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Church of Christ, described how the *Intensive Journal* method could be a real asset for pastors who have to deal with the many dimensions and aspects of their life and work. I attended my first workshop with my wife in Baltimore in 1973 and instantly found it to be a tremendous help to me in gaining an overview of my life and all its many facets, as well as a means to open up new understanding and awareness of individual difficulties and struggles.

**AS: Your Doctor of Ministry thesis\* and your article summarizing it (both entitled: “*The Intensive Journal Method: a Tool for Ministry*”) conclude that the *Intensive Journal* method can help a minister in many ways. Let’s begin by explaining how it can help a pastor personally.**

**JM:** As a pastor, I often found myself overwhelmed by my responsibilities as a husband, father, and pastor of a growing congregation. There simply were not enough hours in the day to do everything I felt I should be doing. Using the *Intensive Journal* method helped me to address these problems by offering me an effective tool to describe, sort out, and make choices about what real priorities should be for me in regard to my own needs, my family’s needs, and my church’s needs. I could dialogue with the various aspects of my life and relationships and listen from another point of view as I sought to clarify my future. I could look inward and find non-verbal images revealing subtle feelings and directions not available on a conscious level. It reminded me of the famous Rosetta Stone which enabled persons to finally translate the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics.

**AS: How has the *Intensive Journal* method impacted your spirituality and your relationship with God? Are the principles of the method consistent with the Christian tradition?**

### **Progoff Ministry Committee**

The Progoff Ministry Committee (PMC) is comprised of ten ministry professionals from several faiths who have been involved in the *Intensive Journal* Program over the years and share a deep belief in its value and potential. The PMC provides guidance to Dialogue House in reaching out to various religious organizations.

\* Rev. Dr. James D. Miller’s Doctor of Ministry thesis, “*The Intensive Journal [Method]: A Tool for Ministry*,” Lancaster Theological Seminary, 1979.

**JM:** The *Intensive Journal* method, with its combination of remembering, describing, dialogue script writing, and non-verbal imaging, offered me a way to deepen my spiritual life and gain a much better understanding of how I was doing in following God’s call in ministry and in my personal relationship with God. I found the *Intensive Journal* method’s neutral exercises comfortable with my own spiritual journey and in no way interfering or drawing me off into subtle and unwanted territory. The dialogue exercises in fact helped me much in my prayer life as I was helped to both speak from my heart and then hear God’s response in my daily life.

**AS: How can a pastor benefit professionally through use of the method?**

**JM:** The *Intensive Journal* process offers me a way to work through problems in every aspect of my church life, handle confrontations in a safe and private way before face to face encounters, and clarify real issues, particularly in emotional or potentially volatile situations. It helps me keep a constructive partnership with my role as pastor as we dialogue regularly together about how things are going in my personal and professional life.

**AS: Why is the *Intensive Journal* method’s emphasis upon privacy in the workshop so helpful to a pastor?**

**JM:** The privacy of the *Intensive Journal* method, whether working alone or in a workshop setting, is so important to pastors who handle confidentiality issues at almost every turn. I have explored issues in my journal which I would hesitate to share (at least at the moment they were written) with anyone else and could do so freely and without hesitation.

**AS: Ministers face a great deal of stress in serving their congregation. Can the *Intensive Journal* method help ministers deal with this and avoid burnout? If so, please explain how.**

**JM:** I give the *Intensive Journal* program a great deal of credit for keeping me live and vibrant after all these years, still in active ministry at 68. It has been a friend and confidant and a most trusted companion. It has helped me work through my past, kept me actively and responsibly involved in my present and led me hopefully and expectantly into my future which is still out there waiting for me! □