

***Why does God Encounter People? Inviting Teens into an Intergenerational
Conversation in Renewalist Spirituality***

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Abstract

Christian ministries in the United States and the Western Church have yet to put teens in the driver's seat regarding self-directed spirituality. Despite affirming youth leadership, leaders have more often commodified children, teens, or young adult ministries rather than developing age-appropriate resources to support Gen Z and Alpha's interest in spirituality. Age-segregation in U.S. Christian ministry contexts has limited teen's participation in intergenerational conversations about encountering God, navigating cultural pluralism, and Christian spiritual formation. An over-emphasis on performance and hurry within U.S. evangelical and charismatic ministries has limited teens' discernment, experiential understanding of God's character, and ability to build healthy rhythms for life and ministry. Without sufficient modeling, support, and protection, teens have lacked opportunities to experience spirituality, form identities based on their experiences, and steward their unique gifts within community. Synthesizing the strengths of Spiritual Direction and Prophetic ministry may best equip teens to enter into the "search-encounter-transformation" process that has come to characterize contemporary Renewalist spirituality.¹

Ultimately, Latino/a/x approaches to community may inform more grounded spiritual practices in renewal youth ministry contexts like Mosaic Church in Seattle, Washington. During a time of increasing U.S. social transformation and *latinization*, U.S. Latino/a/x communities' approaches to belonging and social difference (*mestizaje*), shared testimony (*testimonios*), family (*familismo*), solidarity (*solidaridad*), life in community (*en convivencia*), and encountering God in everyday life (*lo cotidiano*) may support U.S. youth ministries to navigate change. Specifically, Latino/a/x Pentecostal patterns of utilizing testimony as a conduit for shared spiritual direction may influence renewalist ministry contexts like Mosaic Youth Ministry to develop a deeper sense of shared identity. Ultimately, my act of ministry project explored whether using Harvard Project Zero thinking routines in small group discussion could support a focus group of Mosaic teens to engage with elders' testimonies *latinamente*.

For my act of ministry, I interviewed 4 Mosaic Church adults (18+) about an experience they had with God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. From the interviews, I rewrote 3 case studies to share with Mosaic teens. Next, I designed a pre-test and post-test to measure teens' vocabulary and background knowledge. I designed discussion questions based on Bloom's taxonomy, teen's lexile levels, Harvard Project Zero's *Connect*, *Extend*, *Challenge*, *Creative Questions*, and *Think, Puzzle, Explore* thinking routines. I met with 6 middle and high school students (12-18) who had differing amounts of experience with spiritual encounter to discuss these encounter narratives over 5 weeks in Fall 2023. At the end, teens reflected on what they had received from the project and their remaining questions.

The results of this research demonstrate that responding to case studies within small group contexts can be an effective way to support teen's vocabulary development about spirituality. Responding to case studies may support teens to generate questions about their own spirituality, identify their own interests, and connect with others. Additional research should explore how

¹Mark J. Cartledge, *Speaking in Tongues: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 588.

Latino/a/x Seattlite leaders' insights and facilitation styles may improve future intergenerational conversations about Christian spirituality within Seattle.

Keywords: renewalism, charismatic, evangelical, youth ministry, Intercultural Spirituality Studies, community, Spiritual Direction, Prophetic Ministry, spiritual encounter, spiritual experience, teens, Harvard Project Zero, small group discussion, case studies, Christian Spirituality, time poverty, Pacific Northwest, Cascadia

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As I review the scope of this project, I am reminded of the patient presence of about 10 years worth of friends, colleagues, and mentors. Their various backgrounds formed and challenged me...and one another. Ultimately, the lens I've offered via this thesis reflects some of their greatest points of agreement: that life with God is meant to be transformative, holistic, and long-term. I hope that the resources developed in this thesis will allow similar stakeholders to share vision(s).

From Intervarsity Campus Fellowship, I learned that God has a range of qualities that he shares uniquely with different cultures. From Mosaic Church in Seattle, Washington, I learned that the gospel is worth sharing. From Robin Tieperman, I learned that our journey with God is meant to be shared. From Inspirational Gospel Voices of the University of Kansas, I learned that praise is powerful. It can change not just our perspectives, but our circumstances. From Adoration House of Seattle, Washington, I learned how drastically God has chosen to dwell within communities. From Vianca and Miguel Severino and the majority Caribbean Latino/a/x "Jesús (pero con acento)" small group at Mosaic Church, I learned that no matter the distance, transplants can still find community. From Sacred Heart Catholic School in Washington, DC, I learned that holy imagination, art, and celebration can demonstrate God's majesty. From Raquel Rogers, I learned that spiritual direction is an anchoring, ancient counterpoint to Prophetic Ministry. From the Healthy Prophetic Team including Sarah Wren, Dawn Cundy, and Bozena Olszewska, I learned that the best Renewalist representation of Jesus is through grounded, humble, and collaborative Prophetic Ministry.

From Virginia Theological Seminary and the Episcopal Church, I learned that approaching non-Christian cultures can be as easy as conversation. From The Rev. Rode Molla, I

learned that the practices of a Christian community should reflect its people. From Dr. Sharon Heaney, I learned to pay closer attention to whose voice is speaking. From The Rev. Ross Kane, I learned that practicing theology can be easy-going and even fun.

To all the people I have yet to meet, I hope that within this work are threads of something that will serve you. And that God's grace will make a way for you to encounter Jesus in whatever context you are serving.

Introduction

“When a congregation carries children, it is fundamentally oriented, without direct rational thought or effort, to a community of persons. Carrying children reveals that a congregation is most fundamentally a relationship... We are all persons who are open and closed, individual and relational, will and spirit. When we encounter others as a person, we receive our own personhood; we come up against revelation itself. When persons are bound to one another, we experience life. We taste a tangible resonance that leads us to embrace the world, giving and receiving ministry in and to the world.” - Andrew Root²

Living in Christian community is a life of carrying and being carried. Long before I had any experience of Jesus, I experienced God’s love most powerfully through friendship. At 10 years old and during a season of struggle, I had the pleasure of being befriended by Paloma.³ As a second-generation Mexican American and a transfer student to our school, Paloma’s warmth and openness challenged and encouraged me. Like the gospel, her family’s generosity demonstrated a healthier way of life. But like the Holy Spirit, Paloma’s love was active, naming the gap between my behavior and what she believed was true about my identity. In gentle but severe words, she eventually told me, “I don’t think you are really like this.” From her friendship, I learned that God’s love is fierce and uncompromising. Out of respect for her family’s impact, I began learning Spanish the following year.

Once I began to explore Christian Spirituality for myself, learning Spanish brought me to Chile and into the company of several Latino/a/x Pentecostal and evangélico communities. The testimonies frequently shared within these communities taught me what I was beginning to experience as true: that God is patient, powerful, and trustworthy. Rather than living aloof from one another’s experiences of God, the practice of sharing testimonies (*testimonios*) within these

²Andrew Root, “The Congregation in a Secular Age,” in *Keeping Sacred Time Against the Speed of Modern Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 191, ProQuest Ebook Central.

³Name changed for privacy.

communities was unique. When individuals recounted an experience, it became a conduit for shared conversation, connection, and shared encounter. One person's lived experience became an altar call to the entire community. As the community responded, their experience of God resulted not just in more testimonies, but a sense of shared direction. Through these contexts, I began to understand testimony as a vehicle for shared community spirituality.

Eating from the same spiritual bread is a lot like the degree of sharing and *convivencia* required of school communities. As a classroom teacher in Washington, D.C., I was in a role that carried and was carried by our school's Central American Latino/a/x community. Some years after returning to the United States, I sat across from various Latino/a/x parents as we pooled our language skills to support their children. Within this context, I saw how responding to children's needs motivated adults from various backgrounds to risk collaboration. Working towards a shared mission helped us organize our skills and harmonize our differences in ways that simple relationship would not. Prior to leaving D.C., I taught in a bilingual Catholic school that encouraged children to encounter God's "goodness, beauty, truth, wonder, awe, and mystery"⁴ through the lens of Salvadoran Catholic Spirituality.

In moving to Seattle, Washington and the greater Cascadia region, God's "goodness, beauty, truth, wonder, awe, and mystery" feels both so close and so far away. While the mountains, trees, and lakes seem to cry out in praise,⁵ Cascadia is one of the least religious places in the United States. Historical patterns of religious disaffiliation and social isolation have created tremendous rifts between the religious and irreligious, between conservative and liberal, between evangelical and mainline Christian spiritualities.⁶ In a context where individual

⁴Lacey Finn Borgo, *Spiritual Conversations with Children: Listening to God Together* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 40.

⁵Is. 55:12, Luke 19:40

⁶James Wellman, *Evangelical vs. Liberal: The Clash of Cultures in the Pacific Northwest*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008, 87.

spirituality is celebrated but organized religion is contested,⁷ teens at Mosaic Church in Seattle, Washington seemed to be looking for a pathway to understand renewalist Christian spirituality. As a volunteer within this context, I noticed that the embodiment of Latino/a/x understandings of *mestizaje*, extended family structure, and community might support Mosaic's teens to understand God's immanence and long-term faithfulness. In order to prioritize a relationship with God rather than the pressures of ministry, I invited a focus group of 6 teens to read and respond to case studies about encountering God from within the Mosaic Church community. Teens used these case studies as a canvas to discuss their own experiences, anxieties, and questions about why God encounters people. From this project, teens were able to generate questions that could then serve as future lines of inquiry. While the methodology I utilized in my act of ministry project still reflects predominantly Anglo approaches to teaching and learning, its limitations may illuminate future pathways for inquiry-based spiritual formation.

How do we support the next generation's spirituality? What does it mean to help Generation Z or Alpha have greater access to the revelation of Jesus? The answer to that question will depend on the people and culture of each context. Nevertheless, Christian ministry leaders within the U.S. and world must develop resources that are developmentally appropriate, interest-based, and empowering to support children, teens, and young adults' spirituality.

⁷“Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area,” Pew Research Institute Religion and Public Life Project, last modified May 12, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/metro-area/seattle-metro-area/>.

Chapter 1 - Understanding the Spirituality of Mosaic Church

Mosaic Community Church (Mosaic) is a nondenominational evangelical church in Seattle, Washington. Mosaic was founded in 2005 by a small group of friends. It has grown to approximately 1000 members in 3 locations over the last 17 years.⁸ Mosaic Church is a member of the Antioch Network of Churches, a non-denominational evangelical church-planting movement that originated in Waco, Texas in 1987.⁹ In most governance matters, the Church is autonomous from the Antioch Network yet shares resources for missions and training with the Antioch Network. The mission of Mosaic is to be “followers of Jesus from drastically different backgrounds, with unique, Spirit-empowered gifts, [who] come together to form a mature, healthy expression of the family of God” within Seattle.¹⁰

Mosaic Youth Ministry’s Demographics

Within this context, approximately 75 middle and high school students attend a teens ministry called Mosaic Youth. Of these 75 students, approximately 35 teens attend regularly. Ages 12-18 represent Generation Alpha (born in 2013) and Generation Z (born from 2009-2012).¹¹ In addition to Sunday evening youth meetings, teens meet in age-and-gender-based discipleship groups throughout the week, facilitated by approximately 14 adult volunteers and a youth ministry director. Teen attendees volunteer alongside adults in children’s ministry, meet in age and gender-based small groups, lead musical worship during Sunday Youth meetings, serve in Outreach ministry, and provide direction for the Youth Ministry in monthly Youth Leadership

⁸“Who We Are,” Mosaic Community Church, last modified 2024, <https://mosaic.family/>.

⁹“About Antioch Movement,” Antioch Movement, last modified 2024, <https://antioch.org/about>.

¹⁰“About Mosaic Seattle,” Mosaic Community Church, last modified 2024, <https://seattle.mosaic.family/about/>.

¹¹Michael Dimock, “Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins,” Pew Research Center, last modified January 17, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>; Stephen Eldridge, “Generation Alpha,” Encyclopædia Britannica, last modified February 21, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Generation-Alpha>.

Team meetings. The ethnic demographics of the youth group reflect the ethnicities of Mosaic as a whole. Approximately 90 percent of teens are Anglo, with approximately 10 percent of regular attendees identifying as East Asian, Latino, Southeast Asian, or African American collectively. Approximately one-third of the teens attend private Christian schools, while others participate in public, private, or home schools. Some students who attend public schools have initiated or joined Christian student groups. Separate from the emergence of these groups, as of January 2024, a few previously religiously unaffiliated public-school students have joined the youth ministry, having discovered it via a Google search. Approximately 70 percent of the youth attend Mosaic Church with their families, while the remaining 30 percent attend other churches.

Spiritual Movements and Mosaic Church: History, Characteristics, and Terminology

The intertwined influence of the Holiness Movement (eighteenth-nineteenth century), the Pentecostal Movement (nineteenth-twentieth century), the Charismatic Movement (1960s - today), and the Evangelical Movement (seventeenth century - today) have influenced Mosaic Youth Ministry's historical location and spirituality. Currently, Mosaic Church's spirituality reflects language related to encounter, purification, and transformation that may be influenced by these movements. To fully explain how these spiritualities influence Mosaic Church in navigating its geographical context, it is worth clarifying their history, terminology, and characteristics.

In *Holiness and Pentecostal Movements: Intertwined Pasts, Presents, and Futures*, Theological Historians David Bundy, Geordan Hammond, and David Sang-Ehil Han argue that the Holiness movement developed within the East Coast of the United States through John

Wesley's Methodism.¹² Throughout the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century, other mainline leaders such as William Boardman (Presbyterian), Asa Mahan (Presbyterian, Congregationalist), Thomas Upham (Congregationalist), Hannah Whitall Smith (Quaker), A.J. Gordon (Baptist), and Charles G. Finney (Presbyterian, Congregationalist) utilized Holiness spirituality to encourage "the abolition of slavery, economic justice, and freedom for women to minister."¹³ Nevertheless, the understanding of sanctification for most Holiness leaders and laity "came to focus on personal purification and power for ministry, rather than engagement with social change."¹⁴ Over time, separate "Radical Holiness" ministry networks developed, led primarily by less educated, female, or non-Anglo leaders who held formal positions of leadership due to their social location and "conceptions of Christian ministry and mission."¹⁵

Theological Historian Edmund J. Rybarczyk and Political Scientist Eric Patterson in *The Future of Pentecostalism in the United States*, the U.S. Pentecostal Movement carried and expanded the Holiness Movement's emphasis on spiritual encounter and transformation. The Pentecostal Movement's expansion mirrored the migration of U.S. citizens, starting as a "southern and midwestern tradition" rather than on the U.S. East Coast. The U.S. Pentecostal Movement began during an outpouring of "holy spirit baptism" at the Azusa Street Revival (1906), near Los Angeles, when ethnically and ecumenically diverse African Americans, Asians, Anglos, Latino/a/xs, and Indigenous Christians experienced *glossolalia* or speaking in tongues. Despite the intensity of this event, the ethnic solidarity of the Azusa Street attendees quickly fragmented into separate ethnic, linguistic, and theological traditions in 6 continents over the

¹²David Bundy, Geordan Hammond, and David Han, *Holiness and Pentecostal Movements: Intertwined Pasts, Presents, and Futures* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2022), 2.

¹³Bundy, Hammond, and Han, *Holiness and Pentecostal Movements*, 3; Carole D. Spencer, "Holiness: The Quaker Way of Perfection." *Quaker History* 93, no. 1 (2004): 123-147, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/qkh.2004.0015>; C. Douglas Weaver, *Baptists and the Holy Spirit: The Contested History with Holiness-Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2019), 3-20, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/68157>.

¹⁴Bundy, Hammond, and Han, *Holiness and Pentecostal Movements*, 3.

¹⁵Bundy, Hammond, and Han, *Holiness and Pentecostal Movements*, 5.

century.¹⁶ Anglo-Pentecostal leaders gradually joined and influenced the United States based National Association of Evangelicals.¹⁷ Pentecostalism has also been influenced by Cascadia. For example, some Cascadian church leaders rebranded Pentecostals as “Holy Rollers” during the 1904-1906 trials of Franz Creffield and George Mitchell in Seattle and Portland.”¹⁸ Within the United States, one of the most significant theological differences within different Pentecostal groups is between “Finished Work” and “Holiness” views of sanctification.¹⁹ At Mosaic Church today, there is some evidence that leaders synthesize these two perspectives on sanctification, holding that sanctification is simultaneously available and yet gradually outworked in the life of everyday Christians through the help of the Holy Spirit.

Sociologists Paul Freston, Cecilia Mariz, and Brenda Carranza argue that the U.S. Charismatic Renewal Movement “began among mainline Protestants in the U.S. in 1960 and had spread to parts of the U.S. Catholic Church by 1967.”²⁰ The preaching of one notable local, Episcopal Priest Fr. Dennis Bennett of the Ballard neighborhood of Seattle, intensified the influence of the U.S. Charismatic Renewal Movement within Cascadia.²¹ Today, Mosaic Community Church members who identify as charismatics are some of the 20 million U.S. charismatics from Catholic, Orthodox, or protestant backgrounds “who have experienced the

¹⁶Bundy, Hammond, and Han, *Holiness and Pentecostal Movements*, 6.

¹⁷Charles Hummel, “Worldwide Renewal: The Charismatic Movement: Christian History Magazine.” *Christian History Institute* 9, no. 1 (1984): 86-92.
<https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/worldwide-renewal-charismatic-movement>.

¹⁸Bundy, Hammond, and Han, *Holiness and Pentecostal Movements*, 6.

¹⁹Eric Patterson and Edmund Rybarcysk, *The Future of Pentecostalism in the United States* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 6.

²⁰Paul Freston, Cecilia Mariz, and Brenda Carranza. “Charismatic Movement.” *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, November 19, 2019, 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeosc023.pub2>; For more information on the Charismatic Catholic Renewal, please review Valentina Ciciliot’s “The Origins of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the United States: Early Developments in Indiana and Michigan and the Reactions of the Ecclesiastical Authorities.” *Studies in World Christianity* 25, no. 3 (2019): 250–73.

doi:10.3366/swc.2019.0267; Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area.”

²¹Matthew Sigler, “Fr. Dennis Bennett and the Charismatic Renewal at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church,” *Liturgy* 37, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 11–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0458063x.2022.2085971>.

baptism of the Holy Spirit, but who have not left their traditions of origin.”²² Despite their diverse denominational contexts, charismatics are generally “likely to describe the post-conversion experience of God’s Spirit as being filled with the Holy Spirit...includ[ing] a filling of love, receiving other spiritual gifts, and a sense of cleansing.”²³ Due to their diverse contexts, U.S. charismatics may be more ethnically and educationally diverse than U.S. Pentecostals.²⁴ Unlike Pentecostals; charismatics have not preserved the historic classical Pentecostal “sin lists: drinking alcohol, smoking or chewing tobacco, social dancing, and the like.”²⁵ Presently, charismatic Christianity is more prevalent in the Global South than it is in the United States.²⁶ As of 2011, the Pew Research Institute estimated that “almost half (49 percent) of all charismatics in the world live in the Americas, nearly 30 percent of charismatics live in the Asia-Pacific region, 17.4 percent live in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 4.5 percent live in Europe.”²⁷

Despite the various sociological differences between U. S. charismatics and Pentecostals, their similarities in biblical hermeneutics and pneumatology may cause them to both be classified as “Renewalist Spirituality.” In 2006, the Pew Research Institute began to group both Pentecostals and charismatics under the label *Renewalist Christianity* to describe their growing influence in the Global South.²⁸ One of the most vital spiritual practices to both Pentecostal and charismatic *renewalists* involves the retelling narrative *testimonies* “because they are stories told

²²Arlene M. Sánchez-Walsh, *Pentecostals in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 103.

²³Patterson and Rybarcysk, *The Future of Pentecostalism*, 5.

²⁴Elizabeth Sperber and Erin Hern, “Comparing Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians’ Religious and Political Beliefs across Latin America and Sub-saharan Africa,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 62, no. 2 (February 8, 2023): 260–77.

²⁵Patterson and Rybarcysk, *The Future of Pentecostalism*, 5.

²⁶“Spirit and Power: a 10 Country Survey of Pentecostals,” Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life Project. Last modified October 5, 2006. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2006/10/05/spirit-and-power/>.

²⁷“Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area,” Pew Research Center, About the Religious Landscape Study, last modified May 12, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/about-the-religious-landscape-study/>.

²⁸Pew Research Institute, “Spirit and Power: a 10 Country Survey of Pentecostals.”

and retold to validate the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit." Furthermore, renewalist spirituality is more monastic than scholastic in orientation.²⁹

Beyond a schema of testimony, one of the most profound ways Mosaic Church's spirituality has been influenced by renewalist, charismatic, and Holiness Christianity is through its understanding of spiritual *encounter*. This research seeks to develop a discussion framework to help Mosaic teens understand the purpose of encounter through a renewalist lens. Within the Mosaic community and for the sake of this research, an encounter may be defined as "an experience of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit through an inspired picture, dream, or word."³⁰

According to Pentecostal Constructive Theology Professor Daniel Castelo and Pastoral Theology Professor Elaine Heath, Mosaic's "persistent, passionate, and widespread emphasis on encounter" echoes other historical expressions of Christian mysticism.³¹ Mosaic Church demonstrates this understanding of encounter through once-monthly "Encounter Nights," musical worship events designed to promote community members' experience of God. Pentecostal theologian Mark Cartledge argues that this schema of encounter underpins renewalists' "search, experience, and transformation" worldview.³² Due to the shared emphasis on testimony and encounter experiential heuristic between U.S. charismatics and Pentecostals, I will apply the label "renewalist" rather than "charismatic" or "Pentecostal" in discussing the influence of renewalist spirituality at Mosaic Church.

In contrast to renewalist spirituality, Mosaic Church's spirituality and biblical hermeneutics is strongly influenced by the Evangelical Movement (seventeenth century - today).

²⁹Daniel Castelo and Elaine A. Heath, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 70-76.

³⁰In addition to anecdotal evidence, I based this definition on Kris Vallotin's *Basic Training for the Prophetic Ministry*, which is cited in the bibliography. Mosaic leaders utilize this text in teaching an introduction to the gift of prophecy course.

³¹Castelo and Heath, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 80.

³²Cartledge, *Speaking in Tongues: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives*, 70-76.

Evangelicalism emerged from late seventeenth century Lutheran Pietism in Germany and Methodism in England, influencing the Great Awakenings of the eighteenth century and, later, the nineteenth century Holiness movement.³³ Like charismatics, evangelicals attend a variety of mainline Protestant contexts. For that reason, it can be difficult to define evangelicalism. British Historian David Bebbington's 4-point definition of asserts that evangelicals generally (1) highlight the importance of the bible (biblicalism), (2) acknowledge the centrality of Christ's sacrifice on the cross (crucicentrism), (3) emphasize the need for personal conversion (conversionism), and (4) actively engage in spreading the Gospel (activism).³⁴ Critical of the vagueness of Bebbington's quadrilateral, English Church historian Richard Tearle emphasizes that evangelicals are "doctrinally-motivated," with biblicalism being most essential to their practical theology.³⁵ At 25 percent of the total U.S. population, Mosaic Community Church members who identify as protestant evangelicals are members of the United States' most prominent religious group, followed by 23 percent of religiously unaffiliated U.S. citizens.³⁶ As of 2011, the Pew Research Institute estimated that "33 percent of evangelicals in the world live in the Americas, 21 percent live in the Asia-Pacific region, 38 percent live in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 7.5 percent live in Europe."³⁷

Recognizing the U.S. Evangelical Movement and U.S. Charismatic Renewal Movement as "trans-denominational movements"³⁸ is essential to understanding their permeable influence. Today, these movements continue influencing and being influenced by the spirituality of diverse denominations, regions, and people groups. Therefore, it is essential to remember that the labels

³³Pew Research Center, "Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area."

³⁴David Bebbington, *The Evangelical Quadrilateral: Characterizing the British Gospel Movement* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021).

³⁵Richard Tearle, "Evangelicalism--Identity, Definition and Roots: An Historiographical Survey," *Churchman* 126, no. 1 (Spr 2012): 7–20.

³⁶Pew Research Center, "Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area."

³⁷Pew Research Center, "Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area."

³⁸Pew Research Center, "Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area."

“evangelical”, “renewalist”, or “charismatic” are not mutually exclusive. To reflect the fluid nature of this influence, scholars use lowercase written conventions used to describe evangelical spirituality, charismatic spirituality, and renewalist spirituality, unlike the capitalized proper nouns that refer to formally organized Christian denominations or groups. For example, a church may be renewalist, evangelical, and Anglican. Another church may be charismatic, evangelical, and Southern Baptist, and may have formally joined the National Association of Evangelicals.³⁹ Similarly, names of specific movements within the history of these streams are capitalized (such as the Holiness Movement or Charismatic Renewal Movement).

Significant differences between evangelical and renewalist spirituality complicate the spiritual practices of Mosaic Church and Mosaic Youth Ministry. The difference between evangelical and renewalist understandings of scripture may cause tension within Mosaic church. Compared to renewalists, evangelicals are more likely to interpret the bible rationally and according to the plain sense of the text,⁴⁰ with scholastic tendencies towards the simplicity and authority of the bible.⁴¹ While renewalists and evangelicals both believe in the importance of sanctification, evangelicals may be less likely than renewalists to describe how transformation is outworked within everyday life.⁴² Mosaic’s leaders appear to synthesize evangelicalism’s emphasis on biblicism, conversionism, crucicentrism, and missional spirituality with some renewalist spirituality. Nevertheless, Cartledge argues that renewalists’ “appreciation for mystery and experience” may allow them to interpret the bible more flexibly than evangelicals.⁴³

The dissonance between evangelical and renewalist spirituality may increase as Mosaic grows in diversity. Within the United States, evangelicals are more likely than renewalists to be

³⁹“Denominational Membership,” National Association of Evangelicals, August 30, 2024, <https://www.nae.org/denominations/>.

⁴⁰Castelo and Heath, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 112-113.

⁴¹Castelo and Heath, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 112-125.

⁴²Castelo and Heath, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 80.

⁴³Cartledge, *Speaking in Tongues*, 70-76.

Anglo or third-generation or higher immigrants rather than recent emigres.⁴⁴ In 2014, 76 percent of U.S. evangelicals were Anglo compared to 68 percent of nondenominational charismatics⁴⁵ and 59 percent of Pentecostals.⁴⁶ Castelo and Heath, renewalist Christianity may be more diverse than evangelicalism because it is more likely to emphasize “democratization of the spirit” to “include all ethnic groups, men and women, and every socioeconomic class.”⁴⁷ As of today, renewalist Christianity more significantly influences global Christianity than evangelicalism, as global Pentecostals and charismatics outnumbered evangelicals 2:1 in 2011.⁴⁸ Therefore, it’s likely that as Mosaic grows more diverse, the influence of renewalist Christianity will grow.

Regional and Social Influences on Mosaic’s Spirituality

Defining Cascadia: Borders and Demographics

In addition to its historical location, Mosaic Youth’s ministry’s current geographical and social context informs its understanding of spirituality. Due to the uniqueness of this region's values and terrain, regional scholars sometimes refer to the Pacific Northwest within Canada and the United States as “Cascadia.” In *Religion at the Edge: Nature, Spirituality, and Secularity in the Pacific Northwest*, Religion and Sociology Professors Paul Bramadat, Patricia O’Connell Killen, and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme define Northern Cascadia as Canadian British Columbia

⁴⁴Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area.”

⁴⁵“Religious Landscape Study: Nondenominational Charismatics,” Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life Project, last modified May 12, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religious-landscape-study/database/religious-denomination/nondenominational-charismatic/>.

⁴⁶“Religious Landscape Study: Pentecostals in the Evangelical Tradition,” Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life Project, last modified May 12, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religious-landscape-study/database/religious-family/pentecostal-family-evangelical-tradition/>.

⁴⁷Castelo and Heath, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 112-125.

⁴⁸Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area.”

and Southern Cascadia as the U.S. states of Washington and Oregon.⁴⁹ As the most populous city within Cascadia,⁵⁰ the culture of Cascadia influences Seattle’s spirituality. For decades, Cascadia and Seattle have been described as more educated, less ethnically diverse, more urbanized, less religiously affiliated, more foreign-born, more politically progressive, and more economically affluent than other areas of the United States.⁵¹ Paradoxically, Seattle receives more predominantly Asian immigrants for work or school, but has fewer U.S.-born Latinos and African Americans than comparable major cities.⁵² Within Seattle, 61.2 percent of residents are Anglo, 17.1 percent are Asian, 8.2 percent are Latino, 10.5 percent are mixed race, 7.0 percent are African American, 0.7 percent are American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.3 percent are Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.⁵³ As of 2011, 31 percent of Seattle’s adults identified as Republican or Republican-leaning, 21 percent had no party affiliation, and 48 percent identified as Democrat or Democrat-leaning.⁵⁴

Religious Diversity in Seattle

There is some religious diversity in Cascadia and Seattle. According to Pew Research Institute’s 2014 Religious Landscape Study, 52 percent of Seattle residents self-identified as Christian, 37 percent of Seattle residents reported no religious affiliation, and 10 percent

⁴⁹Paul Bramadat, Patricia O’Connell Killen, and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, *Religion at the Edge: Nature, Spirituality, and Secularity in the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2022), 184-203.

⁵⁰“About the Religious Landscape Study,” Pew Research Center, last modified May 12, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/about-the-religious-landscape-study/>; “Data Releases,” U.S. Census Bureau, last modified November 21, 2023. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/news/data-releases.2021.html>.

⁵¹Gene Balk Guy, “People without College Degrees Increasingly in Seattle,” *The Seattle Times*, last modified October 23, 2023,

[https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/people-without-college-degrees-increasingly-rare-in-seattle/#:~:text=Nationally%2C%20a%20minority%20of%20the,a%20college%20degree%20in%202022.](https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/people-without-college-degrees-increasingly-rare-in-seattle/#:~:text=Nationally%2C%20a%20minority%20of%20the,a%20college%20degree%20in%202022.;); Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area.”

⁵²Adam McCann, “Most and Least Ethnically Diverse Cities in the U.S. in 2024,” *WalletHub*, last modified February 21, 2024, <https://wallethub.com/edu/cities-with-the-most-and-least-ethno-racial-and-linguistic-diversity/10264>.

⁵³“Seattle City, Washington,” U.S. Census Bureau, last modified November 23, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade/2020/about.html>.

⁵⁴Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area.”

identified as members of a non-Christian religion.⁵⁵ Of the 37 percent religiously unaffiliated, 10 percent of Seattleites identified as atheists, 6 percent as agnostics, and 22 percent as nothing in particular. Of the non-Christian religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and other groups claimed 1-2 percent of Seattleites each.⁵⁶ Among Seattle's 52 percent self-identified Christians, 23 percent of residents identified as evangelical, 15 percent identified as Catholic, and 10 percent identified as mainline protestant.⁵⁷

Mosaic Church's demographics mirror regional trends in more outstanding educational achievement and economic affluence. However, Mosaic Church is more Anglo, less Asian, less African American, less Latino, less foreign-born, and more politically conservative than Seattle. This data may demonstrate Cascadian evangelical's complex relationship with political parties.

Disaffiliation from Religious Communities in Cascadia and Seattle

To understand the spirituality of Mosaic's youth ministry and intergenerational community, it is essential to comprehend Cascadia's history of spirituality. Historically, this frontier territory has symbolized a place of "individualism and isolation, freedom and opportunity"⁵⁸ where individuals are "free to act as they may as long as they neither hurt anyone nor harm the environment."⁵⁹ Within *Religion at the Edge*, Tina Block and Lynne Marks argue that "British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon have, by statistical measures, constituted "a distinctly irreligious region since the early days of European settlement."⁶⁰ Due to "high levels of

⁵⁵Pew Research Center, "Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area."

⁵⁶Pew Research Center, "Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area."

⁵⁷Pew Research Center, "Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area."

⁵⁸Chelsea Horton, "On Religion, Irreligion, and Settler Colonialism in the Pacific Northwest: A Snapshot from the Field," in *Religion at the Edge: Nature, Spirituality, and Secularity in the Pacific Northwest*, Paul Bramadat, Patricia O'Connell Killen, and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, eds., (Vancouver, Canada: UBC Press, 2022), 20-34.

⁵⁹Wellman, *Evangelical vs. Liberal*, 42.

⁶⁰Tina Block and Lynne Marks, "But People Tend to Go the Way Their Families Go: Irreligion across the Generations in the Pacific Northwest," in *Religion at the Edge: Nature, Spirituality, and Secularity in the Pacific Northwest*, Paul Bramadat, Patricia O'Connell Killen, and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, eds. (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2022), 184-203.

mobility and in-migration”⁶¹ individuals may have lacked social systems that contribute to religious continuity. Furthermore, many Cascadian founding families transmitted “religious disinterest” and disaffiliation “across the generations” for reasons that include religious indifference, general hostility to religion and the churches, a belief that science and rationality precluded religious belief, an association between irreligion and progressive politics, and in a few cases, personal trauma leading to a loss of faith.”⁶² Within this context, the decision to religiously affiliate or disaffiliate corresponds to the firmly held beliefs of individuals and their communities.

To understand how Cascadian religious disaffiliation may have influenced Seattle’s current rates of religious disaffiliation, researchers can examine data from the Seattle Metro Area from the Pew Research Institute’s most recent Religious Landscape Study. In 2014, the Pew Research Institute surveyed approximately 35,000 Americans in 50 states about their religious affiliations, beliefs and practices, and social and political views. Researchers then grouped data according to the trends of major religious groups and the country’s largest metropolitan areas for a contextual measure of religious belonging.⁶³ Notably, the Seattle Metropolitan Area is the only large city featured from the Pacific Northwest.

Lack of community religious participation was also prevalent within present-day Seattleites, including self-identified Christian *Seattleites*. In 2014, 48 percent of Seattle adults expressed “certain faith in God,” but 66 percent never participated in “prayer, scripture study or religious education groups.”⁶⁴ Christians are just as liable as other groups to disaffiliate religiously. In 2014, Just 25 percent of Seattleite Christians attended religious services at least

⁶¹Block and Marks, “But People Tend to Go,” 83-100.

⁶²Block and Marks, “But People Tend to Go,” 83-100.

⁶³Pew Research Center, “About the Religious Landscape Study.”

⁶⁴Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area.”

once per week. Political affiliation may influence this data. Among those surveyed who were “certain that they believe in God,” political conservatives (63 percent) were nearly twice as likely as progressives (35 percent) to claim faith.⁶⁵ Of all Christian groups, evangelicals were the most likely to participate in religious groups and/or practices.⁶⁶

Apart from concrete religious differences, Religion scholar Paul Bramadat unflinchingly argues that the “dominant civil religion” of the Pacific Northwest is actually “nature religion,” which “creates moral values that sacralize nature as a way to orient as well as form the values that guide and shape lives.”⁶⁷ Bramadat argues that sacralizing nature broadly influences both Cascadian Christian evangelical spirituality and Cascadian new-age spirituality.

Cascadia, Mysticism, and Generation Z

Despite religious disaffiliation, an openness to mysticism and interior spirituality defines Cascadia. Increasing interest in individual rather than communal spirituality within Cascadia also reflects growing national trends in spirituality within the United States and Generation Z. Regardless of religious affiliation, many Seattleites report the regular practice of meditation (35 percent), silence, or solitude (32 percent), and spending time in nature for reflection (51 percent).⁶⁸ Anecdotally, Seattleites' interest in interior spirituality may cause them to be more

⁶⁵Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area.”

⁶⁶Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area.”

⁶⁷Paul Bramadat, “Reverential Naturalism in Cascadia: From the Fancy to the Sublime,” in *Religion at the Edge: Nature, Spirituality, and Secularity in the Pacific Northwest*, Paul Bramadat, Patricia O’Connell Killen, and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, eds. (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2022), 23-40; Wellman, *Evangelical vs. Liberal*, 41.

⁶⁸Claire Gecewicz, “‘New Age’ Beliefs Common among Both Religious and Nonreligious Americans,” Pew Research Center, last modified October 1, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/10/01/new-age-beliefs-common-among-both-religious-and-nonreligious-americans/>; Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area”; “Religious ‘Nones’ as Likely as Other Teens to Report Feeling a Deep Sense of Wonder about the Universe,” Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life Project, last modified September 10, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2020/09/10/u-s-teens-take-after-their-parents-religiously-attend-services-together-and-enjoy-family-rituals/pf_09-10-20_religion-teens-00-13/.

open to religious practices rooted in Christian mysticism (such as Spiritual Direction or charismatic Prophetic Ministry) than formal liturgies.

U.S. residents' interest in interior spirituality appears to have only grown in recent years. These changes may ultimately influence the demographics of the "spiritual-but-not-religious" (SBNR), individuals who are likely to emphasize a personal, interior experience of the divine over belonging to a spiritual community.⁶⁹ In a 2022 online study conducted by the Barna group of North American adults, 80 percent of total interviewees⁷⁰ and 83 percent of Generation Z⁷¹ were likely to agree that "a spiritual or supernatural dimension [to life] exists." Much of this interest might be attributed to the United States' growing interest in the New Age movement and Eastern religions since the mid-twentieth century. Regardless of religious affiliation, six in ten U.S. adults affirm at least one new age belief, such as a belief in "reincarnation, astrology, psychics, and the presence of spiritual energy in physical objects like mountains or trees."⁷² This national interest in interior spirituality or mysticism increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 2022, half of U.S. adults (44 percent) say that they are "more open to God today than before the pandemic."⁷³ At the same time, as of spring 2023, nearly 20 percent of U.S. adults say that they attend religious services less than before the pandemic.⁷⁴

⁶⁹"Meet the 'Spiritual but Not Religious,'" Barna Group, last modified June 27, 2023, <https://www.barna.com/research/meet-spiritual-not-religious/>.

⁷⁰Barna Group, "Meet the 'Spiritual but Not Religious,'" "The Open Generation," Barna Group, last modified July 25, 2023, <https://www.barna.com/the-open-generation/>.

⁷¹Barna Group, "Meet the 'Spiritual but Not Religious,'" Barna Group, "The Open Generation."

⁷²Barna Group, "Meet the 'Spiritual but Not Religious.'"

⁷³Barna Group, "Meet the 'Spiritual but Not Religious.'"

⁷⁴Justin Nortney, "How the Pandemic Has Affected Attendance at U.S. Religious Services," Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life Project, last modified March 28, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/03/28/how-the-pandemic-has-affected-attendance-at-u-s-religious-services/#:~:text=One%2Din%2Dfive%20U.S.%20adults,often%20than%20before%20COVID%2D19.>

This data mirrors findings from a study led by Pew Research Institute in September 2020 among teens aged 13-17.⁷⁵ Among these teens, 77 percent were likely to express “a sense of gratitude or thankfulness,” 50 percent were likely to express a “deep sense of spiritual well-being or peace,” 48 percent were likely to “think about the purpose and meaning of life,” and 47 percent “felt a deep sense of wonder about the universe” at least once or twice per month.⁷⁶ Interestingly, traditional affiliations significantly influenced teens’ spirituality among Christian groups. Evangelicals were most likely to express gratitude (85 percent) and a deep sense of spiritual well-being or peace (70 percent). Catholics were most likely to think about the meaning of life (50 percent). Finally, mainline protestants (47 percent) were most likely to feel a sense of wonder about the universe. This data found that religious participation was still relatively common in U.S. teens. Over 60 percent of teens indicated that they had previously “participated in a religious education program, such as Sunday school or Hebrew school, including 29 percent who say they continue to participate often or sometimes.”⁷⁷ Among this sample, evangelical protestant teens were “more likely than teens in other religious groups to say they still participate in a religious education program (57 percent) or religious youth group (64 percent) at least sometimes.”⁷⁸ Within the context of growing interest in spirituality and decreasing interest in religious affiliation, differentiating between approaches to mysticism within Christianity and other religions may be a neglected and essential element of spiritual formation.

⁷⁵“Religious ‘Nones,’” Pew Research Center, last modified September 4, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2020/09/10/u-s-teens-take-after-their-parents-religiously-attend-services-together-and-enjoy-family-rituals/pf_09-10-20_religion-teens-00-13/.

⁷⁶Pew Research Center, “Religious ‘Nones.’”

⁷⁷“U.S. Teens Take after Their Parents Religiously,” Pew Research Center, last modified September 10, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2020/09/10/u-s-teens-take-after-their-parents-religiously-attend-services-together-and-enjoy-family-rituals/>.

⁷⁸Pew Research Center, “U.S. Teens Take after Their Parents Religiously.”

Cascadian Evangelicalism and Mosaic Church

Age and Evangelical Spirituality

Mosaic's region, average age of leaders, and Christian affiliations influence its approach to faith and spirituality. Wellman found that leaders' "willingness to experiment with style" and "evangelistic focus" "fits within a Pacific Northwest culture that thrives on change, innovation, and market focus."⁷⁹ Similar to other evangelical regional churches, Mosaic demonstrates a "therapeutic atmosphere of worship services and smaller group settings" and a "powerful pattern of moral strictness, personal vulnerability, and unconditional forgiveness"⁸⁰ that may align with emerging research on Generation Z's values for "collaboration, flexibility, and authenticity."⁸¹

Beyond regional patterns of religious diversity, disaffiliation, and individualized mysticism, the ministries at Mosaic Church reflect Robert Webber and Stanley Grenz's descriptions of the values of younger and older evangelicals. According to Webber, younger evangelicals (ages 18-39) are more likely than their elders to emphasize "a value for the community, the ancient practices and traditions of the church [such as stillness, silence, solitude, sabbath, or celebration], the category of narrative, and the embodiment of relational missions."⁸² Meanwhile, Grenz would argue that like older evangelicals, Mosaic's leaders emphasize a life "centered on the Bible and personal faith" and the "importance of prayer and personal devotions." Furthermore, they may understand "church life through the lens of fellowship," and desire to "highlight worship and music"⁸³ as essential."⁸⁴ Beyond evangelicalism, Mosaic's

⁷⁹Wellman, *Evangelical vs. Liberal*, 87.

⁸⁰Wellman, *Evangelical vs. Liberal*, 87.

⁸¹"What to Know about Gen Z," Melissa Dewitte, Stanford News, last modified January 3, 2022. <https://news.stanford.edu/2022/01/03/know-gen-z/>.

⁸²Robert Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 116.

⁸³Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 116-117.

⁸⁴Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 116-117.

leaders' beliefs about encountering God reflect some influence of the U.S. Charismatic Renewal movement. Leaders at Mosaic believe that encounter with the Holy Trinity is a phenomenon that has the potential to be a healthy and holistic part of the Christian experience.⁸⁵ Mosaic embodies these characteristics through its homeless outreach ministry (50 members), missions training school (20 members), and age-specific ministries.

Communication

Communication at Mosaic is layered and context-dependent, contradicting and conforming to the cultural linguistics of Cascadia. In *Religion at the Edge*, regional scholar Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme describes the cultural linguistics in Cascadia as oriented towards indirect negative feedback, egalitarianism, and confrontation avoidance.⁸⁶ Within smaller groups, leaders' communication patterns tend to be egalitarian, gradually more relationship-based, consensual, and indirect,⁸⁷ aligning with Wellman's description of Cascadian evangelicals' small group settings.⁸⁸ Within large group settings or Sunday services, leaders' communication styles appear hierarchical, task-based, top-down, and direct. It may be worth examining whether schema related to gender⁸⁹ informs the layered cultural linguistics⁹⁰ of this community. Regardless of the

⁸⁵L. William Oliverio Jr., "Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition," (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill., August 1, 2012).

⁸⁶Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, "Second to None: Religious Non-affiliation in the Pacific Northwest," in *Religion at the Edge*, 82-84. This description applies to the cultural communication inventory designed by Erin Meyer in Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map: Breaking through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2014).

⁸⁷Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*.

⁸⁸Wellman, *Evangelical vs. Liberal*, 87; Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*, 1-24.

⁸⁹John P. Bartkowski, "Breaking Walls, Raising Fences: Masculinity, Intimacy, and Accountability among the Promise Keepers," *Sociology of Religion* 61, no. 1 (2000): 33. John Bartkowski's 2000 ethnography on the evangelical "Promise Keepers" men's group demonstrates a similar, seemingly complex context where "gender relations are neither singularly traditionalist nor solely progressive", and where "instrumentalist and expressive brands of godly manhood are collectively negotiated." This case study is an example of how cultural linguistics may differ across small and large group evangelical settings.

⁹⁰Farzad Sharifian, *Cultural Linguistics: Cultural Conceptualisations and Language* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017). For an overview of cultural linguistics and how schema related to gender, religion, and politics may influence differences in communication styles across settings, see chapters 6-8 of Farzad Sharifian's *Cultural Linguistics*.

group size, communication about time in this community is linear rather than flexible,⁹¹ aligning with a United States' Anglo understanding of time.⁹² The dissonance between cultural linguistics within large group Mosaic Church contexts and communication trends in Cascadia may encourage Mosaic Church members to develop a subcultural identity.⁹³

Subculture, Growth, and Immigration within Cascadian Evangelical Communities

Evangelical and mainline progressive churches within Cascadia and Seattle have different beliefs about ministry that lead to diverging spiritual practices and community engagement. In 2000-2005,⁹⁴ Regional scholar James Wellman interviewed leaders at 24 growing evangelical churches in Cascadia to understand how the culture of Cascadia may influence these churches' approaches to ministry. According to Wellman, evangelical churches are more likely than mainline progressive churches to create community networks that "rival or substitute for public community meeting places." Cascadian evangelicals "attempt to meet human needs at every level of human development and family makeup"⁹⁵ through "family [groups], activities, sports groups, and all kinds of other groups."⁹⁶ Strategies to contextualize ministry offerings, recruit new members, and engage the larger community play a significant role in these churches' well-being. According to Wellman, spirituality within mainline progressive churches "is simply not about conversion so much as it is about social service."

In contrast, evangelical churches emphasize "counteracting" Cascadia and North America's "regional entropy towards disaffiliation,"⁹⁷ which may lead them to create subcultural

⁹¹Sharifian, *Cultural Linguistics*, 63-83.

⁹²Sharifian, *Cultural Linguistics*, 63-83, 1; Erin Meyer, "Country Mapping Tool," The Culture Map Premium, 2024.

⁹³Wilkins-Laflamme, "Second to None," 100-145.

⁹⁴Wellman, *Evangelical vs. Liberal*, 44.

⁹⁵Wilkins-Laflamme, "Second to None," 41.

⁹⁶Wilkins-Laflamme, "Second to None," 41.

⁹⁷Wilkins-Laflamme, "Second to None," 100-145.

communities. At their best, this tendency to develop subcultural community structures reflects Christian leaders' desire to preserve specific values. According to Wilkins-Laflamme, evangelical subcultures in Cascadia can foster a sense of belonging, encouraging new evangelical immigrants to "become active in these churches" rather than becoming unchurched.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, at their most limited, Cascadian Christian subcultural communities may fail to promote contextual theology or insufficiently support individuals to engage with non-Christian Seattilites. Indeed, Wellman's data suggests that most new Cascadian evangelical church members result from recruiting Christian immigrants to Seattle rather than locals. Over time, these communities' structures may act as walls instead of fences, sheltering them from their regional context rather than supporting them to engage. Rather than pursuing semi-isolation, church communities in Cascadia may need to emphasize the benefits of community spirituality and contextualize Christian spirituality from other forms of regional mysticism. Only from a place of renewed community identity can Cascadian churches begin to respond to Seattle's regional tendency towards disaffiliation.

Beyond Subculture: Opportunities to Connect with Seattle

Despite the temptation to remain disconnected from local Seattilites, Cascadian evangelicals' political distinctiveness could produce meaningful regional partnerships with non-Christian Seattilites. In 2017, sociologist Michael Wilkinson collected interviews of Cascadian evangelical leaders for the University of Victoria's *2017 Religion, Spirituality, Secularity, and Society in the Pacific Northwest* study. Leaders described Cascadia as "a secular place, a spiritual place, a naturally beautiful area, a place to make money... a place where people

⁹⁸Wilkins-Laflamme, "Second to None," 54-55.

are lonely, looking for friends, and seeking community.”⁹⁹ Many voiced “stewardship and creation care as important ecclesiological practice”¹⁰⁰ along with an “emphasis on work among immigrants and refugees.”¹⁰¹ With 20 percent of Cascadian evangelicals identifying as liberal or left-leaning as compared to 11.9 percent of American evangelicals, these factors “may differentiate evangelicalism in Cascadia from the rest of America.”¹⁰² Furthermore, Wilkinson found that Cascadian participants “were politically similar to others in the region in that they did not support President Trump” and “distanced themselves from the view that “evangelical” means “Republican.”¹⁰³ Wilkinson found that evangelicals in Cascadia “contended that they ought not to live in isolation but in relationship with those around them”¹⁰⁴ and were likely to link the Pacific Northwest’s “unique, majestic beauty” to “a broad openness to working for the common good, being open-minded and tolerant.”¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, these leaders’ values of stewardship, hospitality towards immigrants, or community engagement did not necessarily lead to new initiatives.

Cascadian Evangelical’s Approach to Age-Based Teen and Young Adult Ministries

Based on Wellman’s data, evangelical churches within Cascadia are “strongly committed to children’s and youth ministries.”¹⁰⁶ Evangelical churches are more likely than mainline progressive churches to spend significant resources on children and youth ministries or describe the positive influence of parachurch organizations such as Young Life or Youth for Christ.¹⁰⁷ For

⁹⁹Michael Wilkinson, “Evangelicals in the Pacific Northwest: Navigating the “None Zone,”” in *Religion at the Edge: Nature, Spirituality, and Secularity in the Pacific Northwest*, Paul Bramadat, Patricia O’Connell Killen, and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, eds. (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2022), 184-202; Wellman, *Evangelical vs. Liberal*, 41.

¹⁰⁰Wilkinson, “Evangelicals in the Pacific Northwest,” 191.

¹⁰¹Wilkinson, “Evangelicals in the Pacific Northwest,” 191.

¹⁰²Wilkinson, “Evangelicals in the Pacific Northwest,” 191.

¹⁰³Wilkinson, “Evangelicals in the Pacific Northwest,” 120.

¹⁰⁴Wilkinson, “Evangelicals in the Pacific Northwest,” 200.

¹⁰⁵Wilkinson, “Evangelicals in the Pacific Northwest,” 188.

¹⁰⁶Wilkins-Laflamme, “Second to None,” 41.

¹⁰⁷Wilkins-Laflamme, “Second to None,” 173.

example, 26 percent of Wellman's interviewees mentioned the impact of these groups on their spiritual formation, describing "how much they "loved" their groups" and "how committed they were to them."¹⁰⁸ Recent data from the Pew Research Center on U.S. teens' church attendance and attitudes confirms the importance of religious community to evangelical teens. For example,

About nine-in-ten evangelical teens enjoyed doing religious things with their families a lot (34 percent) or some (54 percent), while just 5 percent say they do not enjoy them much or at all. By comparison, larger shares of mainline Protestant and Catholic teens say they participate in religious activities with their family but do not enjoy them (18 percent and 17 percent, respectively).¹⁰⁹

Teens' participation in age-based ministries can cause them to proceed their parents into church membership. Indeed, some adult parents "started attending [evangelical] churches" due to the influence of their teenage children.¹¹⁰ Compared to Seattle's mainline churches, Cascadian evangelical churches' investment in age-based ministries has long-term implications. Wellman found that the lack of emphasis on youth programs within mainline Cascadian churches leads to a "paradoxical lack of youth," which may have "consequences for their future numerical growth and general institutional health."¹¹¹ Indeed, data from the Pew Research Institute demonstrates that teens at many Cascadian mainline churches choose to disaffiliate once reaching adulthood.¹¹²

Synthesizing National and Regional Factors: Mosaic Teen's Spirituality

As members of this ecclesiological and social context, teen's experiential approach to spirituality, interpretation of the bible, and individual and communal practices have been influenced by evangelicalism and renewalism spirituality. Like their parents, teens describe a renewalist belief in immediacy and personal availability of God, using the language of spiritual

¹⁰⁸Wilkins-Laflamme, "Second to None," 173.

¹⁰⁹Pew Research Center, "U.S. Teens Take after Their Parents Religiously."

¹¹⁰Pew Research Center, "U.S. Teens Take after Their Parents Religiously."

¹¹¹Wellman, *Evangelical vs. Liberal*, 87.

¹¹²Pew Research Center, "U.S. Teens Take after Their Parents Religiously."

“encounter” and “experience.”¹¹³ However, teens' self-described spiritual practices (such as reading the bible, fasting, and prayer) appear more like younger evangelicals than renewalists. Most specifically, teens' interpretation of scripture synthesizes an evangelical tendency to take scripture “at face value”¹¹⁴ while affirming a renewalist approach towards scripture as a “revelational mystery.”¹¹⁵ Teen's high degree of biblicism, as indicated by their knowledge of bible stories and verses, use of biblical references, and tendency to apply biblical teachings to their lives, align with evangelicalism.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, teen's approach to scripture narratives as “normative exemplars for Christian experience” sometimes reflects a renewalist, experiential heuristic of scripture.¹¹⁷ Teen's approach towards engaging their peers, serving other youth, and practicing vulnerability in small-group discussions is similar to emerging research on Gen Z's values for “collaboration, flexibility, relevance, authenticity, and non-hierarchical leadership.”¹¹⁸

Teens' values for relational ministry, community, church history, and practices may influence their approach to community engagement. Precisely, teens' value for authenticity and collaboration may align more with L. William Oliverio's description of Ecumenical Pentecostalism, which, unlike Evangelical Pentecostalism, emphasizes dialogue and continuity with other Christian groups.¹¹⁹ This emphasis on engaging individuals past interpersonal differences may be similar to the ecumenical work of South African-born Pentecostal American

¹¹³Castelo and Heath, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 112.

¹¹⁴Castelo and Heath argue that 20th and 21st century Evangelicalism inherited Fundamentalism's “scholasticizing and rationalizing tendencies” towards the simplicity and authority of the bible, 112-125. They then explain that Pentecostals' appreciation for mystery and experience is more monastic than scholastic in its orientation, 70-76.

¹¹⁵See Castelo and Heath's description of the theme of “mystery” in Pentecostal Pneumatology, informing both orthopraxy and orthodoxy, 80-88.

¹¹⁶Castelo and Heath, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 112.

¹¹⁷Castelo and Heath typify characteristics of evangelical and Pentecostal hermeneutics based on L. William Oliverio Jr.'s “*Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition*,” (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill., August 1, 2012). They explain how charismatic evangelicals' weave the authority of the bible with “the primacy of religious experience” on pages 112-113.

¹¹⁸Melissa DeWitte, “What to Know about Gen Z.”

¹¹⁹L. William Oliverio Jr., “*Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition*,” (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill., August 1, 2012), 111.

minister David Du Plessis (1906-1987), whose relational dialogue with mainline, Catholic, and evangelical leaders led to greater acceptance of the global Charismatic Renewal Movement.¹²⁰

Teen's values and conversational approach may also be similar to Richard Niebuhr's "Christ as Transformer of Culture" model of cultural engagement, which seeks to affirm what is good about culture and transform what has been corrupted by "sin and selfishness."¹²¹ This approach is different from Niebuhr's "Christ and Culture in Paradox" model, which encourages individuals to develop a subcultural identity towards culture. These generational differences indicate that Mosaic Teens may need more support to authentically acknowledge their Christian identity or meaningfully relate to non-Christian Seattleites outside of Mosaic Church.

Industrialization, Speed, and Holistic Disengagement

While these national, regional, and ecclesiastical factors have contributed to Mosaic Church's spiritual DNA, one additional element presents an immediate threat to healthy intergenerational spirituality at Mosaic Church. Specifically, this is the untempered influence of the Industrial Revolution on North American Protestantism, which still drives an emphasis on production rather than presence in North American churches. In short, this influence has the effect of forming individuals to commodify time in pursuit of productivity, reducing opportunities for deep engagement with God, people, and places.¹²² The glamor of over-productivity within U.S. culture presents a real challenge to North American churches, as

¹²⁰David Du Plessis and Bob Slosser, *A Man called Mr. Pentecost* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1977).

¹²¹H. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1951); Trevin Wax, "'Christ and Culture', an Overview of a Christian Classic," The Gospel Coalition, last modified June 1, 2020, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/christ-and-culture-an-overview-of-a-christian-classic/>.

¹²²John Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefulness, and Gentle Discipleship* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018), 22.

integrative leadership and healthy intergenerational spirituality require Christians to move at a balanced, thoughtful pace.¹²³

So how did speed and external productivity become a norm through which U.S. Christians measure their spiritual lives? By the late seventeenth century, technological advances within Europe, socioeconomic interest in modernity, and corresponding urban migration had “shifted time from a transcendent reality to an immanent one...stripped of its supernatural quality.”¹²⁴ The invention of clocks with both hour and minute hands exacerbated modernist human’s tendency to “concretize time” and “believe that we know what it is and can control it.”¹²⁵ In *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefulness, and Gentle Discipleship*, John Swinton describes how the “slow, kind, generous, gentle, time-full, and self-controlled” speed of Jesus sometimes made it difficult for “fast people” to receive him or others, including individuals with disabilities.¹²⁶ Swinton cites Benjamin Whorf’s description of *Standard Average European Time (SAET)*, contrasting it to the fluidity of Latino/a/x and African approaches to time.

According to Whorf, Standard Average European Time commodifies time in numerous ways,

“insist[ing] on punctuality (that one be “on point” on the timeline, as they have promised), synchronicity (the coordinated positioning of several people simultaneously on the timeline), historiography and paleontology (the exact location of past events on the timeline), and, most revealingly, a plethora of behaviors like “wasting time” (as one might waste perfectly good food), “selling” and “buying” time (as one would sell or buy apples or wheat), and “saving time” (by shortening the distance traveled on the timeline to accomplish a task).”¹²⁷

Rather than viewing time as a transcendent, “continuous, meaningful whole wherein each

moment latches seamlessly onto and into the next,” Swinton argues that *SAET*

compartmentalizes aspects of individual or communal lived experiences into “our past, present,

¹²³Jim Fisher, *The Thoughtful Leader: A Model of Integrative Leadership* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

¹²⁴Andrew Root, *Ministry in a Secular Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 131.

¹²⁵Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time*, 23.

¹²⁶Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time*, 122.

¹²⁷Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time*, 22.

and future lives,” feeds and “creates the impression that time is fragmented” into “family time, leisure time, market time, study time, prayer time, quiet time, [or] devotional time.”¹²⁸

These limitations hold potent implications for the practice of youth ministry. Scholar and youth minister Andrew Root cites Hartmut Rosa’s definition of “time famine” to discuss how compartmentalizing time can limit deep connection with others. In this context of hurry, individuals may struggle to connect with those most demographically like them, let alone wrestle well with interpersonal differences. During a time of increased global migration, time famine, and technological advances, this sense of hurry may feed an individual’s sense of dislocation from places.¹²⁹ It may influence individual Christians to overfocus on the future and “harvest enough resources” to achieve their imaged sense of the good life¹³⁰ rather than communing with God, people, and places in an immanent frame.¹³¹

Mosaic Church must develop a deep sense of intergenerational spirituality to respond to Seattle’s regional needs. However, this will be impossible under the influence of time famine. Root argues that simply “doing less” will not restore deep fellowship. Instead, he amplifies philosopher Charles Taylor’s exhortation to “stay in the present, a present that integrates both past and future” and to see ourselves as “pilgrims on a journey” who can learn and deeply engage with others within their own cultural context.¹³² By intentionally sharing stories of God’s faithfulness in the past, Mosaic Church can invite teens to consider where they find themselves in his story. As the community takes time to reflect, they may celebrate God’s leadership and presence within present mysteries.¹³³ Reflection may give the Mosaic Church community the

¹²⁸Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time*, 21.

¹²⁹Hartmut Rosa, *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late Modern Temporality* (Malmö, Sweden: NSU Press, 2014), 20-21.

¹³⁰Rosa, *Alienation and Acceleration*, 20-21.

¹³¹Rosa, *Alienation and Acceleration*, 20-21.

¹³²Root, *Ministry in a Secular Age*, 141.

¹³³Root, *Ministry in a Secular Age*, 140.

courage to embrace an unknown future.¹³⁴ Ultimately, the resilience formed through community reflection may enlist the generations to more attentively engage with the needs of Seattle's regional context.

Against Hurry: Teens' Need for Deeper Spiritual Engagement

Within the individualist cultural context of North America, Cascadia, and Seattle, teens and their churches need additional support to form meaningful connections. Over time, a deeper sense of connection may lead to a more authentic, shared sense of community identity.¹³⁵ While some inclinations of Renewalist Spirituality may support young people to connect well with God and others, another framework will be necessary to help intergenerational communities present a collective testimony of Jesus. With the help of such a framework, teens may more readily understand how their lived experiences relate to the experiences of their elders, how their unique gifts may overlap with the life of the Church, and how to navigate their regional context perceptively. Eventually, utilizing such a framework may support the generations of Mosaic Church to engage Seattle's religious pluralism from a posture of servanthood rather than dominance.

Without intervention, the influence of time poverty (hurry) on Mosaic's spirituality may combine with the limitations of the U.S. Evangelical Movement and U.S. Charismatic Renewal Movement to undermine teens' beliefs about the character of God.

Without a course correction, Mosaic teens' spirituality may reflect current practical tensions within U. S. evangelicalism related to application. The "rationalizing and scholasticizing

¹³⁴Root, *Ministry in a Secular Age*, 140.

¹³⁵Lillian Daniel, *When "Spiritual but Not Religious" is not Enough: Seeing God in Surprising Places, even the Church* (New York, NY: Jericho Books), 2014.

tendencies" within evangelicalism¹³⁶ may cause teens to define their spiritual growth by what they have cerebrally understood about God's character rather than by ways they have perceived and applied his teachings in real life. Furthermore, teens may consider participating in formal ministry gatherings as evidence of deep spirituality rather than acknowledging Christian spirituality as an ongoing, lifelong journey. They may be unable to identify and join in God's activity across contexts because they may underestimate how God would have them engage.

Without change, Mosaic Church may continue to reproduce the tendency of the U.S. Charismatic Renewal Movement to overemphasize God's intensity rather than his engagement with and respect for human choice. They will apply the language of immediacy and intensity of spiritual encounter rather than the language of daily, devotional pursuit. This dedication to hurry will form a community so eager to see demonstrations of God's manifest power that they neglect to be formed by God's subtle, deep, and continuous pursuit. Rather than being empowered to develop their rhythms of rest and hearing God, Mosaic teens may develop a disengaged, impersonal spirituality.¹³⁷ Over time, these deficits will limit teens' capacity to perceive the activity of the Holy Spirit or how he may cause them to relate to others.

Receiving from Latino/a/x Spiritualities of Community

To engage more deeply with God and others, North American Anglos may need to celebrate and receive spiritual insight from groups with a more fluid understanding of community, time, and place. Despite the sincere ways that the Mosaic Church is pursuing individual and communal spirituality, relying on an Anglo understanding of community will not be sufficient to counteract Seattle's individualized and industrialized expectations of God and

¹³⁶Castelo and Heath, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 112-125.

¹³⁷Root, *Ministry in a Secular Age*, 141.

others. Based on my experience working with Latino/a/x communities, insights from Latino/a/x spiritualities of community¹³⁸ may begin to treat these spatial, temporal, and practical assumptions.

Latino/a/x spiritualities of community respond to both the needs of the Mosaic Church community and Seattle's regional context. Latino/a/x spiritualities may emphasize "personal empowerment,"¹³⁹ narrative storytelling, and discussion-based learning, which align with some of Mosaic's current ministry practices. Moreover, Latino/a/x spiritualities may allow Mosaic to maintain a distinct subcultural identity. Historically, Latino/a/x spiritualities have synthesized a "communal, linguistically Spanish, family-oriented"¹⁴⁰ culture with North America's "individualizing" ethos. Therefore, they may be able to help Mosaic maintain its subcultural community identity while sustainably engaging with the regional culture.

Latino/a/x spiritualities of community also correspond to Seattle's regional spirituality. Latino/a/x spiritualities affirm Seattleites emphasis on mysticism, mystery, and wonder.¹⁴¹ For example, Puerto Rican Pentecostal theologian Simon Soliván asserts that Latino/a/x spiritualities are "driven and focus on the whole person,"¹⁴² which resonates with a Seattleite's interest in holistic spirituality. Puerto Rican Pentecostal theologian Eldin Villafañe's description of devotionally led, communal orthopraxis of spirituality resonates with Mosaic Church's leaders' devotional missional spirituality. Villafañe describes spiritual encounter as explicitly relational, "with guidance by the Holy Spirit, who pours the love of God into our hearts making love the

¹³⁸Néstor Medina and Sammy Alfaro, *Pentecostals and Charismatics in Latin America and Latino Communities* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

¹³⁹Sánchez-Walsh, *Pentecostals in America*.

¹⁴⁰Néstor Medina, "Theological Musings Toward a Latino/a Pneumatology," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, ed. Orlando O Espín (Hoboken, NY: Wiley, 2015), 95. While I cite the 2015 Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology, the 2023 second edition is the most current and comprehensive.

¹⁴¹Empereur and Fernández, *La Vida Sacra*, 132.

¹⁴²Samuel Soliván, *The Spirit, Pathos, and Liberation: Toward a Hispanic Pentecostal Theology* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 79-82.

dominant relationship of the believer to God and other persons.”¹⁴³ By relying on this understanding of God’s relational pursuit of individuals and communities, Mosaic may find the strength to engage with increasingly diverse groups within Seattle.

The next chapter will deeply explore perspectives in Latino/a/x spiritualities of community, and how they may influence the creation of a discussion-based curriculum about spiritual encounter and experience for teens at Mosaic Church. First, I will ground Latino/a/x spiritualities of community within the history of the Latino/a/x Studies movement and themes in Latin American Christian Spirituality first raised in the works of Puerto Rican and Mexican-American scholars Eldin Villafañe, Simon Soliván, and Virgilio Elizondo. Relying upon the historical overviews and synthesizing the work of Néstor Medina and Kristy Nabhan-Warren, I will then connect and further deepen this discussion by citing the works of U.S. Latino/a/x scholars like Lindsay Pérez, Edwin Aponte, Roberto Chao Romero, Daisy Machado, Gilberto Cavazos-Gonzalez, Arlene Sanchez-Walsh, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, Jonathan Calvillo, James Empereur, Altagracia Pérez, Alberto López Pulido, and Sammy Alfaro.

¹⁴³Eldin Villafañe, *El Espíritu Liberador: Hacia Una Ética Social Pentecostal Hispanoamericana* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Creación, 1996), 174.

Chapter 2 - Preparing for a Mixed Future: Community in Latino/a/x Christian Spiritualities

As of 2020, U.S. Latino/a/xs are the fastest-growing ethnic group within the United States. In 1970, during the U.S. Charismatic Renewal Movement's early days, Hispanics comprised 5 percent of the U.S. population and numbered 9.6 million.¹⁴⁴ Since 1970, the Hispanic population in the U.S. has grown more than sixfold. In 2021, an estimated 62.5 million Latino/a/xs accounted for 19 percent of the total U.S. population.¹⁴⁵ Research Analyst Jie Zong of UCLA's Latino Policy and Politics Institute forecasts that by 2060, the Latino population will number 111.2 million, or 28 percent of the U.S. population.¹⁴⁶ Fueled predominantly by birth rates rather than legal or illegal immigration, this data reflects an increasing “*latinization*” of the United States.¹⁴⁷ In *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, cultural historians Edwin Aponte and Miguel A. De La Torre reflect that due to the cultural influence of Latino/a/x communities, many of the “advances” made by U.S. Manifest Destiny “are being reversed” in the process of *latinization*, and some Eurocentric Anglo values may be renegotiated.¹⁴⁸

Beyond just bearing their image of the *imago dei*, Latino/a/xs who come to the United States bring their *community cultural wealth (CCW)* that can spiritually enrich and challenge Anglo, African American, Asian, and Native American Christianity. *Community cultural wealth* is a concept developed by critical race scholar Tara Yosso, who asserts that while traumatic, the historical experiences of marginalized communities have enriched their communication, experience, structures of family, imagination, resilience, and sense of counter-cultural identity or

¹⁴⁴Jie Zong, “A Mosaic, Not a Monolith: A Profile of the U.S. Latino Population, 2000-2020,” Latino Policy and Politics Institute, last modified October 27, 2022, <https://latino.ucla.edu/research/latino-population-2000-2020/>.

¹⁴⁵Zong, “A Mosaic, Not a Monolith.”

¹⁴⁶Zong, “A Mosaic, Not a Monolith.”

¹⁴⁷Edwin David Aponte and Miguel A. De La Torre, *Introducing Latinx Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2020), 99.

¹⁴⁸Aponte and De La Torre, *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, 99.

self-individuation.¹⁴⁹ Romero cites the research of critical race analyst Lindsay Pérez, who extends Yosso's understanding of community cultural wealth to the "spiritual capital" her Chicana students self-reported as a source of educational resilience.¹⁵⁰ To exemplify what it is to recognize the strengths and receive wisdom from Latino/a/x spiritualities, Romero names the example of Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484-1566), whose "conversion experience" led him to reject financial gain from the exploitation of Indigenous workers in Hispaniola. Instead, de las Casas honored Indigenous advanced art, architecture, and civilizations. De las Casas refuted the Spaniard's claim of social domination in the name of Christ, arguing "in unequivocal terms that the gospel message should always be spread in the example of Christ—through peaceful means and the demonstration of Christian love."¹⁵¹

Increasing Latino/a/x Immigration is one of the most complex issues in U.S. foreign and domestic policy. Nevertheless, responding to migration and social change is a topic modeled throughout the Old and New Testaments. In stories like Israel's flight into Egypt through Joseph (Genesis 40-46), migration created provision during crises for both nations. Chinese-Latino American historian and immigration lawyer Roberto Chao Romero acknowledges that the countries of the Americas may be navigating a similar crossroads today. In his 2016 article "Migration as a Source of Grace," Romero argues that "Migration is a source of grace both to migrants and their host country."¹⁵²

Indeed, the increasing *latinization* of the United States could benefit the Americas. But how? Rather than fearing change, leaders willing to engage with the implications of *latinization*

¹⁴⁹Tara J. Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8, no. 1 (March 2005): 69–91.

¹⁵⁰Lindsay Pérez Huber, "Challenging Racist Nativist Framing: Acknowledging the Community Cultural Wealth of Undocumented Chicana College Students to Reframe the Immigration Debate," *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 4 (December 1, 2009): 704–730.

¹⁵¹Robert Chao Romero, *Brown Church: Five Centuries of Latina/o Social Justice, Theology, and Identity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 53-68.

¹⁵²Robert Chao Romero, "Migration as Grace," *International Journal of Urban Transformation* 1 (October 2016).

will quickly observe the timely prophetic wisdom and opportunities for healing that many Latino/a/x Christian voices can offer the United States. Churches in the United States struggle to redefine their relationship to work and time, grapple with the boundaries of community and individualism, acknowledge alienation from place due to increasing migration, and lean together towards holistically integrated Christian spirituality. Reflecting on Latino/x/a theologies of community, belonging, and family may challenge U.S. Christian leaders to evaluate their limitations and receive new grace. At a time post-COVID, when 20 percent of U.S. Christians attend church more often than before the pandemic, the United States' individualizing tendencies have never been more visible.¹⁵³ Christian leaders must explore how to best support U.S. churches as intergenerational faith communities. For non-Latino/a/x U.S. leaders, receiving and responding to Latino/a/x theologies is more urgent and less genteel than a civic or theological duty to engage across ethnic differences. If non-Latino/a/x Christians recognize their need to be formed by Latino/a/x Christianity, their humility could support new, healthier works of practical theology.

U.S. non-Latino youth ministers can begin to respond to *latinization* by recognizing the value of Latino/a/x Christian spiritualities. Rather than minimizing or erasing differences in identity, deeper engagement with Latino/a/x people and values may eventually create new pathways for individuals and communities to receive Jesus's life,¹⁵⁴ healing,¹⁵⁵ and reconciliation.¹⁵⁶ Latino/a/x Christian community cultural wealth can support the spirituality of Gen Z and Alpha, leading to racial reconciliation and the mobilization of intergenerational spiritual communities. Rather than disengaging from or attempting to import the spiritual

¹⁵³Justin Nortney, "How the Pandemic Has Affected Attendance at U.S. Religious Services."

¹⁵⁴John 17:3, Rev. 22:1-21, John 14:6.

¹⁵⁵Is. 53:5, John 9:1-41, Matt. 23:37.

¹⁵⁶John 10:16, Rev. 7:9, Matt. 28:19, Isa. 62.

practices of Latino/a/x communities, U.S. Christian leaders can consider how Latino/a/x theologies may catalyze them to improve their practical theology.

Latino/a/x Spiritualities Can Lead Conversations about Change in Praxis

In the face of what will likely remain a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous future, social scientist Bob Johansen of the Center for Creative Leadership encourages leaders to be “positive change agents amidst the chaos, *creating* the future” rather than just responding to it.¹⁵⁷ At this time of global and national change, U.S. Christian leaders must respond to God’s present activity of regional restoration as he “rebuild[s] the ancient ruins” and “renew[s] ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.”¹⁵⁸

The intersectional nature of Latino/a/x spiritualities may fortify conversations about change in U.S. identity, spiritual practices, and curriculum. One specific concept that may equip U.S. Christian leaders to navigate this period effectively is the concept of *mestizaje* embedded within some Latino/a/x spiritualities of community. *Mestizaje* is a schema that acknowledges the depth of human diversity and the challenging history of the “multicultural and multiracial heritages of various Latinx peoples.”¹⁵⁹ Professor of Theology and Latin American Studies Sharon Heaney acknowledges that adequately valuing the “seeds of creativity and survival” have shaped U.S. Latino/a/xs understandings of *mestizaje* will allow U.S. identity change and *Latinization* process and promote “sustained life for the nation.”¹⁶⁰ Aponte and De La Torre explain that the “multicultural and multiracial heritages of various Latinx peoples” have gifted Latino/a/x U.S. leaders with a spirituality that acknowledges the depth of human diversity and

¹⁵⁷Bob Johansen, *Leadership Skills in an Uncertain World*, Center for Creative Leadership, last modified November 11, 2020, <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/leadership-skills-for-an-uncertain-world/>.

¹⁵⁸Is. 49:8-16; Is. 61:4-9.

¹⁵⁹Aponte and De La Torre, *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, 51.

¹⁶⁰Sharon E. Heaney, *Engaging Latino/a/X Theologies: A Conversation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2024), 59.

the challenging history of various peoples.¹⁶¹ Aponte and De La Torre cite Latina Christian historian Daisy Machado's description of *mestizaje* to demonstrate how an experience of ethnic and cultural mixture has come to define the spiritual practice of U.S. Latino/a/x communities.

According to Machado, *mestizaje* is,

Not only about borders crossed, but also very much about racial mixture that includes the *mestizaje* of Indian and Spanish blood, the *mulatez* of Spanish and African, the whiteness of *criollos*, and the brown tones of the indigenous peoples, as well as other racial mixtures that are the reality of human pigmentation in the Americas.¹⁶²

Quoting Christian theologian and Tejano Friar Gilberto Cavazos-Gonzalez, Aponte and De La Torre describe how Latino/a/xs experience of ethnic *mestizaje* has become a vital spiritual inheritance to help Latino/a/xs understand Jesus as "a divine/human mestizo."¹⁶³ Furthermore, Aponte and De La Torre argue that a Latino/a/x embodiment of *mestizaje* beneficially differs from the assimilationist extended metaphor of the melting pot previously embedded within United States culture. Instead,

Latinx is a *mestizaje* or *mulatez* of kitchens, a dense stew of distinct flavors, bringing a different perspective to the still common image of melting pot. That paradigm typically pictures all immigrants to the United States from all nations placed into one pot where they all combine into a new American culture that curiously remains essentially Eurocentric. In contrast, the Latino/a *mestizaje* stew always retains the differing flavors of its diverse roots (varieties of European, Indigenous, and African) while enriching all elements of the mix. Some ingredients may dissolve completely in the blend while others remain more distinct, and new ingredients are constantly added--all providing flavor to the simmering stew that is always in a state of change.¹⁶⁴

A call to true collaboration is at the heart of Aponte and De La Torre's description: *en conjunto* conversations where individuals retain their identities to enrich and complexify community and scholarly dialogue on the United States' future. Despite the potentially "defensive attempts of

¹⁶¹Aponte and De La Torre, *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, 51.

¹⁶²Daisy L. Machado, "History and Latino/a Identity: Mapping a Past That Leads to Our Future," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 36.

¹⁶³Gilberto Cavazos-González, OFM, "The Study of Spirituality," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, edited by Orlando O. Espín (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 430.

¹⁶⁴Aponte and De La Torre, *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, 27.

some U.S. Anglos, African Americans, and Asians against *Latinization*” through increasingly aggressive rhetoric regarding voter I.D. laws and policies surrounding the U.S.-Mexico border,¹⁶⁵ there are opportunities at the academic and grassroots level to prepare for the future.¹⁶⁶

Mapping the Field of Latino/a/x Studies and Latino/a/x Christian Spirituality Studies

To understand the benefit of Latino/a/x spiritualities on Mosaic Church’s spirituality, it is essential to determine the boundaries of Latino/a/x Studies and Latino/a/x Christian Spirituality Studies. Within *Latino/a Theology and the Bible: Ethnic-Racial Reflections on Interpretation*, Cuban-American biblical scholar Fernando Segovia describes Latino/a/x Spirituality Studies as a subset of cultural studies, as “Latino/an American religious-theological studies within the field of Latino/a Studies” along a spectrum of studies “dealing with the religious-theological expressions of minoritized ethnic-racial groupings.”¹⁶⁷ According to Segovia, scholars in this community bear a “threefold affiliation” based on individual and communal identity.

First, they do [scholarship] as members of the Latino/a population--individuals who are products of the realities and experiences underlying this formation. Second, they do [scholarship] as members of the Latino/a academic-scholarly guild--scholars who analyze the realities and experiences behind this formation across the gamut of its social-cultural production. Third, they do [scholarship] as members of the Latino/a religious-theological guild--theologians who focus on the religious-theological dimension of this formation across the range of its components.¹⁶⁸

Latino/a/x community membership has shaped Latino/a/x scholars' spiritual practices and professional scholarship. Therefore, their scholarship carries both vulnerability and authority.

¹⁶⁵Aponte and De La Torre, *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, 99; Good research, curriculum, and practical theology is a conduit for change. A transformational framework may guide the development of new curriculum for intergenerational spiritual communities. John Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2023), 25.

¹⁶⁶Due to increased technology and migration, scholarly and grassroots communities who engage faithfully in dialogue between Latin America, the Caribbean, Central America, and North America may ultimately develop renewed Pan-American theologies.

¹⁶⁷Francisco Lozada and Fernando F. Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible: Ethnic-Racial Reflections on Interpretation* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2021), 236-7.

¹⁶⁸Lozada and Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible*, 237.

Furthermore, Lozada and Segovia acknowledge that for theological works to be considered Latino/a/x,” theologians (Latino/a or not) must:

be personally involved with Latino/a communities to such a degree that his or her theology be truly and unquestionably born from the “heart of our people” (ie, from within, and consciously reflective of, Latino/a people’s lives, reality, faith, cultures, and so on) -- a perspective and knowledge had not through books or journals or occasional encounters but only through daily (personal, committed, and prolonged) engagement.¹⁶⁹

The development of practical theology resources influenced by Latino/a/x spiritualities but focusing on non-Latino/a/x or mixed ethnicity ministry contexts may instead rest under the category of Intercultural or Ecumenical Christian Spirituality Studies.¹⁷⁰

Tracing the development of the Latino/a/x Christian Spirituality Studies field is necessary to understand how current scholars’ perspectives and themes may influence Non-Latino/a/x praxis.¹⁷¹ Lozada and Segovia claim that between the 1960s-1970s, James Cone’s scholarship in Black Theology predated Liberation Theology in the Global North (1967-1973) and the transmission of Latino/a/x Theology in the Global South by a decade. In 1983, Mexican American Catholic scholar Virgilio Elizondo published *The Galilean Journey*. Throughout 1980-1990, scholars such as Andrés Guerrero, Ada María Isasi-Díaz, Yolanda Tarango, Allan Figueroa Deck, and Herold J. Recinos consolidated and matured the Latino/a/x Studies field.¹⁷² Through the 1990s, Latino/a scholars focused on similarities and differences within Latino/a/x groups (*latinidad*), yet did not yet pay much attention to “the realm of religion and theology.”¹⁷³ During this time, Lozada and Segovia argue that Latino/a/x scholars marginalized religious perspectives.¹⁷⁴ Within the early twenty-first century, Latino/a/x scholars focused on

¹⁶⁹Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible*, 8.

¹⁷⁰If leaders from within the Latino/a/x Spirituality field felt that scholarship born in an Ecumenical Spirituality Studies context was “unquestionably born” from the reality of Latino/a people’s lives, reality, faith, and cultures, Latino/a/x Spirituality scholars and Latino/a/x grassroots communities would need to intentionally adopt it.

¹⁷¹Lozada and Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible*, 266-270.

¹⁷²Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible*, 270.

¹⁷³Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible*, 271.

¹⁷⁴Romero, *Brown Church*, 8.

transformation and empowerment by drawing attention to systemic power imbalances and the increasing influence of globalization. Presently, the fields of Latino/a/x Theological Studies and Latino/a/x Christian Spirituality Studies are emerging concurrently with the field of Contemplative Studies.¹⁷⁵ Some Latino/a/x scholars, such as religious studies scholar Arlene Sánchez-Walsh, have begun to explore how Latino/a/x individuals influenced the Azusa Street revival and other precursors to the U.S. Charismatic Renewal movement.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, there is little current research on the effect of Latino/a/x charismatic Catholics, Pentecostals, and Evangélicos on U.S. spirituality.

Though some scholars have raised difficulties with the construct of *latinidad* as an oversimplification of differences between Latino/a/x groups,¹⁷⁷ it is still necessary to discuss themes in Latino/a/x Christian spirituality to understand differences in community cultural wealth and worldview between ethnic groups in the United States. While “most scholars today recognize the importance of naming the unique features of each Latinx group,”¹⁷⁸ the scholarship within Latino/a Theological Studies has become diverse and, at times, ecumenical.¹⁷⁹ Theologians have needed to condense these perspectives by theme via resources like The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology. Even so, a worthy criticism of surveys on Latino/a/x Christian spirituality is that they may not accurately represent grassroots Latino/a communities. Practical theology that engages Latino/a/x communities may respond to this discrepancy.

¹⁷⁵Néstor Medina, “Theological Musings Toward a Latino/a Pneumatology,” 174–88; Lozada and Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible*, 274–275.

¹⁷⁶Arlene Sánchez-Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity*, 15–20. Sanchez-Walsh’s scholarship is thorough but limited to mostly immigrants from Mexico in the U.S. Southwest, but as highlighted by Gastón Espinosa’s 2005 review. Future scholarship opportunities exist to trace the influence of Caribbean, Central American, and Latin American Latino/a/xs within renewalist Christianity.

¹⁷⁷Lozada and Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible*, 271–288.

¹⁷⁸Aponte and De La Torre, *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, 37.

¹⁷⁹Lozada and Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible*, 271–288.

Clarifying Terminology in Latino/a/x Studies and Latino/a/x Spirituality Studies

Over the last 50 years, the Latino/a/x Studies field has used various terminology. Still, applying the most current terms in discussing Latino/a/x people and trends in Latino/a/x Christian Spirituality Studies is important. Primarily, I acknowledge that I have used the term “Latino/a/x” rather than Hispanic, Latino/a, or Latinx in this research. Many individuals, arms of the local and federal U.S. government, and groups use the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” interchangeably. Initially, the term “Hispanic” was used as a blanket term for individuals who speak Spanish or whose lands were former colonies of Spain.¹⁸⁰ However, according to author and journalist Ed Morales, the term “Hispanic” may not adequately reflect the African, Asian, and indigenous roots of Latino/a/xs. In the 1980s-1990s, scholars applied the term Latino/a instead of Latino to emphasize the importance of women’s perspectives.¹⁸¹ Lozada and Segovia explain that while a younger generation of Latino/a/xs scholars have begun to use the term “Latinx” to leave room for perspectives that may not fit gender or sexuality binaries or to capture a broader sense of *latinidad*.¹⁸² Grassroots communities and older scholars may not yet readily receive this term. Since scholars from the Latino/a/x community have only started to use the term “Latinx,” I have applied the term Latino/a/x to acknowledge the diversity of their current views on terminology. Similarly, to respect the plurality of perspectives within the Latin/a/o/x Christian community, I have used the plural term “Latino/a/x Christian spiritualities” in discussing individual viewpoints and “Latino/a/x Christian Spirituality Studies” to refer to the field at large. I have used the particularist term “Latino/a/x Christian spiritualities” rather than “Latino/a/x spiritualities” to acknowledge the degree of U.S. religious pluralism and limit the scope of this research.

¹⁸⁰Lozada and Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible*, 29.

¹⁸¹Lozada and Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible*, 259-260.

¹⁸²Lozada and Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible*, 249.

It is also essential to clarify the use of the term *evangélico* to understand current demographics in U.S. Latino/a/x Christianity. Aponte and De La Torre explain that the term *evangélico* has “a broader connotation than the English “*evangelical*.” Instead, *evangélico* roughly translates to the growing Protestant minority¹⁸³ within predominantly Catholic Latino/a/x communities of the Americas.¹⁸⁴ Since *evangélico* roughly translates to “Non-Catholic” or “Protestant,” it may encompass mainline, evangelical, and renewalist Latino/a/x communities.¹⁸⁵ According to Aponte and De La Torre, ecumenical research on renewalist Christianity is fundamental to understanding Latino/a/x Evangélico Spirituality, as “more than half of Latinx Protestants self-identify as being “Spirit-filled” Christians.”¹⁸⁶ For that reason, I will acknowledge Latino/a/x mainline, Catholic, evangelical, and renewalist Christian scholars in the scope of this research. Cognizant of my Protestant ministry context, I will refrain from citing research on Latino/a/x Mariology since Mosaic’s members ascribe feminine qualities of nurture, life, and comfort to the character of God himself rather than Mary.

Starting with Seattle

What could greater engagement with Latino/a/x spiritualities look like in Seattle? Like many other cities of the Pacific Northwest, Seattle faces a diversity paradox. While Seattle receives various Asian immigrants to the region for work or school, it contains fewer U.S.-born Latinos and African Americans than comparable major cities in the West, Southwest, and East Coast. Seattle’s present diversity gap may be traced to nineteenth century Anglo settler’s ambivalence towards Latino/a/x or Native American communities.¹⁸⁷ Seattle’s total population in

¹⁸³Aponte and De La Torre, *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, 33-37.

¹⁸⁴Aponte and De La Torre, *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, 32.

¹⁸⁵Scholars interested in greater discussion on Latino/a/x Jehovah’s Witnesses, Latter Day Saints (Mormons), or expressions of folk religion like curanderismo and santería, see Aponte and De La Torre’s history on pages 34-37.

¹⁸⁶Aponte and De La Torre, *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, 37.

¹⁸⁷Pierce, *Making the White Man’s West*, 96-101.

2020 reflects this paradox. In 2020, 61.2 percent of Seattlites were Anglo, 17.1 percent were Asian, 8.2 percent were Latino/a/x, 10.5 percent were mixed race, 7.0 percent were African American, 0.7 percent were American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.3 percent are Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.¹⁸⁸ Less than 4.8 percent of Seattleites speak Spanish at home.¹⁸⁹ At just 4 percent of the congregation in 2023, Mosaic’s Latino/a/x population is nearly half that of Seattle’s 8.2 percent Latino/a/x population. This trend may relate to the predominance of Anglos within U.S. evangelicalism and the propensity of third-generation or higher Latino/a/x immigrants rather than recent emigres to self-identify as evangelical.¹⁹⁰

How might an Anglo context receive insights from Latino/a/x spiritualities? In a context with so few Latino/a/xs, is deeper engagement with Latino/a/x spiritualities a more reasonable expectation than demographic change? What expectations should frame that journey?

Participating Honestly, Humbly and Faithfully

Religious Educator and Latina evangélica Elizabeth Conde-Frazier contrasts intention and correct application. Frazer states, “Knowledge is information, but wisdom is the ability to apply that knowledge in various situations. Knowledge tells us about justice, but wisdom guides us into the love that is needed for seeing justice done.”¹⁹¹ Wisdom is paramount to allow Latino/a/x spiritualities to inform the spiritual practices at Mosaic Community Church.

First, leaders in Anglo contexts need to recognize that, at minimum, it is neither possible nor beneficial for U.S. Anglos, African Americans, Indigenous, and Asian Americans writing

¹⁸⁸“Seattle City, Washington,” United States Census Bureau, “Data Releases,” last modified November 21, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/news/data-releases.2021.html>.

¹⁸⁹United States Census Bureau, “Seattle City, Washington.”

¹⁹⁰Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study: Seattle Metro Area.”

¹⁹¹Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, Foreword to *Engaging Latino/a/X Theologies: A Conversation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2024), 12.

about Latino/a/x spiritualities to produce a Latino/a/x perspective.¹⁹² Nevertheless, by reflecting on Latino/a/x spiritualities, non-Latino/a/x leaders may benefit from Latino/a/x leaders' perspectives. To prevent misrepresentation or misappropriation of Latino/a/x spiritualities, Non-Latino/a/x leaders must embark on a gradual and rigorous process of reflection, evaluation, and application. They must determine whether perspectives from Latino/a/x scholars, community members, or leaders will be the most relevant to their contexts. To avoid misrepresentation, leaders can identify their contexts' values and determine how, if any, methodological changes can be made.

Authenticity rather than “Influence”

Secondly, leaders should recognize that more than a strategy of individual personal relationism will be required to support intergenerational communities to respond to the implications of *Latinization* or apply insights from Latino/a/x spiritualities. Practical theologian and youth ministry scholar Andrew Root acknowledges the importance that evangelicals place on personal relationships with others, potentially due to their “theological commitment to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”¹⁹³ However, Root argues that rather than supporting others to connect with Jesus and experience his character, evangelicals' value for activism may cause them to approach relationships inauthentically as a conduit for change. Sociologist Christian Smith labels this tactic of developing individual relationships to share the gospel as a “personal relationship strategy.” Rather than modeling Jesus' respect for human choice, promoting authenticity, or equipping Christians to engage with complex social issues, Smith

¹⁹²Aponte and De La Torre, *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, 30.

¹⁹³Andrew Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 188.

argues that this personal relationship strategy may cause evangelicals to cross important boundaries to influence others or share the gospel. According to Smith,

This method is strategic in that it consciously attempts to influence others. It is relational in that it relies on interpersonal relationships as the primary medium of influence...through personal connections and positive example, evangelicals believe that they can influence others towards the benefits and joys of being in a personal relationship with Jesus. The advantage of this strategy, according to evangelicals, is not only changed lives but also changed social structures-- "societal transformation" by "sheer demonstrational power."¹⁹⁴

Genuine love through authentic, individual relationships can significantly influence human beings.¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, a culture of personal relationism encourages individuals to take on a savior or rescuer role towards others. Rather than relying on the Holy Spirit to develop, direct, and nourish community ties, it directs an individual's attention toward the charisma of specific leaders and away from Christ. When elders practice personal relationism, it may cause teens to idolize rather than relate to elders who, like all, "have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."¹⁹⁶ When elders fail, or conflicts inevitably come, these false expectations may cause teens greater disappointment than if leaders acknowledged their limitations and modeled dependence on Jesus.

Unfortunately, this personal relationship strategy still significantly influences the community relationships at Mosaic Church. Whether the Mosaic Church community receives the invitation to abandon personal relationism in favor of intergenerational and intercultural place sharing will affect their practice of youth ministry. If left unchecked, personal relationism will impede teens' emotional development and harm teens' ability to engage with social differences. While it is admirable to pursue relationships with individuals from different ethnic or religious

¹⁹⁴Christian Smith and Michael Emerson, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 70-71.

¹⁹⁵Rom. 12:9-21.

¹⁹⁶Rom. 3:23-24.

backgrounds, personal relationism may not support teens in discerning which individual differences are due to sin or brokenness and which are just part of human diversity. The perfectionism embedded in personal relationism will perpetuate false expectations based on imaginary ideals or potential stereotypes. It will limit young adults' capacity to be authentic with themselves and others through the internalized expectation that they "be a good example." Over time, this embedded cultural tactic could alienate teens from a God who already understands their limits (Ps. 139) and is actively working to redeem them (Ps. 40).

This theory holds important implications for cross-cultural and intergenerational engagement. Beyond just being dishonest, personal relationism may cause Mosaic to subconsciously promote cultural assimilation when working with non-Anglo Christians in Seattle. Rather than pursuing the risk of cross-cultural relationships, personal relationism may encourage safetyism, or the practice of avoiding perceived threats, challenges, or discomfort, including intercultural or intergenerational dialogue.¹⁹⁷ Despite the power of cross-cultural relationships to support teen's resilience and emotional maturity, communities that practice personal relationism and safetyism may be more likely to produce teens who are prone to perceive themselves as emotionally fragile, anxious, and victimized.¹⁹⁸ The emotional courage and maturity modeled by centuries of Christian communities do not align with this identity.¹⁹⁹

For Mosaic to receive from Latino/a/x spiritualities, respond to *Latinization*, or engage with Latino/a/x leaders, Mosaic must relate to non-Anglos within their context without trying to minimize differences in culture or worldview. In a podcast titled "Everything you Need to Know about Pastoring Cross-Cultural Churches," National Association of Evangelicals pastors Randy

¹⁹⁷Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting up a Generation for Failure* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2019), 50.

¹⁹⁸Lukianoff and Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 50.

¹⁹⁹Edward L. Smither, *Christian Martyrdom: A Brief History with Reflections for Today* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 10.

Nabors and Leith Anderson suggest that while not every church must be multicultural, predominantly Anglo churches in urban environments must engage with rather than pass over pockets of ethnic diversity.²⁰⁰ Leaders must evaluate how Non-Anglo theologies and Non-Anglo leaders within their contexts can inform their praxis and discipleship curriculum. Mosaic Church aspires to be “followers of Jesus from drastically different backgrounds, with unique, Spirit-empowered gifts, [who] come together to form a mature, healthy expression of the family of God” in Seattle. Yet without authentic discussions about how ethnicity influences culture and curriculum, Mosaic Church will remain monoculturally Anglo and fail to receive the wisdom of Latino/a/x spiritualities. Various resources exist to support ethnically mixed communities like Mosaic, who are legitimately interested in the work of racial reconciliation within their contexts.²⁰¹ If Mosaic Church members choose to utilize a curriculum that Latino/a/x spiritualities have influenced, they may join countless churches that are working to disrupt growing anti-Latino/a/x ethnicism, nativism, and xenophobia in the United States.²⁰²

Furthermore, a personal relationism strategy may keep Mosaic Church from acknowledging and responding to the nature of systemic problems in Seattle. Relying solely on a strategy of personal influence for social transformation can oversimplify multidimensional social issues, dismiss interpersonal differences, and keep individuals from engaging deeply *en conjunto* to solve social problems.²⁰³ Rather than attempting to “influence” others, leaders should embark on an intergenerational and intercultural ministry by earnestly trying to carry one another’s burdens.²⁰⁴ Rather than looking to one another or leaders, community members should instead

²⁰⁰Randy Nabors and Leith Anderson, “*Everything You Need to Know about Pastoring Cross-Cultural Churches.*” National Association of Evangelicals, last modified September 18, 2021. <https://www.nae.org/naborspodcast/>.

²⁰¹Arrabon, a racial-reconciliation ministry, has resources for church leaders and communities that are accessible, broad, and practical. Josh Hayden, “*Foundation of a Reconciling Community,*” Arrabon, last modified 2022, <https://arrabon.com/foundation-of-a-reconciling-community/>.

²⁰²Lozada and Segovia, *Latino/a Theology and the Bible*, 278.

²⁰³Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 70-71.

²⁰⁴Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 124-197.

look to Jesus, come alongside one another in their journeys, and customize the practice of youth ministry for their cultural contexts.²⁰⁵

At its best, ecumenical and intercultural conversations about praxis demonstrate “that God sent Jesus to make all things new.”²⁰⁶ Authentic cross-cultural relationships can demonstrate God's character and the Holy Trinity's triune nature. However, healthy relationships alone will not be enough to shift local or national culture. Practical theologians must shift their focus beyond relational ministry to their cultural schema that informs praxis and curriculum. Analyzing intersections between the spirituality of Mosaic Church, Gen Z and Alpha, and Latino/a/x spiritualities may support teens to engage more deeply with God and one another in an increasingly Latinized, ecumenical, and renewalist U.S. Christian ministry context.

Family and Community within Latino/a/x Christian Spiritualities

Latino/a/x spiritualities contain rich community cultural wealth that can help Mosaic teens relate well to God and others. The remainder of this chapter will specifically focus on how Latino/a/x spiritualities of community may support a discussion framework for Mosaic teens' Youth Ministry.

Apart from *mestizaje*, *familismo* is the most critical entryway to understanding community within Latino/a/x Christian Spirituality Studies.²⁰⁷ In *Spirit, Pathos, and Liberation*, Puerto Rican Pentecostal theologian Simon Soliván celebrates how Latino/a/x Christian *familismo* is foundational to Latino/a/x ecclesiology. Soliván argues that during Pentecost, the

²⁰⁵Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 197-212.

²⁰⁶Carl Nelson, “Crossing Relational Boundaries for Church Unity,” National Association of Evangelicals, February 23, 2024, <https://www.nae.org/crossing-relational-boundaries-for-church-unity/>.

²⁰⁷Within the *Wiley Black Companion to Latino/a Theology*, Cavazos-González reviews the importance of community, family, and the importance of relationships as a key facet in the Latino/a Spirituality of Virgilio Elizondo, Eldin Villafañe, Alberto Garcia, Eduardo Fernández, Orlando Espín, 429-430.

Holy Spirit established “unity in diversity” as the boundaries²⁰⁸ of “a new human family.”²⁰⁹ More than just a nuclear family or family of families, belonging in this family is automatic through faith in Christ and shared participation in the Holy Spirit.²¹⁰ According to Christian theologian and Tejano Friar Gilberto Cavazos-González, Latino/a/x Christian spiritualities feature *compadrazgo*, “an enduring commitment and loyalty to immediate and extended family members,” which includes “the extended family of *comadres*, *compadres*, and amigo/as that gift us with the sense of community...and the communion of the Saints.”²¹¹ *Familismo* demonstrates “the profound respect for the human person and how [Latino/a/xs] value relationships over tasks or possessions.”²¹² Soliván asserts that the formation of a community is inexplicably spiritual, “reflect[ing] humankind’s quest after wholeness congruent with that innate spirituality given us by God as an extension of himself in the *imago dei*.”²¹³ Espín seconds the supernatural nature of the Christian community by describing how the Spirit of God must “move us [and] weave our lives together,”²¹⁴ resulting in authentic oneness, direction, and life. Rather than standing “aloof, unspoiled, and uninvested” from what happens in our lives, Espín argues that the Holy Spirit’s tangible involvement “in the very messiness of life, despite the painful reality of human selfishness and suffering” provokes Latino/a/x Christians to live *en convivencia*.²¹⁵ Living *en convivencia* promotes close community as the only authentic means of individual and social transformation. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit’s activity of transforming communities is a work of justice that “actively opposes all aspects that run counter to the divine creative intent for life.”²¹⁶

²⁰⁸Samuel Soliván. *The Spirit, Pathos, and Liberation: Toward a Hispanic Pentecostal Theology* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 58.

²⁰⁹Aponte and De La Torre, *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, 40.

²¹⁰Rom. 11:11-24, John 15:1-6, John 10:16, Is. 56:6-7.

²¹¹Cavazos-González, “Spirituality in Latino/a Theology,” 106-108.

²¹²Cavazos-González, “Spirituality in Latino/a Theology,” 431.

²¹³Soliván, *The Spirit, Pathos, and Liberation*, 53.

²¹⁴Espín, *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, 183.

²¹⁵Espín, *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, 183.

²¹⁶Espín, *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, 183.

According to Episcopal Practical theologian Altagracia Pérez, the life stored within this “web of human community” contributes to the Church’s “healing and transformation work” both individually and communally, in identifying shared responses to public policy issues and responding to problems of individual emotional well-being.²¹⁷

Evangélico Guatemalan Youth Ministry pastor and author Howard Andruejol describes the responsibility of North American leaders to embrace a broader and deeper understanding of adoption in youth ministry.²¹⁸ When understanding the purpose of youth ministry, Andruejol celebrates the informal intergenerational relationships developed by lay women in his congregation relationally. Andruejol declares,

[These are] women of faith who have experienced assurance, convictions, and fears. They have known God in that walk of life and possess experiences that have enriched them...no, they do not form a part of the team that organizes youth activities; no, they don't go to camps or come for lock-ins. But they are called youth pastors. They are called to invest their lives in other girls like my daughter so that they can be surrounded by mentors who teach them how to become women of God.²¹⁹

According to Andruejol, informal mentorship is a youth ministry of “unconditional love” practiced not primarily at events but through everyday life (*lo cotidiano*). Rather than producing “supporters-fans of some leader with great charisma,” Andruejol argues that youth ministry is holistic, the role of “the whole church exercising a powerful influence in the lives of the new generations. A position is not required, just a relationship.”²²⁰ Andruejol argues that youth ministry is about *solidaridad* (solidarity), not “one on top of all but one next to others.”²²¹ To

²¹⁷Altagracia Pérez, “Latina/o Practical Theology: Reflections on Faith-Based Organizing as a Religious Practice,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 439-51. While I cite the 2015 Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology, the 2023 second edition is the most current and comprehensive.

²¹⁸1 Cor. 12; Howard Andruejol, “Adoptive Youth Ministry: A Latin American Perspective,” in *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith*, ed. Chap Clark (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 268-280.

²¹⁹Andruejol, “Adoptive Youth Ministry: A Latin American Perspective,” 268.

²²⁰Andruejol, “Adoptive Youth Ministry: A Latin American Perspective,” 269.

²²¹Andruejol, “Adoptive Youth Ministry: A Latin American Perspective,” 269.

form “disciples of Christ who learn his Word, follow his example, and share his mission,” Andruejol calls leaders to become servants. Logistically, Andruejol calls the Church in the United States and Cascadia away from providing age-related services. Instead, he challenges the Church in Cascadia to incorporate mentorship and support age-appropriate intergenerational dialogue.

Belonging and Sacred Space within Latino/a/x Christian Spiritualities

A third important trait in Latino/a/x understandings of community is a fluid understanding of sacred space and the concept of *altar familiar*. Communities that embrace this schema can shift their focus away from production and towards authenticity, creating intergenerational cultures of belonging.

An appreciation for God’s presence across time and space may be visible in how Latino/a/x renewalists approach popular spirituality at home. In “*Sustaining the Altar Flow: Lived Religion and Latinx Pentecostal Altars*,” Southern Californian Pentecostal Ethnographer Jonathan Calvillo argues that “[spiritual] practices at Latinx Pentecostal Churches can be highly ritualized at a collective level, yet simultaneously personal and individualized” because Latino/a/x Pentecostals “enact altar practices inside and outside of the church.”²²² Calvillo explicitly focuses his analysis on the image of the altar, which he argues “functions as a materially and geographically orienting space of attention” within Latino/a/x Pentecostal Churches.²²³ Calvillo argues that although “many Latinx Pentecostal churches do not have spaces designated as altars,” many use open spaces at the front of churches as formal ministry spaces.

²²²Jonathan E. Calvillo, 2022. “Sustaining the Altar Flow: Lived Religion and Latinx Pentecostal Altars.” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 49 (2): 144.

²²³Calvillo, “Sustaining the Altar Flow,” 144.

These “pentecostal altars and the practices that flow out of them”²²⁴ are “both institutional and part of *lo cotidiano*.”²²⁵ They are “embodied and carried forth into the everyday spaces of life” as “part of a flow of [complementary] practices that [are] exacted and adapted across spaces.”²²⁶ Though “sparse for most respondents,” some congregants described “supernatural encounters” that included experiencing dreams, hearing a voice during prayer, or having visions of God” during times of home prayer.²²⁷ Calvillo recounts Latino/a/x Pentecostal Christians in Orange County who sometimes used the term “*altar familiar*” as a verb rather than physical space to describe the action of praying as a family.

Latino/a/x Catholic perspectives mirror Latino/a/x Pentecostal’s fluid understanding of sacred space. James Empereur and Eduardo Fernandez describe Latin American “cosmic sacramentality” in *La Vida Sacra: Contemporary Hispanic Sacramental Theology*. Empereur and Fernandez affirm an omnipresent, unhurried, devotional understanding of encounter by celebrating that to Latino/a/x Catholics, “everyday materials [are] sacred and contain elements of the divine.”²²⁸ They claim that cosmic sacramentality causes Latino/a/x Catholics to value supernatural experiences and conversationally engage young people in understanding God.²²⁹ Furthermore, Chicano Sociologist Alberto López Pulido acknowledges a similar approach to sacred space within Chicano Catholic Churches. López defines holy space as “a locus where human beings experience the presence of supernatural, divine, ancestral, demonic, or numerous

²²⁴While Calvillo explains that Pentecostal individuals do not invest material objects within their home or institutional altars as containing spiritual qualities, James Empereur and Eduardo Fernández explain how Latino/a/x Catholic cosmic sacramentality expects divine encounter through holy sacraments and objects, in *La Vida Sacra*, 76-78.

²²⁵Calvillo, “Sustaining the Altar Flow,” 145, 153.

²²⁶Calvillo, “Sustaining the Altar Flow,” 145, 153.

²²⁷Calvillo, “Sustaining the Altar Flow,” 145, 155.

²²⁸James Empereur and Eduardo Fernández, *La Vida Sacra: Contemporary Hispanic Sacramental Theology*. (Lanham: Rowman; Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 77.

²²⁹Empereur and Fernández, *La Vida Sacra*, 132.

powers.”²³⁰ Nevertheless, rather than just celebrating the experience of spirituality, López Pulido extends Empereur and Fernandez’ understanding of encounter by acknowledging how Latino/a/x Catholics extend the altar flow as a means of social transformation to resist these powers. López describes the annual women-led enactment of the Via Crucis or Way of the Cross ritual within the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago as an act of resistance that “effectively connects Christ’s suffering” to “personal and collective struggles with such things as poverty, underemployment, racial harassment, domestic violence, and anti-immigrant sentiments.”²³¹ By acknowledging how Jesus not just spiritually but socially bore humanity’s sins, Pilsen residents invite God to transform their everyday experience and create divine justice in their community.

Testimony as Shared History and Community Narrative within Latino/a/x Pentecostalism

Within a family, there is a shared history and story of transformation that new generations inherit and influence. A fourth element of Latino/a/x spiritualities of community, therefore, includes the role of testimonies (*testimonios*) as a conduit for shared community identity.

Arizonian Church of God Pastor Sammy Alfaro describes how Latino/a/x Pentecostals develop their shared story through *testimonios*. According to Alfaro,

During the week and in preparation for church gatherings, Latina/o Pentecostals live with a constant outlook for how God could be speaking to their lives each day in order to then come together to minister to others from what they themselves have received. At times, it might be a word of comfort, a song of joy, or even a tearful testimony or prayer request that speaks to an individual so powerfully that it made the time at church worth it...through an experiential hermeneutic of the Spirit, the Latino/a Pentecostal believer heads out of the church building with a renewed sense of calling and commitment to share the gospel with others: this is the secret of the continued growth of global Pentecostalism.²³²

²³⁰Alberto López Pulido, “Popular Religion among Latinos/as: Place-Based Expressions for Understanding Latino/a Popular Catholicism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Latinx Christianities in the United States*, edited by Kristy Nabhan-Warren, 196-203 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2022).

²³¹Pulido, “Popular Religion among Latinos/as,” 196-203.

²³²Sammy Alfaro, “Reading and Hearing Scripture in the Latina/o Pentecostal Community.” In *Latino/a Theology and the Bible* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2021), 41.

Peruvian Pastor Darío López Rodríguez explains that testimonies are an extension of the global Pentecostal's reverence for the bible as a "revelational mystery."²³³ Lopez Rodríguez explains that "when a Pentecostal gives a testimony of his/her faith, it is not the narration of an unknown story nor are they retelling an unfamiliar experience, but rather they are speaking of their continued relation with God recounting what is currently happening in their spiritual pilgrimage."²³⁴ Latino/a/x Pentecostals co-locate themselves within God's ongoing story by relating and receiving from one another's testimonies. It may be that the solidarity and communal identity woven from shared experience is not unique to Latino/a/x Pentecostals. However, Latino/a/x renewalist testimonies extend the experiential heuristic embedded within Latino/a/x *familismo*, acknowledging relational experience rather than rational understanding as the most authoritative kind of knowledge.²³⁵ Furthermore, Latino/a/x renewalist's experience of the Holy Spirit as the "Democratizing Spirit" fosters organic intergenerational participation and dialogue. Latino/a/x Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit "moves freely to empower men and women" for ministry, creating openness within Latino/a/x Pentecostal churches to include women and children as testimony-sharers and preachers.²³⁶

Although both U.S. Anglo renewalists and Latino/a/x renewalists may value testimony, Latino/a/x renewalist churches uniquely use testimony as a conduit for shared community spiritual identity. The accounts of Latino/a/x Pentecostal churches may display a more profound sense of shared community spirituality than testimonies within some U.S. renewalist ministry contexts due to *familismo*. Latino/a/x Pentecostal's use of testimony as a doorway into shared

²³³Castelo and Heath, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 70-76, 112.

²³⁴Dario López Rodríguez, *La fiesta del Espíritu Espiritualidad y Celebración Pentecostal* (Lima, Perú: Ediciones Puma, 2006), 52.

²³⁵Sammy Alfaro, "Reading and Hearing Scripture," 41.

²³⁶Sammy Alfaro, "Reading and Hearing Scripture," 33.

community identity may challenge U.S. Anglo renewalists' individualistic and voyeuristic implementation of testimony. Rather than being "inspiring" to individuals, testimonies within Alfaro and López-Rodríguez's Latino/a/x Pentecostal contexts are directionally relevant to their audience. As individuals testify and relate to others' encounters, the revelation shared through *testimonios* extends into a pattern of encountering God that holds directional significance to church communities. By "com[ing] together to minister to others from what they have received," Latino/a/x community members open practical opportunities for others to encounter God, such as receiving prayer for healing. Ultimately, *testimonios* enrich these community's practice and experiential understanding of God.²³⁷ Over time, community members' choice to connect through *testimonios* creates a shared community witness of having encountered God in a particular way.

By developing a history of deeply engaging with God through one another's testimonies, Latino/a/x Pentecostals challenge U.S. renewalists to build a shared sense of community identity. By applying narrative testimony as a conduit for shared community identity, renewalists may create more authentic opportunities for intergenerational dialogue than through age-specific ministries. Through testimony, these contexts may allow the Holy Spirit to weave a shared history of what God has done, is doing, and will do for the generations.

Conclusion

Within Latino/a/x Christian spiritualities, an emphasis on family, community, and belonging supports an experiential heuristic of individual and social transformation. Communities can practice holistic Christian spirituality by prioritizing heart connection over

²³⁷For a longer description of the elements of a Latino/a/x Pentecostal worship service, please see Villafaña, *El Espíritu Liberador: Hacia una Ética Social Pentecostal Hispanoamericana* (Buenos Aires, AR: Nueva Creación, 1993), 115, 119, 127-9.

rational understanding, engaging across social differences, using testimony to impart shared spiritual heritage, and living in the altar flow across time and place. This fluid approach to encountering God enables Latino/a/x Christians to approach youth ministry not as developing age-related social services but as engendering authentic intergenerational dialogue. By centering community spiritual life around opportunities to help, shape, and receive narratives of collective spiritual identity, Latino/a/x Christian spiritualities may encourage U.S. Christian Youth Leaders to pursue deep engagement with the Holy Spirit across time and place. In youth ministry, this value for deep engagement may gradually support U.S. Christians to relate to time not as a master but as a tool.

Applying rather than importing insights from Latino/a/x spiritualities is essential. To honestly, humbly, and faithfully consider how insights from Latino/a/x spiritualities may support teens' spiritual development, my act of ministry project must correspond to teenagers' unique needs. In the next chapter, I will explore historical and contemporary mis-examples of youth spiritual formation from the United States and Western Europe. I will also compare the implications of spiritual formation, prophetic ministry, and counseling in supporting youth ministry. Next, I will examine how contemporary experiential learning theory, research methods, and best practices from Christian Spirituality Studies may support teen's spiritual formation. Finally, I will summarize how insights from Latino/a/x heuristics of testimony and spiritualities of community can support a relevant framework for teen spirituality at Mosaic Church.

Chapter 3 - Water for the Thirsty: Expanding Teens' Access to the Revelation of Jesus

Now more than ever, supporting teens' spirituality is vital to conversations about Christian identity in the United States. In a 2022 online study conducted by the Barna group, 83 percent of Generation Z in the United States were likely to agree that “a spiritual or supernatural

dimension [to life] exists.”²³⁸ This research suggests that teen’s interest in spirituality is consistent across geographical location and gender.²³⁹ To nourish the spirituality of Generation Z (born in 1997-2012) and Generation Alpha (born in 2010-2025),²⁴⁰ Christian leaders must develop resources that scaffold teen participation in healthy Christian spirituality within their contexts.²⁴¹

Particularism and Spiritual Plurality in Seattle

The purpose, methods, and boundaries of providing spiritual support to youth must be contextual in an increasingly pluralist Cascadian, U.S., and international context. Leaders must recognize that embedded practical assumptions about God's character and youth spiritual formation may differ within faith traditions. According to Christian Spirituality scholar Karen Yust, a community’s schema for supporting youth spiritual formation is tradition-dependent. In *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality: Perspectives From the World’s Religious Traditions*, Yust’s team of authors compare approaches to supporting children and adolescents’ spirituality from various world traditions, such as intentional life structure in U.S. Roman Catholicism, personal responsibility in Islam, spiritual practices in renewalist Brazilian churches, rites of passage within Judaism, and spiritual accompaniment through listening in U.S. protestant spirituality. As a mainline pastor, Yust’s careful arrangement of the essays demonstrates her belief that spirituality is inherently human, intergenerational, and pluralist. Within their essays, the authors assert that while diverse traditions may share a common goal of supporting youth

²³⁸Barna Group, “Meet the ‘Spiritual but Not Religious’; Barna Group, “The Open Generation.”

²³⁹Barna Group, “Meet the ‘Spiritual but Not Religious;” Barna Group, “Openness to Jesus Isn’t the Problem-the Church Is.”

²⁴⁰Dimock, “Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins.”

²⁴¹As Andrew Root discusses on pages 197-212 of *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, youth ministry practices must be customized to their specific communities and cultural contexts.

spirituality, their schematic differences may lead to different religious practices.²⁴² For example, charismatic Christians emphasize that the gifts of the spirit (*charismata*) can help sanctify and mature individuals to be increasingly like Jesus²⁴³ and communities to reflect the Kingdom of Heaven.²⁴⁴ Christian Spirituality, therefore, facilitates individual and community transformation.

In *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, scholar and youth minister Andrew Root demonstrates how Christian leaders' approach toward teens' spirituality parallels the changing relationships between historically dominant and colonized nations. At a time of increasing religious plurality and national identity changes, Root argues that adult leaders must meet teens in their place of "greatest need" through a ministry of *place-sharing*.²⁴⁵ Similar to Howard Andruejol's argument that youth ministry is "not about one on top of all but one next to others,"²⁴⁶ place-sharing is a spiritual posture that allows intergenerational communities to relate to one another and share one another's emotional, spiritual, and practical burdens as appropriate.²⁴⁷ Root cites the healthy boundaries between diverse members of the Trinity to exemplify how healthy boundaries in place-sharing relationships can support teens' and nations' authentic identity development. Like sovereign nations with clear national boundaries, Root argues that leaders who practice place-sharing will approach teens as individuals whom God has designed and who Jesus is already pursuing.²⁴⁸

²⁴²Paul Hedges and Alan Race, *Christian Approaches to other Faiths: A Reader* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2009), 112-114.

²⁴³John 16:13, Eph. 4:13.

²⁴⁴Col. 1:13, Phil. 2:13-16, Luke 17:20-21, Matt. 16:19.

²⁴⁵Andrew Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 124-197.

²⁴⁶Andruejol, "Adoptive Youth Ministry: A Latin American Perspective," 269.

²⁴⁷On page 139 of *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, Root describes how deciding what aspects of adult life to not share is part of healthy place-sharing.

²⁴⁸Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 124-197.

Within his framework, Root argues that God's complete acceptance of humanity in Jesus Christ²⁴⁹ and atoning sacrifice²⁵⁰ models healthy boundaries between adult leaders and teens. Root's argument for authentic relational leadership reflects how Jesus offered humanity a relationship with himself without assimilation.²⁵¹ Like the relationship between two sovereign nations, like the collaboration between Anglos and Latino/a/xs in the United States, Root argues that relationships between teens and adult leaders can be transformative, not as "connections of shared ideology," but as places of encountering holy differences.²⁵² Root argues that through authentic relationships rather than manipulation or control, teens will be most equipped to understand God's character. Moreover, Root acknowledges that teens who replicate this egalitarian relationship schema will be more equipped to engage with others' social differences. In keeping with this theme of egalitarian collaboration, Root calls for an incarnational, egalitarian, and relationally just approach to youth ministry.

Root's place-sharing framework carries implications for supporting action research and youth spirituality within Cascadia. Just as youth leaders must draw boundaries to support teens' spiritual development, so must action research in Cascadian Christian spirituality take a particularist approach to bracket spiritual experience. A particularist framework to interreligious dialogue within Seattle may most adequately support Mosaic Teens in navigating religious plurality.²⁵³ By acknowledging the different schema different traditions hold surrounding religious experience, particularism may support Cascadian Christians to neither assimilate other spiritualities (inclusivism) nor label other mystic traditions as "false" (exclusivism). For the sake of this act of ministry project, I will consider non-Christian mystic traditions in Seattle as

²⁴⁹Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 89.

²⁵⁰Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 118.

²⁵¹Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 194.

²⁵²Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 192.

²⁵³Hedges and Race, *Christian Approaches to other Faiths*, vii-viii.

separate religious systems, thereby preserving the distinctiveness of contemporary Christian understandings of the Holy Spirit.²⁵⁴

Beyond research, Root's framework of place-sharing may allow Seattlite renewalists to embody a particularist approach to spirituality in their friendships with non-Christian mystics, leaving room for humility²⁵⁵ and for the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to individuals²⁵⁶ who are searching. Place-sharing may support Mosaic Youth ministry, aligning with evangelicalism's deep value for religious choice²⁵⁷ and honoring Gen Z's values for "collaboration, flexibility, relevance, authenticity, and non-hierarchical leadership."²⁵⁸ Nevertheless, while a framework of place-sharing may support Mosaic teens' community engagement, it will not help their participation in Christian spiritual practices or empower them to resist the influence of time poverty.

Acknowledging Differences within U.S. Christian Spiritual Practices

To narrow the scope of this study and select methods that will support Mosaic's teens' spirituality, it is vital to acknowledge the breadth of U.S. Christian spiritual practices. In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, Pastoral theologian Bonnie Miller-McLemore leads a team of researchers to examine four significant streams within U.S. Christian Spirituality: Protestant evangelicalism (Charles Scalise), Pentecostalism (Mark Cartledge), mainline Protestantism (Gordon Mikowski), and Roman Catholicism (Lynn Bridgers).²⁵⁹ These essays compare each tradition's history, spiritual practices, and critiques.

²⁵⁴Hedges and Race, *Christian Approaches to other Faiths*, 28.

²⁵⁵Hedges and Race, *Christian Approaches to other Faiths*, 28, 118.

²⁵⁶John 16:13, John 3:8.

²⁵⁷Charles Scalise, "Protestant Evangelicalism," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, B.J. Miller-McLemore (ed.), 277-287 (Hoboken, NY: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

²⁵⁸Melissa DeWitte, "What to Know about Gen Z."

²⁵⁹B. J. Miller-McLemore, ed., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (Hoboken, NY: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

Church historian and American Baptist layperson Charles Scalise builds on Webber and Grentz's description of younger evangelicals' values and spiritual practices²⁶⁰ by acknowledging the decentralized nature of evangelical spirituality. According to Scalise, this influence is likely to be felt in "churches, denominations, para-church mission groups, publishing houses, schools, and institutions of higher education."²⁶¹ Critics of evangelical spirituality criticize its emphasis on rational rather than experiential understanding.²⁶² They may also categorize it as isolationist or politically enmeshed,²⁶³ seeking to influence society without sufficient contextual theology.²⁶⁴

Acknowledging a similar kind of decentralization in renewalist ministries, contemporary Pentecostal theologian Mark Cartledge affirms renewalists' experiential heuristic. He describes how renewalist spirituality is especially likely to emphasize 1. Cor 12-14 *charismata* such as "wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working of power (miracles), discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation" and especially "prophecy" (Prophetic Ministry).²⁶⁵ Critics of renewalist spirituality claim it can lack groundedness. For example, Catholic writer Peter Kwasniewski claims that Renewalist spirituality overemphasizes intangible spiritual practices without a link to the historical practices of the Church or Christian identity. Kwasniewski questions Renewalist's present-day social engagement and discipleship.²⁶⁶ Like evangelicalism, renewalist spirituality's adaptable nature may make its influence challenging to trace.

²⁶⁰Robert Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 116.

²⁶¹Scalise, "Protestant Evangelicalism," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, 578.

²⁶²Ron Scott Sanders, *After the Election: Prophetic Politics in a Post-Secular Age* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 35-41.

²⁶³Scott Sanders, *After the Election*, 35-41.

²⁶⁴Kerry D. McRoberts, *Following Jesus to Burning Man: Recovering the Church's Vocation* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books), 2011.

²⁶⁵Mark Cartledge, "Pentecostalism," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, B.J. Miller-McLemore (ed.), 587-595 (Hoboken, NY: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

²⁶⁶Peter Kwasniewski, "Confusion about Graces: A Catholic Critique of the Charismatic Movement." OnePeterFive, last modified December 20, 2018, <https://onepeterfive.com/confusion-about-graces-a-catholic-critique-of-the-charismatic-movement/>.

Christian Education professor and Presbyterian minister Gordon Mikowski asserts that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century social gospel movement continues to challenge mainline traditions towards holistic social service. Mikowski argues that mainline traditions most frequently approach sin and salvation not at an individual level but at the level of a community. Furthermore, mainline traditions aspire to “work with ecumenical and interfaith partners to diagnose individual and social ills, discern the signs of God in human life, and work toward greater fulfillment of God’s future for all of humanity.”²⁶⁷ This commitment to broad social engagement as community spirituality has led to more excellent application of social scientific approaches to pastoral ministry and scholarship within mainline traditions. Nevertheless, critics of mainline spirituality claim it tends towards cultural assimilation at the expense of individual spiritual formation. They maintain that it does not sufficiently support individual Christian identity and, therefore, can fail to present cohesive Christian community identities.²⁶⁸

To counterbalance a social scientific approach to community engagement, Mikowski acknowledges that some mainline churches, such as the Episcopal Church,²⁶⁹ American Baptists,²⁷⁰ U.S. Presbyterians,²⁷¹ Lutherans,²⁷² and United Methodists,²⁷³ emphasize spiritual

²⁶⁷Gordon Mikowski, “Mainline Protestantism,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, B.J. Miller-McLemore (ed.), 565-566 (Hoboken, NY: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology, 565.

²⁶⁸Gillis J. Harp, Review of Mainline Protestantism: Triumphant but Sidelined, by Elesha J. Coffman, Matthew S. Hedstrom, and David A. Hollinger. *Reviews in American History* 42, no. 3 (2014): 469–77. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43661698>; Jason S. Lantzer, *Mainline Christianity: The Past and Future of America’s Majority Faith* (New York, NY: University Press), 2016.

²⁶⁹Gray Temple, “Spiritual Direction in the Episcopal Church.” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 30, no. 4 (Wint 2002): 303–13.

²⁷⁰Rebecca Driscoll, “American Baptist Churches USA Announces Renewed Focus on Spiritual Direction.” ABCUSA, last modified May 14, 2021, <https://www.abc-usa.org/2021/05/american-baptist-churches-usa-announces-renewed-focus-on-spiritual-direction/>.

²⁷¹“Finding a Spiritual Practice That Enlivens Your Soul,” Presbyterian Church U.S.A, Presbyterian Mission Agency, last modified February 9, 2021, <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/pt-0321-spiritual/>.

²⁷²Martin Wells, “Soul Care,” Living Lutheran, last modified June 3, 2022, <https://www.livinglutheran.org/2022/06/soul-care/>.

²⁷³Polly House, “Spiritual Direction Nurturing the Journey toward God,” Resource UMC, last modified December 15, 2016, <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/spiritual-direction-nurturing-the-journey-toward-god>.

direction²⁷⁴ along with some contemplative spiritual disciplines such as stillness, solitude, sabbath, silence, and celebration.²⁷⁵ However, these individualized resources may not support community renewal and re-identification.

Finally, aided at least in theory by the centralization of the Roman Catholic Church, Lynn Bridgers summarizes several vital elements to Catholic youth spiritual education, such as exploring secularization, rituals, values, and norms.²⁷⁶ According to Dominican Sister of Peace Fara Impastato, Roman Catholic's diverse and intersectional practices of spiritual direction influence and are influenced by Protestant spiritual direction. Therefore, Roman Catholic spirituality is relevant to a survey of U.S. Protestant spirituality.²⁷⁷

Acknowledging Age-Segregation in Historical U.S. Protestantism

While these descriptions of U.S. spirituality may be valid for adults, are they representative of teens? Is supporting teens' spirituality different from supporting adults' spirituality? According to Root, the influence of the Industrial Era may provide both a “yes” and “no” answer to that question.

While “the church has always worked to pass on its faith to its young people,” Root argues in *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry* that “age-specific ministry to young people is no older than the late nineteenth century.”²⁷⁸ Root claims that, ultimately, the age-specific ministry was a Christian response to the fragmentation of intergenerational communities caused by Industrialism. However, he asserts that attempting to influence teens through age-based ministry

²⁷⁴Spiritual direction is also an important aspect of Roman Catholic spirituality as explored in Fara Impastato, “An Introduction To Spiritual Direction For Christian Counsellors: Its Meaning, History, And Present Practice In A Roman Catholic Context,” *Didaskalia* 8, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 26–40.

²⁷⁵Borgo, *Spiritual Conversations with Children*, 50.

²⁷⁶Bridgers, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, 577.

²⁷⁷Impastato, “An Introduction To Spiritual Direction For Christian Counsellors.”

²⁷⁸Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 26.

alone may contribute to social fragmentation rather than support teens' spirituality. Leaders must provide a framework that bridges U.S. age-based subcultures to effectively support teenagers' spirituality or promote meaningful intergenerational community identity.

Initially, English Anglican leaders developed age-based ministries to support children and teens through tremendous social changes in the Industrial Era. In the nineteenth century, London Newspaperman Robert Raikes introduced Sunday schools to teach “overworked and undereducated children” “basic skills in reading, writing, manners, and morals.”²⁷⁹ As the Industrial Revolution redistributed teens from out of apprenticeships in agricultural, multigenerational communities and into urban labor and nuclear family systems, reading and arithmetic became essential skills.²⁸⁰ In the mid nineteenth century, English Philanthropist George Williams formed the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) and YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) to protect young people from the perceived threats of city life and reinforce their Christian commitments.²⁸¹

Within the United States, Methodist layman William Elliot held the first Sunday school in Accomack County, Virginia.²⁸² Sunday schools spread to major cities like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Rhode Island through the parachurch American Sunday School Union (ASSU).²⁸³ In the mid nineteenth century, high schools became a more popular avenue for educational training due to increasing Industrialism. U.S. churches discarded the academic emphasis of Sunday Schools, recasting Sunday schools as “divinely appointed instruments” to “convert young people to Christ.”²⁸⁴ By the 1930s, high schools introduced clubs to “build

²⁷⁹Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 30.

²⁸⁰Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 31-36.

²⁸¹Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 30.

²⁸²Eric Black, “Sunday School an Evolving Institution,” Baptist Standard, last modified January 6, 2012, <https://www.baptiststandard.com/news/faith-culture/sunday-school-an-evolving-institution/>.

²⁸³Ellen Little, “Guides: Elizabeth Nesbitt Collection, American Sunday School Union.” Edited by Claire Withers. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Libraries, June 5, 2024. <https://pitt.libguides.com/Nesbitt/ASSU>.

²⁸⁴Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 30.

loyalty and camaraderie” among students, and by the 1940s-1960s, “sports practices, weekend dances, and community hangouts” had created entirely separate youth spheres with popularity as a prized social currency.²⁸⁵

In the middle decades of the twentieth century and post-WWII, various U.S. evangelical parachurch groups began to develop age-specific ministries that responded to teens' need for social belonging. Groups such as Jack Wyrzten's Youth For Christ Rallies (1940), Jim Rayburn's Young Life Movement (1941), and Billy Graham's Crusades (1944) emerged and thrived. Nevertheless, these ministries attempted to apply a strategy of personal relationism. For example, Christian Education professor Mark Senter describes the impact of this tactic on Jim Rayburn's Young Life ministry.²⁸⁶ Early in his ministry to high school students, Rayburn discovered that by “striking up a conversation about sports, music, or fashion (about the distinct youth culture)” and inviting students personally, he could “win the right” of individuals' participation in his events. Furthermore, Rayburn found that by befriending the most popular students, such as the football captain and cheerleaders, less popular students would begin to attend Rayburn's events.²⁸⁷ While effective in turning high school communities towards the charisma of a ministry leader, personal relationism within these groups may have reinforced the dichotomy between powerful and weak teens and failed to scaffold teen's spirituality.

The efficacy of personal relationism began to fade during the polarizing events of the mid-twentieth and early twenty first centuries. From the 1960s to the 2000s, social conflicts related to racial inequality, the Vietnam War, Feminism, the Sexual Revolution, drug use, the breakdown of the family unit, President John F. Kennedy's assassination, and Watergate encouraged teens to distrust the construct of popularity or the legitimacy of authority figures.

²⁸⁵Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 44.

²⁸⁶Mark Senter, *The Coming Revolution in Youth Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 126.

²⁸⁷Senter, *The Coming Revolution in Youth Ministry*, 126.

Social schisms fragmented the U.S. youth subculture into smaller subcultures of hippies, metalheads, punks, nerds, and skaters, each with a different definition of social success.²⁸⁸ Churches responded to this increasing fragmentation by increasingly commodifying and customizing youth spirituality. Between the 1960s and 2000s, churches adopted parachurch ministries' approach to age-based discipleship. They hired full-time youth workers and invested in large, expensive youth ministry productions, focusing on influencing teens rather than scaffolding their spirituality.²⁸⁹ Despite contemporary marketing strategies, religious products, and age-related programs, teens' rates of religious disaffiliation and interest in spirituality have remained simultaneously high.²⁹⁰

Individualizing youth spirituality or marketing to separate youth subcultures fails to promote genuine intergenerational belonging in the church.²⁹¹ Attempts to influence teens or have been unable to scaffold their spirituality. Rather than aspiring toward influence, youth leaders must become more effective at meeting teens in their most significant places of emotional, social, and spiritual need. Nevertheless, the history of age-based teens' ministry requires leaders to respect teens' perspectives as individuals who belong to a separate age-based subculture. Leaders must develop egalitarian, respectful, age-diverse dialogue. Through place-sharing, leaders can scaffold teens' engagement on topics that matter to them.²⁹² Through stories that relate to the struggles of teenage life, teens may understand testimonies as mirrors of their own lived experiences, windows into new spiritual practices of knowing God, and doors into the practice of ministry.²⁹³ Over time, inviting teens to challenge, claim, or extend their

²⁸⁸Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 56-57.

²⁸⁹Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 64-70.

²⁹⁰Pew Research Center, "U.S. Teens Take after Their Parents Religiously."

²⁹¹Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 56-57.

²⁹²1 Tim. 4:12.

²⁹³Rudine Sims Bishop, "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors." *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books from the Classroom* 6, no. 3 (Summer 1990).

communities' testimonies will provide them with more authentic opportunities to form a Christian identity than the commodification of youth spirituality.

Youth Spiritual Formation in Contemporary U.S. Protestantism

Paving new pathways for teens' spiritual formation through place-sharing must employ a schema of journeying together toward Christ. While the breadth of Protestant denominations, churches, and parachurch ministries may make a unified approach to Christian spirituality seem impossible, former Asbury Theological Seminary Dean Catherine Stonehouse argues that at their core, renewalist, evangelical, and mainline protestant spiritualities all support a schema of spiritual accompaniment towards Jesus. Stonehouse says that spirituality within Protestantism is an age-inclusive human experience,²⁹⁴ defining it as:

The awareness that there is more to life than the material; an awareness of oneself as a human being, responsiveness to beauty, sensitivity to ethical concerns, as well as experiences of engaging mystery, awe, and wonder... the inner source of thoughts, feelings, intentions, choices, and actions.²⁹⁵

Stonehouse's definition is like Lacey Finn Borgo's definition of children's spirituality. In *Spiritual Conversations with Children: Listening to God Together*, Borgo celebrates how children's recognition of "goodness, beauty, truth, wonder, awe, and mystery" may support their understanding of the gospel.²⁹⁶ In a potentially controversial next step, Stonehouse argues that themes of holiness are still relevant to general Protestant spirituality. Her argument cites Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, and George Whitfield's influence on the Holiness Movement (1790-1840). Stonehouse's emphasis on sanctification corresponds to Episcopal Rev. Canon

²⁹⁴Gen. 2:7, Matt. 22:37, and John 10:10.

²⁹⁵Catherine Stonehouse, "After a Child's First Dance with God: Accompanying Children on a Protestant Spiritual Journey," in *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality: Perspectives From the World's Religious Traditions*, Karen Yust (ed.) (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 95-107.

²⁹⁶Borgo, *Spiritual Conversations with Children*, 40.

Gray Temple's understanding of spiritual direction as the pursuit of holiness.²⁹⁷ Stonehouse argues that it is this appreciation for holiness that must influence Christian leaders to take an egalitarian approach to accompanying youth, "get[ting] out of the way so that the Spirit of truth can lead children to meet God in the story."²⁹⁸ Stonehouse affirms the experiential heuristic found in Renewalist Christianity, emphasizing that children, youth, and adults are spiritual beings formed through "all the experiences of life"²⁹⁹ and that Jesus can reveal himself through their experiences. Stonehouse affirms the importance of acknowledging teens' identities in their knowledge of Jesus, claiming that as adults make room, the Holy Spirit will lead them "to discover the precious realities suited for them." Rather than contradicting evangelicals' value for biblical authority, minimizing the personhood of Christ, or inviting individuals to edit core Christian doctrines preferentially, Stonehouse's argument for individual experience corresponds to Jesus' incarnation. She argues that God's sovereignty in human diversity and capacity to connect with each person³⁰⁰ allows the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to each individual based on their character attributes and personhood.³⁰¹ Nevertheless, Stonehouse's argument for supporting teens' experiential understanding of God is not individualistic. Instead, Stonehouse argues that for teens to participate meaningfully in a Christian community, it is necessary to enlist their reflection on how they experience God.

Stonehouse's convictions border but do not intersect with critical aspects of Latino/a/x Christian spiritualities. Indeed, the limitations of her argument may mirror current limitations in U.S. Anglo spiritualities. In language that borders but still limits the *familismo* of Simon Soliván,

²⁹⁷Gray Temple, "Spiritual Direction in the Episcopal Church," 304.

²⁹⁸Catherine Stonehouse, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 186.

²⁹⁹Stonehouse, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*, 96.

³⁰⁰Ps. 139.

³⁰¹A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God: Their Meaning in the Christian Life* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1961).

Howard Andreujol, and Gilberto Cavazos-González, Stonehouse emphasizes that based on the Trinitarian nature of God, spirituality is not just individual but, at the core, a communal act. Flowing from this eternal spiritual community, the youngest child “is a spiritual being” and is invited to participate in a “relationship with God and others.”³⁰² Stonehouse does not describe how Jesus invites children to be adopted into his family in ways that both mimic³⁰³ and extend³⁰⁴ a Western understanding of the nuclear family.

Moreover, Stonehouse’s argument falls short of Orlando Espín, Altagracia Pérez, and Alberto López Pulido’s emphasis on social transformation as the mature outworking of Christian community spirituality. While Stonehouse asserts that spirituality includes “sensitization” to community-scale ethical concerns, she stops short of describing how shared convictions about injustice and the bible might mobilize a community to pursue social justice and restoration. Within this blind spot are echoes of a joint and just complaint: that when over-spiritualized, Renewalist Christianity is more concerned with Heaven than the outworking of the Kingdom of God on Earth. Instead of leaving room to over-spiritize injustice, protestant renewalists, evangelicals, and mainline Christians must accompany teens to pursue proportionate justice. On Earth, just as much as in Heaven, righteousness and justice are the foundation of Christ’s throne.³⁰⁵

Finally, Stonehouse synthesizes current insights from the social sciences, pedagogy, and Christian spiritual practice. She describes how spiritual formation within Protestant churches must include experiential learning, community-based opportunities for identity formation, and questioning. She echoes Andreujol’s lament over the post-modern commodification of youth

³⁰²Stonehouse, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*, 96.

³⁰³Rom. 8:14-17.

³⁰⁴Luke 8:21.

³⁰⁵Ps. 89:14.

ministry programming in the Americas, acknowledging that “many churches depend on these programs to nurture the young, failing to see that it is the responsibility and privilege of the whole church to nurture the spiritual life of its children.”³⁰⁶ She solidifies her support for reinvesting in supporting young people’s spiritual formation, acknowledging that “too often the full potential for [teens and children’s] spiritual enrichment has not been realized as teaching focused on merely learning facts, not on forming the spirit.”³⁰⁷

More appropriate tools to scaffold youth spirituality are needed. To respond to this call, leaders must incorporate the strengths of Spiritual Direction and Renewalist Prophetic Ministry.

Differences between Spiritual Direction, Prophetic Ministry, and Psychotherapy

Contemporary U.S. Protestants must shift their emphasis on youth ministry from simply providing age-specific programs to scaffolding teens’ spirituality. For this approach to support teens in engaging well with God and others, teens need support within and beyond youth ministry settings. This summary of U.S. Christian spiritual practices demonstrates Spiritual Direction and Prophetic Ministry as the most dominant current approaches to scaffolding spirituality. Rather than relying upon one approach alone, these two approaches offer complementary approaches to navigating spiritual “encounter” and “experience.”³⁰⁸

In keeping with Stonehouse’s emphasis on holiness in Protestant spirituality, according to Episcopal Rev. Canon Gray Temple, the purpose of Spiritual Direction is to “assist a soul in pursuing holiness”³⁰⁹ through coaching. Individual directees initiate Spiritual Direction by

³⁰⁶Stonehouse, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*, 105.

³⁰⁷Stonehouse, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*, 104.

³⁰⁸Castelo and Heath, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 112.

³⁰⁹Temple, “Spiritual Direction in the Episcopal Church,” 304.

contacting a spiritual director and meeting one-on-one in spiritual direction sessions. These sessions may include:

sacramental confession; review of spiritual journals or dream journals; the formation, monitoring, and adjustment of a “rule of life”; instruction and practice of different forms of prayer; suggesting and directing courses of spiritual reading; and/or informal conversation in which the directee is encouraged to share his or her story with the director, linking their “stories” to the Gospel story.³¹⁰

Though some spiritual directors offer spiritual direction in group settings to build community identity,³¹¹ more resources are available for individuals. Through emphasis on spiritual disciplines and a rule of life, the Holy Spirit's activity within spiritual direction is frequently expressed through imagery of gradual change, lifestyle integration, and holistic wellness.

Comparatively, Renewalist Prophetic Ministry involves an individual or group receiving and communicating an inspired image, impression, or statement (*prophetic word*) to individuals or communities for their strengthening, encouragement, or consolation.³¹² The three stages to receiving and communicating prophetic words include: 1) receiving the inspired image, impression, or statement (*revelation*), 2) parsing the content through the framework of scripture (*interpretation*), and 3) responsibly communicating its significance (*application*). Receiving and delivering a prophetic word may occur in a range of contexts, such as an individual's time of personal prayer, whole group church services, small group ministry settings, or spiritual retreats, with more or less structure depending on the context.³¹³ Individuals may seek to receive a prophetic word, or leaders may approach them spontaneously if they believe they have received

³¹⁰Temple, “Spiritual Direction in the Episcopal Church,” 305.

³¹¹Anne F. Grizzle, “Group Spiritual Direction: Offering Spiritual Depth and Community Building in Diverse Settings,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2018): 218–27. doi:10.1177/1939790918798830.

³¹²1 Cor. 14:3-8.

³¹³Jacob D. Dodson, “Gifted for Change: The Evolving Vision for Tongues, Prophecy, and Other Charisms in American Pentecostal Churches,” *Studies in World Christianity* 17, no. 1 (April 2011): 56.

something relevant. Individuals must then discern whether the word they received resonates or feels inaccurate, harsh, or misdirected.³¹⁴ Renewalists may also utilize prophetic ministry for individual and communal spiritual listening and as an evangelism tool.³¹⁵ Despite the deliberate process some leaders apply when crafting a prophetic word, prophetic ministry's range of uses and sometimes spontaneous nature causes individuals to associate the Holy Spirit's activity with language relating to change, holy disruption, and immediacy.³¹⁶

Spiritual Direction and Prophetic Ministry have separate but parallel goals to Psychotherapy. In Psychotherapy, counselors support individuals in improving their relations with themselves, others, and the world rather than their relationship with God. Many psychotherapeutic methods include "concentrated conversation and reframing," which may produce a more directed conversation than Spiritual Direction or Prophetic Ministry.³¹⁷ Lastly, only psychotherapists may prescribe medication.³¹⁸ Though Psychotherapy may support Christians in pursuing an integrated lifestyle, it is not primarily designed to support spirituality.

Together, Spiritual Direction and Prophetic ministry can paint a more robust portrait of the Holy Spirit than one approach alone. By acknowledging the deliberate but active ways that the Holy Spirit pursues and sanctifies followers of Jesus, leaders may support teens' belief in God's immanence, that God is actively engaged with people across time and space. By training teens to attend to God's presence in intense moments of worship, in quiet times of individual reflection, and all the contexts in between, leaders may support them to enter into the "search-encounter-transformation" process that has come to characterize contemporary

³¹⁴1 Cor. 14:29, 1 John 4:1, 1 Thes. 5:21.

³¹⁵Dodson, "Gifted for Change," 56.

³¹⁶Harvey Gallagher Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21st Century* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2001), 87.

³¹⁷Temple, "Spiritual Direction in the Episcopal Church," 312.

³¹⁸On page 311, Temple describes indicators that a directee should be referred to psychotherapy or psychiatry.

Renewalist spirituality.³¹⁹ Ultimately, teens may be able to enter into intergenerational dialogue about the nature of Christian spirituality within their contexts, both influencing and being influenced by the community's spirituality.

Obstacles Towards Teen's Protection, Dignity, and Engagement in Spiritual Formation

Before settling on a methodology to support Mosaic's teens' understanding of spirituality, it is important to introduce one last word of caution that may safeguard teens' spiritual formation within Protestant ministry contexts. Specific case studies from Western Christian history demonstrate the importance of providing adequate spiritual support and preventing the exploitation of what U. S. moderns would call *minors* (0-18s) or *teens* (13-19).³²⁰

For example, between the eighth and fourteenth century in Medieval Italy, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany, Sweden, and Basque regions, regional ecclesiological or political leaders fabricated minors' spiritual experiences to endorse political or religious ends.³²¹ According to Medieval historian Patricia Healy Wasyliw, the appropriation and mythification of child martyrs' experiences through corresponding religious cults in these contexts may have inadvertently prevented justice for their deaths. For example, ninth-century prince Wistan of Mercia was venerated as a martyr after his cousin Bithfour assassinated him for political reasons.³²² By the eleventh century, Mercian hagiographers insisted that Wistan had been assassinated not as his cousin's political rival but because he objected to his cousin Bithfour's

³¹⁹Cartledge, "Pentecostalism," 588.

³²⁰Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Information about Teens (Ages 12-19)," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, May 15, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/parents/teens/index.html>.

³²¹Patricia Healy Wasyliw, *Martyrdom, Murder, and Magic: Child Saints and Their Cults in Medieval Europe* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2008).

³²²Wasyliw, *Martyrdom, Murder, and Magic*, 2008, 83.

practice of incest.³²³ Though the veneration of child martyrs through Medieval religious cults could not “have existed without substantial popular sympathy for the child victims,”³²⁴ promoting stories of their peaceful non-resistance to murder denigrates the value of children’s lives and spiritual experiences.

Potentially more dangerous to Industrialized Western culture is a tendency of previous centuries to equate minor’s holiness with developmentally inappropriate, adult-like behavior. According to Medieval historian David Tinsley, medieval hagiographies sacralized adult-like behavior that would be considered developmentally inappropriate by today’s standards. These accounts create an expectation that greater spiritual maturity in minors may cause them to skip over common developmental stages. For example, Tinsley cites an account of St. Hedwig of Poland who “had the demeanor of an old woman from the time she was a child, trying as an old person would to practice good morals and to flee the inconstant lifestyles and insolence of other children.”³²⁵ Within the contemporary era, Christians have also commodified minor’s spiritual encounters. In 2015, Alex and Elizabeth Malarkey described how they felt Tyndale House exploited Alex’s account of surviving a car crash and subsequent spiritual experience.³²⁶ After publishing his account in *The Boy Who Went to Heaven*, it took years of protest to induce Tyndale House publishers to discontinue the book. Unfortunately, this tendency to sacralize adult-like behavior is not unique to Christianity. Journalist Dale Fuchs describes the decision of former Dalai Lama Osel Hita Torres, whom his elders’ made Dalai Lama as a toddler. Hita Torres abdicated this role as a teen in search of more dignified, developmentally appropriate

³²³Wasyliw, *Martyrdom, Murder, and Magic*, 2008, 83.

³²⁴Wasyliw, *Martyrdom, Murder, and Magic*, 2008, 84.

³²⁵David F. Tinsley, “Reflections of Childhood in Medieval Hagiographical Writing: The Case of Hartmann Von Aues Der Arme Heinrich,” in *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, 2005, 229–46.

³²⁶Bill Chappell, “Boy Says He Didn’t Go to Heaven, Publisher Says It Will Pull Book,” NPR, last modified January 16, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/01/15/377589757/boy-says-he-didn-t-go-to-heaven-publisher-says-it-will-pull-book>.

expectations.³²⁷ Compared to sacralizing old age, Root's framework of place-sharing advocates safeguarding minors to optionally consider how God may be present throughout their current developmental stages.

In addition to safeguarding minors from physical, mental, or emotional abuse, Christians have a responsibility to create organizational cultures that protect minors from spiritual abuse like exploitation. Especially for renewalist ministries that utilize a schema of spirituality for interpreting daily life, safeguarding against spiritual abuse is essential. In *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*,³²⁸ Lisa Oakley and Justin Humphreys acknowledge the characteristics of spiritual abuse. According to Oakley and Humphreys,

Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. This abuse may include manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision-making, requirements for secrecy and silence, coercion to conform, control through the use of sacred texts or teaching, requirement for obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has 'divine' position, isolation as a means of punishment, and superiority and elitism.”

Humphreys and Oakley suggest various approaches to preventing spiritual abuse, such as supporting individuals to learn to interpret their spiritual experiences for themselves, some degree of team leadership, clear expectations and procedures, adequate supervision and support, and authentic and servant leadership.³²⁹ When adults invite teens to participate in conversations about Christian spirituality, they may need to ensure that their support is developmentally appropriate, corresponds to teens' interests and values, and empowers teens to decide how to share or protect their experiences. Without adequate protection, leaders may alienate minors who

³²⁷Dale Fuchs, “Boy Chosen by Dalai Lama as Reincarnation of Spiritual Leader Turns Back on Buddhist Order,” The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, last modified May 31, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/may/31/dalai-lama-osel-hita-torres>.

³²⁸Lisa Oakley and Justin Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse: How to Create Healthy Christian Cultures* (London, UK: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2020).

³²⁹Oakley and Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*, 126-155.

report spiritual encounters from their respective faith traditions, disrupt their enjoyment of developmental life stages, and further stigmatize spiritual experience within Western culture.³³⁰

Becoming Healthy Intergenerational Spiritual Communities

In keeping with Latino/a/x Christian understandings of *familismo*, it is the responsibility of U.S. Protestant Christian communities to become families that insulate the spirituality of children, teens, and college students. Through building an intergenerational *altar familiar*, protestant Christian communities can share intergenerational testimonies of encountering God. Within and beyond age-based ministries, communities can create opportunities for youth to experience spirituality, form identities based on their experiences, process questions, and build structures for spiritual formation. As communities design these new pathways for youth spiritual formation, they may equip new generations to see themselves in the story of Christian spirituality.

Adults must recommit to accompanying young people's spirituality by helping them make sense of their direct experiences of the supernatural. Adults may coach young people to discern for themselves which spiritual encounters feel healthy and connected to the revealed character of Jesus and which feel heavy, isolating, or weird.³³¹ Children and teens should have the right to decide what they disclose about their experiences to adults and how that information will be used.³³² Spiritual disciplines like engaging questions, patience, and silence³³³ may provide room for minors to hear from God. Children and teens may also benefit from artistic ways of

³³⁰Elijah J. F. Kim, *The Rise of the Global South: The Decline of Western Christendom and the Rise of Majority World Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012).

³³¹Gal. 5, John 17, Luke 18:22.

³³²Oakley and Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*, 40.

³³³Oakley and Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*, 40.

connecting with God, such as painting or dance.³³⁴ By helping teens make sense of their own experiences through place-sharing, this act of ministry hopes to foster such awareness.

Responding to Seattle: Using Dialogue as a Canvas for Identity Development

When emerging artists observe and study other artists, they determine their own inclinations. Contrary to the myth of absolute freedom (dislocation), individuals can only develop unique perspectives towards Christian spirituality from encountering holy differences.³³⁵ Through grappling with others' experiences of encountering God, teens may recognize how God might be uniquely revealing himself to them.

Creating something new always has a history. Communities of human beings grounded in specific regional locations will influence one another's spirituality. While Seattleites' belief in "individualism and isolation, freedom and opportunity"³³⁶ may encourage teens to define their spirituality as unlinked to any previous history or community group, Latino/a/x spiritualities of testimony demonstrate that authentically engaging with others requires the capacity to connect with or challenge a speakers' experience. According to Root, "Relationships, if they are true relationships, demand judgment and confrontation." Therefore, supporting teens to confront and connect with others' testimonies is a more honest location for Christian spiritual development than relying on solely age-based ministry contexts.

To create a form of shared community spiritual identity, teens and adults must neither generalize their spiritual experiences (inclusivism) nor flatly deny others' perspectives (exclusivism). Instead, community members must be able to articulate what they have received from others' testimonies and what they may leave behind. Rather than shielding teens from the

³³⁴Yust et. al, *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality*, 455.

³³⁵Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 119.

³³⁶Chelsea Horton, "On Religion, Irreligion, and Settler Colonialism in the Pacific Northwest: A Snapshot from the Field," in *Religion at the Edge: Nature, Spirituality, and Secularity in the Pacific Northwest*, Paul Bramadat, Patricia O'Connell Killen, and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, eds., 20-34 (Vancouver, Canada: UBC Press, 2022).

diversity of spiritual experience, Christian leaders must teach them how to connect with, extend, or respectfully challenge others' testimonies through small group discussion.

Spirituality, Education, and Engagement: Methodological Implications

In *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, Mary Elizabeth Moore describes how educational contexts become sacramental when they demonstrate “God’s nature and the signs of God’s grace in the world,” facilitate “hopeful encounter[s] with New Creation,” and catalyze new vision and costly, required action.³³⁷ Current scholarship on contemplative spirituality, best pedagogical practices, and Mosaic Church’s organizational structure indicate that self-reflection embedded in small group discussion can be one tool on this journey toward community transformation.

Utilizing a transformative framework to develop this act of ministry best supports Mosaic teens to describe their own spirituality.³³⁸ Unlike phenomenology or grounded theory, this action research is ethnographic,³³⁹ relying upon the understanding of spiritual encounter already embedded within Mosaic Church.³⁴⁰ This project is pragmatic, seeking to develop a framework to support discussions about spirituality within Mosaic’s Youth ministry.³⁴¹

In order to honor Mosaic’s use of small-group instruction for age-based spiritual,³⁴² I have applied a small group (focus group) format to this study. Beyond Mosaic Church, teens respond well to small group spiritual formation and instruction. In *Ethnography as Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*, Mary Clark Moschella explains that pastoral listening through small group discussions “empowers and encourages” participants “to speak in ways that are authentic,

³³⁷Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 46-48.

³³⁸Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 25-27.

³³⁹Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 271-275.

³⁴⁰Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 306.

³⁴¹Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 27.

³⁴²One group that relies on this format is based on Alpha International. Please see “About Alpha,” Alpha International, last modified June 8, 2022, <https://alphausa.org/about/>.

honest, and transformative.”³⁴³ Furthermore, educational equity researcher Jill Barshay promotes small group instruction as a pathway to teen’s deeper learning. According to Barshay, this modality produces more profound listening, more constructive exchange of ideas, and greater collaboration between individuals with higher or lower amounts of knowledge than individual instruction.³⁴⁴ A small group format may promote equity in spiritual formation, supporting Mosaic teens with less renewalist vocabulary or clear experiences of encountering God.

This semi-ethnographic research act of ministry asserts the importance of giving Mosaic teens opportunities to evaluate testimonies from within their own community. In “Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors,” Multicultural Literature Researcher Rudine Sims Bishop acknowledges that sharing culturally relevant narratives and presenting opportunities to evaluate them may scaffold Mosaic teens’ vocabulary and identity formation.³⁴⁵ In this case, I am interpreting “culturally relevant narratives” to mean “testimonies of encounter from adult members of the Mosaic Church community.” For this reason, I will use ethnographic methods to collect testimonies of encounter from adult members of the Mosaic Church community for teens to evaluate. To invite teen’s engagement, I will develop a 5-week discussion series, inviting a group of 6 teens to connect, extend, and challenge these testimonies. To ensure that teens feel comfortable interrogating these accounts in a Cascadian culture that resists direct conflict, I will keep the identities of the adult interviewees anonymous.

³⁴³Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 96.

³⁴⁴Jill Barshay, “Working in a Group Might Be the Best Way to Help Kids Meet Individual Goals, Study Says,” The Hechinger Report, last modified March 30, 2020, <https://hechingerreport.org/working-in-a-group-might-be-the-best-way-to-help-kids-meet-individual-goals-study-says/>.

³⁴⁵Bishop, “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors.”

Self-Reflection in Small Group Discussion as an Invitation into Sacred Time

Within this discussion series, Mosaic teens will require opportunities to consider how their perspectives on spirituality may differ from the adult speakers. The emerging field of Contemplative Spirituality Studies celebrates self-reflection in small group discussion as a path to retain individual perspectives. In *The Soul of Higher Education*, Margaret Benefiel describes the depth of missional spirituality that can result from incorporating silence, reflection, and listening within small group settings.³⁴⁶ The slower pace of self-reflection may leave more room for teens to exit *Standard Average European Time (SAET)* time. By incorporating wait time, leaders may alleviate any sense of anxiety teens may feel to participate, thereby decreasing a culture of performance.³⁴⁷ Self-reflection may help teens discern God's voice.³⁴⁸

Therefore, I will design discussions that incorporate room for self-reflection prior to whole group discussion. I will give teens at least 8 minutes to read and evaluate a testimony before responding. Unlike a culture of hurry, utilizing self-reflection in small group discussions may support teens' to define spirituality both by what they do and what they cease doing.³⁴⁹ By inviting teens to slow down and discern God's pace, they may determine how to participate in how the Holy Spirit is guiding the conversation. Over time, contemplative strategies for discussion may begin to support teens' self-regulation and support their engagement with the Holy Spirit across contexts. In the following chapter, I will explain the methodology and results of this action research project in greater detail.

³⁴⁶Margaret Benefiel, *The Soul of Higher Education: Contemplative Pedagogy, Research and Institutional Life for the Twenty-First Century*, *Advances in Workplace Spirituality: Theory, Research, and Application* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2019), 131-135.

³⁴⁷"Wait Time: Making Space for Authentic Learning," Center for Teaching and Learning, Kent State University, last modified 2024, <https://www.kent.edu/ctl/wait-time-making-space-authentic-learning#:~:text=What%20Is%20Wait%20Time%3F,pa use%20after%20a%20student%20response.>

³⁴⁸Kent State University, "Wait Time: Making Space for Authentic Learning."

³⁴⁹Andrew Louth, "Apophatic and Cataphatic Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, edited by Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman, 137-46 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Chapter 4 - Encounter Study: Supporting Intergenerational Dialogue about the Nature of Spiritual Encounter

This action research project explores how self-reflection in small group discussions might support intergenerational conversations between Mosaic's Teens and adults (18-80+).

This study addressed the following questions:

Supporting Intergenerational Conversations through Ethnographic Interviewing

How might ethnographic interviewing techniques support intergenerational conversations about the nature of spiritual encounter at Mosaic church?

Understanding Christian Spirituality

Can reflecting on elder community members' encounter narratives help teens identify how the Holy Spirit works within spiritual encounters to lead Christians toward life, wholeness, and deeper fellowship with God?

Self-Reflection and Agency

Can opportunities for self-reflection be effectively embedded within small group discussions?
Can self-reflection support teens' agency or ability to relate others' encounter narratives to their own experiences?

Vocabulary and Background Knowledge

Can responding to elder community members' encounter narratives scaffold teens' vocabulary and background knowledge about renewalist Christian Spirituality?

Beyond

Beyond building background knowledge, what steps must leaders take to support teens' devotional understanding of spiritual encounter?

Encounter Study Methodology

Study Design

This semi-ethnographic action research involved 3 parts. First, I interviewed 4 Mosaic Church adults about one experience they had with God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. Then, I summarized each adult's encounter narrative into a 1-page case study. I selected 3 of the 4 interviews and arranged them in order of least to most significant degree of mystery.

After collecting interviews, I designed a pre-test and post-test to measure teens' vocabulary and background knowledge. Next, I designed discussion questions to scaffold teen's self-reflection and small group discussion.

Finally, I selected 6 middle and high school students who had differing amounts of experience with spiritual encounter to discuss these encounter narratives. Using the pre-test, case studies (3), and post-test, this group met over 5 weeks in Fall 2023. At the end, teens reflected on what they had received from the project and their remaining questions.

Adult Participants

In selecting adult participants to interview, I relied on criterion sampling.³⁵⁰ Adult participants needed to be 18 years old, have attended Mosaic Church for one year, and have some biblical literacy. Furthermore, they must have experienced some kind of "spiritual encounter" with God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, such as an inspired picture, dream, or word. They

³⁵⁰Creswell and Poth. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018), 116.

needed to be able to describe the context of their encounter, what it taught or confirmed to them about the character of God, and how it contributed to their overall spiritual formation. I intended for the sample to be diverse in gender, age, and ethnicity. Fifty percent of the invitees were male, and 50 percent were female. Approximately 2 of the invitees were Generation Z (born in 1997-2012), 3 invitees were Millennials (born in 1981-1996), 1 invitee was Generation X (born in 1965-1980), and 1 invitee was a Baby Boomer (born in 1946-1964)³⁵¹ (7 total). Of the adult invitees, approximately 3 were Anglo, 2 were Mixed race, 1 was African American, and 1 was Latino/a/x. The final sample contained 3 men and 1 woman; 2 Anglo, 1 Latino/a/x, and 1 Mixed Race individual; and 1 Gen Z, 1 Millennial, 1 Gen X, and 1 Baby Boomer (4 total).

To identify suitable candidates for the study, I shared the criterion with a leader who co-facilitated a “Growing in the Prophetic” course at Mosaic Church. This course aimed to support adults’ interpretation of spiritual encounters and the range of experiences with prophetic ministry. Before facilitating this research, I audited this course over 5 months to understand the specific embodiment of renewalist spirituality at Mosaic Church. This leader recommended approximately 6 adults who might meet the criteria. I also met several individuals who might meet the criteria by participating in Mosaic Church’s outreach ministry.

First, I contacted the adult candidates in person. I described the purpose and perimeters of the study and asked if they would be interested in hearing more information. To those who agreed, I emailed or texted a PDF letter and consent form describing the purpose of the study. A full copy of this document is available in Appendix A. I gave invitees the option to meet in person or over Zoom. Overall, 4 adults completed the interview process. Three of the 4 interviewees met in person at the church building or a coffee shop. As outlined in the release, I

³⁵¹Age ranges sourced from Dimock, “Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins.”

collected audio recordings and anecdotal notes from the interviews, storing them according to the procedures outlined in the letter.

The survey I drafted included several items. I began by gathering background information on participants' age, number of years attending Mosaic, denomination, or Christian affiliations past or present, and city of origin. Due to the breadth of U.S. Christian Spirituality and the diffuse influence of the U.S. Evangelical Movement and U.S. Charismatic Renewal Movement, it was essential to ask about the participants' past denominational or Christian affiliations. Furthermore, I also included a question about individuals' age during the spiritual encounter they recounted. It was essential to include this question to evaluate whether age-at-encounter influenced the terminology or context individuals provided to describe their experience.

The next part of the survey focused on individuals' spiritual experiences or *encounters* and contained open and fill-in-the-blank questions. Since this project draws upon renewalist Christianity's tradition of devotionally framed encounter narratives (testimonies) and seeks to help teens connect to others' experiences, I focused on the centrality of individual experience in items 2-4. A full copy of the survey is available in Appendix B.

Adult Survey Items

1. Describe an encounter (such as a dream, vision, or other experience) you had with at least one member of the Holy Trinity.
 - a. How old were you when you had this experience?
2. What events in your life made the encounter especially meaningful?
 - a. "This encounter was meaningful because _____ [what was happening?]"
 - b. Ex: Healing after divorce
3. What did this experience teach you about the nature of God?
 - a. Ex: God is _____ (detail/attribute)
4. How did experiencing this insight about God's character contribute to your spiritual formation journey?

- Knowing ____ about God helped me _____

Teen Participants

In determining teens to invite to participate in the focus group, I also relied on criterion sampling. Teen participants needed to be between 12-18 years old, consistently attend Mosaic Youth ministry, have parent(s) who have joined Mosaic Church, have some biblical literacy, and have some prior exposure to spiritual encounter, either through close family or their own direct experience(s). They needed to be able to reflect on their firsthand experiences, generate questions, and remain relatively engaged for 30 minutes. Like the adults, I intended for the focus group to be diverse in gender, age, and ethnicity. Fifty percent of invitees were male, and 50 percent were female. Approximately 2 invitees were 12, 3 invitees were 13, 1 invitee was 14, and 2 invitees were 15 (8 total). Ethnically, 3 invitees were Anglo, 2 were Latino, 2 were Asian, and 1 was African American. The final sample contained 3 boys and 3 girls; 1 Anglo, 2 Latino/a/xs, 2 Asians, and 1 African American; one 12-year-old, one 13-year-old, one 14-year-old, and two 15-year-olds (6 total).

I shared the criterion with Mosaic Teen's youth group director to identify suitable candidates and limitations for the study. This leader recommended approximately 8 teens who might meet the definition's requirements. The final sample was split between 50 percent of teens who had personally experienced encounters and 50 percent who had heard at least one encounter narrative from a family or close friend. One limitation he suggested was that I ask siblings to reduce the carpooling burden on families. He also suggested a second limitation, that the group meet on Sundays before or after the whole group teens ministry meeting. Overall, I believed that these limitations would be reasonable for a 5-week series, but was interested in exploring other options if students elected to continue the group.

After identifying potential candidates, I designed a two-part permission slip for teens and contacted families using the same procedure as the adults. So that teens would feel more comfortable with the purpose of the focus group and have a greater sense of agency, I wrote a simplified but detailed teen-facing copy of the permission slip in an age-appropriate Lexile range. I then wrote an adult-facing permission slip, conveying the same information but separate responsibilities for adults. Virginia Theological Seminary's Human Subjects committee submitted and approved this permission slip and research plan. Copies of the two-part permission slip are available in Appendix C.

Data Collection and Storage

After receiving permission from adults and teens, I digitized the permission slips and stored them in a password-protected Google Drive folder. I completed the same procedure for student work samples, interview audio recordings, discussion audio recordings, and anecdotal discussion notes. I will store copies of this work in the same folder until November 2026.

Curriculum

As a former elementary teacher in Washington, D.C., I used Harvard School of Education's Project Zero free curriculum to support student small group discussions. During my role in a bilingual English-Spanish Catholic school with 1st-3rd generation Latino/a/x elementary students, I applied this curriculum to support student discussions in social across academic subjects and spirituality. At that time, the discussion framework supported diverse learners' vocabulary acquisition, deep engagement with course material, and capacity to relate to their peers emotionally. Within this context, I saw how Project Zero's engagement-based approach to pedagogy was equally effective in helping support students' spirituality: their ability

to connect and find meaning in biblical narratives, religious liturgy, or the testimonies of others. Furthermore, I appreciated the versatility of the curriculum, that instructors could adapt questions to students' degree of language mastery (*lexile*), and how different discussion routines (*Thinking Routines*) correspond to various levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.³⁵²

As I began connecting with Mosaic's teens, I wondered how a non-Catholic, non-Latino/a/x, teen ecclesiological context might utilize this curriculum. Based on the needs of Mosaic's Teens, I recognized that Project Zero's Thinking Routines may provide a valuable basis for a teen's discussion guide. To support teens' agency, I selected Thinking Routines that would scaffold teens' analytical skills.³⁵³ As teens lacked prior exposure to Project Zero Thinking Routines, I sourced and organized 70 percent of the questions in the discussion guide according to the introductory *Connect, Extend, Challenge* routine. For the remaining 30 percent of questions, I adapted questions from the *Creative Questions*³⁵⁴ and *Think, Puzzle, Explore*³⁵⁵ routines. The discussion guide contained 10 total questions, distributed under the "Connect," "Extend," and "Challenge" categories. For each case study, the focus group discussed 1-2 questions from each category of the discussion guide. My ultimate step in drafting the case studies and discussion guide was to measure the Lexile of the texts. I used the MetaMetrics³⁵⁶ Lexile analyzer tool to ensure that the 1-page case studies and discussion guide texts were no more challenging than a 5th-grade reading level. I hoped to ensure that teens would spend most of each 30 minutes in discussion rather than decoding the texts.

³⁵²"Project Zero's Thinking Routine Toolbox," Harvard Project Zero, last modified 2022, <https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>.

³⁵³Patricia Armstrong, "Bloom's Taxonomy," Vanderbilt University, last modified June 10, 2010, <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>.

³⁵⁴"Creative Question Starts," Harvard Project Zero, last modified 2022, <https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Creative%20Question%20Starts.pdf>.

³⁵⁵"Think, Puzzle, Explore," Harvard Project Zero, last modified 2022, https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Think%20Puzzle%20Explore_3.pdf.

³⁵⁶"Lexile Text Analyzer," MetaMetrics Inc, Lexile and Quantile Hub, last modified 2024, <https://hub.lexile.com/analyzer>.

Elements of this Discussion Guide could be adapted to different age groups, regional contexts, ministries, and project purposes. Project Zero curriculum supports engagement in children as young as three, using drawing, interviews, and other evidence. Project Zero Thinking Routines are available in Spanish and can support diverse learning needs.

Teen Discussion Guide

Ultimately, the questions in the discussion guide were:

Connect:

1. How is this story connected to what you already know about encountering God?
2. Are there any stories from the bible that this encounter reminds you of?
3. Are there any stories from real life that this encounter reminds you of?

Extend:

1. How did this story extend or push your thinking in new directions?
2. Why do you think God chose to reveal himself in this way?
3. How would you have reacted if this encounter had been your experience?
4. What other aspects of God's character do you think the story demonstrates that the speaker did not name?

Challenge:

1. What is still challenging or confusing for you to understand? What questions, wonderings, or puzzles do you now have?
2. What parts of this story surprised you?
3. What question(s) would you still want to ask the speaker?

A full copy of this discussion guide is available in Appendix D.

Case Studies

After meeting with adult interviewees, I needed to summarize each testimony into a narrative form for teens to read. To ensure that teens feel comfortable interrogating these accounts, I kept the identities of the adult interviewees anonymous.

It was important to me to limit the length of the narratives to a maximum of -page each. I standardized the narratives into a template to promote equity in summaries and help teens identify the most critical details. I structured the narratives using a Beginning, Middle, and End structure, with 1-2 paragraphs for each. I incorporated specific survey items into each section. For example, within paragraph 1 of each case study, I included information about the period of the interviewees' encounters, the problem the speaker was facing, and other conditions that made the encounter relevant to them.

Additionally, I incorporated elements of Problem and Solution structure into the final third of each case study. I wrote Case Studies 1-2 in the style of a “small moment” narrative, with a beginning and end related to the same episode. I wrote the narratives from the first-person perspective and emphasized that these accounts came from adults in the Mosaic Church community. I tried to keep as much of the speakers’ syntax and phrasing as possible for authenticity.

I sequenced the case studies from the least to the most significant degree of mystery. However, while I intended to order the testimonies in order of complexity, they organically fell in order of the speakers’ ages at the time of their encounter. For example, I chose the encounter narrative *God who is a Good Provider* as Case Study One because I felt teens would most immediately relate to the speaker’s anxiety about the future and struggle to trust God. Even more tangibly, foods that Speaker One mentioned in his vision are popular among teens. Speaker One described a recent experience from his mid-20s. Comparatively, Speaker Two’s described a vision from his 30s that helped him, his wife, and his children make a significant move decision. Even though Speaker Two’s encounter was over 30 years old, the speaker described the precise challenges and comfort this encounter brought him as though it was more recent. Lastly, Speaker

Three described several times when she needed God's assurance, and he used a phrase to calm her. Together, these encounter narratives are a composite portrait of how God comforts individuals through the perils of youth and increasing demands of maturity.

Early in the process of synthesizing the interviews, I recognized that the rationalizing tendencies and linear communication in this ministry context would favor an ethnically Anglo, chronological, linear story composition.³⁵⁷ While most interviewees communicated their encounter narratives similarly linearly, Speaker Three's flexible and circular communication style reflected her non-Anglo-Latina background. During our interview, she apologized various times for not following a linear storytelling format, although I did not explicitly ask her to apply one. It frustrated me to realize that unless I synthesized her interview into a linear storytelling format, teens in this ministry context would not be able to receive it. Yet, as a former educator, she was very vocal and excited about the opportunity to contribute to this research.

I recognized that Speaker Three's interview's strength lay in its circular nature, which testified to how God pursued her throughout her entire lifespan. Therefore, I decided to make as much room for circularity as possible. Within the resulting narrative, I followed an "early in life, middle life, and late in life" chronological style, bracketing her encounter narrative over 20+ years. Unlike Case Studies 1-2, I allowed Case Study 3 to model how God comes alongside his people for the lengthy process. While I could not entirely abandon this context's linear approach to time, I hoped to, at minimum, expand teens' expectations of what God's faithfulness could look like. I expected to subtly undermine any assumptions that God must operate in U.S. Anglo's immediate or discrete sense of time. Instead, I hoped teens would see God answer specific prayers at multiple echoing moments throughout our lifespans.

³⁵⁷Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*; Sharifian, *Cultural Linguistics*, 63-83.

My last step was ensuring that the adult interviewees felt their commentary was well-represented. I shared a copy of each summarized encounter narrative with its speaker, and they agreed to share.

If I were working with young adults or the discussion period was over 30 minutes, I would choose not to standardize the narratives. However, during our half-hour meetings, this decision helped teens focus on the most relevant information. As illustrated by Case Study 1, a full copy of this encounter narrative template can be found in Appendix E.

Pre-Test

Since Mosaic Church's spirituality has been influenced by both the U.S. Evangelical Movement and U.S. Charismatic Renewal Movement, the pre-test I designed utilized renewalist terminology such as "encounter," "prophecy," "prophesy," and "prophetic ministry."³⁵⁸ My primary goal with the pre-test was to gauge the focus group's subjective impressions of prophetic ministry. Teens had some prior exposure to prophetic ministry, as sharing inspired words or pictures with others is a predominant expression of renewalist charismata at Mosaic. Nevertheless, it was essential to get their subjective impressions of this practice. After this pre-test, I re-articulated to the teen participants that our focus group would not primarily teach them how to receive, interpret, and communicate prophetic words. Instead, our focus group would lay a more foundation, seeking to understand why God initiates spiritual encounters with people.

My decision to focus this study on encounter rather than prophetic ministry comes from a desire to support teen's agency in journeying toward God³⁵⁹ and protect them from spiritual

³⁵⁸Mark Cartledge, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, 588.

³⁵⁹Andrew Root, *Ministry in a Secular Age*, 141.

abuse. I wanted them to experience spirituality apart from the disproportionate and unhealthy pressure that leaders in some renewalist churches place on young people to practice spiritual gifts. Based on historic abuses of minor's spirituality, I wanted them to understand that God does not need to rush their spiritual development and that their inner life with God belongs to them alone. Furthermore, I wanted them to observe the specific and personal way God spoke to everyone. I hoped that teens would begin desiring to hear from God personally and that renewalist spirituality may begin to support their identity and vocational development. Beyond just reading stories, I hoped teens would be able to glimpse God's kindness through how these encounters supported community members' inner healing and character development.³⁶⁰ I hoped teens would perceive learning to discern God's voice as an integrated, life-long pursuit.

The healthiest progression for young people to learn about spiritual gifts is through a significant amount of modeling and gradual release. One introductory approach to modeling a skill within pedagogy is the "I Do - We Do - You do" method.³⁶¹ This project is like the "I Do" stage, where students observe a teacher model a skill. However, I included diverse encounter narratives rather than just one instructor so teens would be more likely to see God as the teacher and see themselves as his students. An opportunity to extend this project could include a "We Do" stage, where leaders coach teens to receive and interpret inspired words, pictures, and dreams to understand what God is saying to them personally. Finally, as teens increasingly build confidence and integrate hearing from God into their everyday rhythms, leaders could support teens at the "You Do" stage to share and communicate prophetic words with others. For the sake of this focus group, I hoped to invite teens to explore and set their own pace simply. A complete copy of the Pre-Test can be available in Appendix F.

³⁶⁰John 16:13, Eph. 4:13,

³⁶¹Children's Literacy Initiative, "Reading Workshop," *Learn: Classroom Environment and Culture*, 2016; Mark K. Reha, "How to Use 'I Do - We Do - You Do' in Teaching," Grand Canyon University, August 19, 2019.

Instructions: Fill in the blank with 1-2 descriptive words. Explain why you chose them.

1. Prophetic ministry (prophecy) is _____
2. What do you think you already know about prophetic ministry? Think about categories like who, what, when, where, and why people prophesy.
3. What do you wonder about prophetic ministry? What questions or puzzles do you have about this topic?
4. Does prophetic ministry relate to the character of God or the bible? If so, how?

During Case Studies

During the first discussion, I introduced teens to routines we would continue throughout the series. Before the sessions, teens had 10-15 minutes of free chat while their peers gradually arrived. During this time, some teens helped set up chairs in a circle. By 4:30 pm, most teens would have grabbed mechanical pencils and copies of the day's case study and the discussion guide. Around 4:30 pm, we would start sessions with a 2-minute check-in question about their weeks. From there, I would lead us in prayer for about 1 minute. Teens would then have about 8 minutes to read the case study, take notes in the margin, and begin answering 2-3 questions. Early on, teens preferred soft music over silence while working. Therefore, I chose an 8-minute timer with soft music and gave teens a 1-minute heads-up when the time was over. As we came back together, I asked them what aspects of each case study most struck them. Then, we moved into about 20 minutes of discussion, leaving some room to unpack their questions more deeply. By approximately 5:00 pm, we closed the discussion, collected materials, saved the discussion audio file, and restored the previous configuration of the space. During these meetings, I invited the second adult to complete the exercises and chime in if students directly addressed them.

Post-Test

By the time the discussion series ended, I wanted to analyze whether teens had understood the differences between “encounter” and prophetic ministry. I also wanted to know

how the patterns they noticed within these encounter narratives compared to less healthy experiences of the supernatural that they may have heard about from relatives or through popular media. Due to this research's particularist Christian lens and reliance on biblical narratives, I wanted to understand what spiritual phenomena teens attributed to the character of God and what they might consider to be demonic or unhealthy. Lastly, I included 2 questions on the posttest to focus on the whole group discussion because I wanted to see whether they would build on one another's commentary. A complete copy of the post-test can be available in Appendix G.

Individual Only:

1. What is the difference between an encounter and a prophetic word? What is the same?
2. In your opinion, what are some reasons people prophesy?
3. Why do you think God may initiate encounters with people?
4. Think about what people saw, heard, and felt in the encounters you read in this group. How do you think the people knew that they were from God?
5. Can you think of any spiritual encounter that would not be from God? What might a person see, hear, or feel that would be different?

For Whole Group Discussion

6. What do you think you learned from this group?
7. What is something that you are still wondering about?

Findings: Themes from Adult Interviews and Teen Responses

Pre-Test

At the beginning of this study, teens' understanding of prophetic ministry demonstrated ambivalence. The range of teens' definitions of "prophetic ministry" reflects the uncertainty and mystery of knowing God. While one student defined prophetic ministry functionally as "spiritual communication," the majority described it as "mysterious," "predictive," "interesting," "odd," "powerful," "deep," and "spiritual." They recognized that in the bible, God used various people

and Jesus to “convey messages” and that these messages impacted others’ lives. They recognized that “like the bible,” “prophetic ministry usually needs to be decoded.” Multiple teens believed that learning to hear from God corresponds to “prayer and worship.” They indicated prophetic ministry “can come in the form of dreams, prayer, or other stuff.” They knew about prophetic ministry from “conferences, evangelists, Benny Hinn” and the bible.

They asked questions like:

- “How can you know when a message is just for you or others?”
- “What do you do if you get a life-threatening prophecy?”
- “What do I do if I receive a prophetic word?”
- “Besides checking the bible, are there other ways to discern what God is saying?”
- “What if you want something or believe something so badly that you misinterpret what God is trying to say to you, and as a result, someone else’s life is impacted?”

Overall, teens’ responses to this pre-test demonstrate a sense of ambivalence about prophetic ministry. While teens could think of specific ministers or uses of prophetic ministry, they were not sure how to hear God’s voice for themselves. By describing prophetic ministry with words like “odd” or “mysterious,” they indicated that it felt inaccessible or distant from their own lives. Within these descriptions of prophetic ministry, the focus was more on prophetic leaders and the mechanics of receiving prophecy rather than communing directly with God.

For 3 weeks after the pre-test, students met once weekly to read and respond to an encounter narrative. The following section includes the text of the case studies and trends in teens’ reactions. Speaker One was a man in his 20s who had encountered God as part of his inner healing process.

Case Study 1: God Who is a Safe Provider

I had this experience a few months ago, in August 2023. I was in a season of processing, thinking about the different things I tell myself about my future and who I am as a person. I had believed that I was not worthy of good things. I needed to get used to carrying my own and the pain of others. Because of that, I struggled to receive the truth about God's goodness and fully take it in. During this season, I was going back to examine my beliefs about whether God is good and what he wants for me. I needed to see how it lined up with the truth of scripture. I wanted to not just discover a better way to think about myself but to understand how deeply I believed these lies and why it was hard to let go of them.

I was on the phone with a friend from the East Coast, processing a sense of heaviness about these things. Towards the end of that conversation, we started praying. In my mind's eye, I got this picture when we prayed.

In the vision, I saw myself sitting on the ground, cross-legged. And there was a bunch of gray smoke around me. From the perspective of sitting down, I could not see through it or past it. But I continued to pray. As I kept praying, I saw Jesus walk through the smoke, carrying a platter of fruit and another various snacks. I saw burgers and some of my favorite foods like mangoes and sushi. And I saw that he was laying out the food before me like a banquet. He came and sat down in front of me, holding the tray. And I remember that I was afraid to take anything from the tray in the vision. But it all looked so good, so refreshing, so nourishing. I started to eat. Everything was bursting with flavor and color; everything was so vibrant and nourishing. It was the best-tasting mango you have ever had, times ten, and the best chicken nuggets you have ever had. As I ate the food in the vision, I started to feel a recognition of what goodness feels like in my physical body. It reminded me of Psalm 34:8, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." And I felt the Lord saying, "Keep eating. Keep going."

On the phone, I told my friend about the picture. She said, "It sounds like you needed to be restored spiritually. That you have been running on fumes."

After we got off the phone, I could identify that what she said was true. In this vision, God showed me that the barriers I have, God can walk right through them. It taught me that the Lord really does have goodness in store for me, goodness that is in abundance. And he is not scared of running out! I can take as much as I want and eat as much as possible. He will not run out. I can go to God with my needs. I do not have to figure out everything on my own.

Since this experience, things have gotten a little easier. I am still working on the assumption that I have to look out for myself, and I'm still working that out in every aspect of my life. I am still trying to surrender it to the Lord.

Teens' Reactions to Case Study 1

Teens connected with Speaker One's experience mostly through their own trials with uncertainty. They quickly affirmed that God intervenes to help people when they are struggling and uses "things familiar to us." One teen said, "God will restore people's faith in him." Another teen acknowledged that she had experienced God "walking through" her "barriers." But she described how "God's presence itself is so refreshing and nourishing, you wouldn't want to leave" it. Another described how she knew God sometimes used visions to talk to people. She also acknowledged that, like Speaker One's decision to check in with his friend, trusted people could help "validate whether it was God speaking." One student needed the group to explain the meaning of the phrase "running on fumes."

One teen demonstrated great insight in questioning the nature of barriers and boundaries in developing spiritual maturity. She reported,

"There are barriers in my life, both good and bad. I recognize that some barriers will stay in place until I mature spiritually. How will I know when to not bypass those barriers?"

Her question acknowledged young people's need for healthy boundaries and God's faithfulness in the maturity process. Her sincerity in the face of mystery matched Speaker One's hopeful tone.

Case Study 2: God who Gives us Choices

I had this encounter half a lifetime ago when I was about 30. My wife and I had 3 children under 10 years old. We were part of a church in the Foursquare Church Movement and were learning to "grow up": how to talk with God in a more mature way and take responsibility to partner with him in making decisions. We attended the church for about 9 years, and around the end of that season, God revealed that he wanted us to be part of something he was going to do in the UK. It is one thing to get a vision in your heart and head, another thing to get in the prayer closet, to prepare to go, and let God form you. Before this experience, I was far less confident in my ability to hear God and was afraid of hearing him wrong. I was disappointed and angry at God that discerning our calling to the UK had already taken 3 years. I was

afraid of disappointing our elders, my wife, and our friends, who were also trying to discern if they were called to the UK. My family doubted whether we were really called. They thought we were crazy to want to uproot our lives and our family and sell everything to follow a dream. I was struggling...praying, seeking God, trying to understand what practical steps were necessary...and we started to really need clarity. I went away for a weekend to seek God and had this experience.

When I was in prayer, I saw a picture in my mind's eye of an intersection that was visually the same as an intersection near our home. Like the shape of a compass, this intersection was formed by the termination of 4 different roads. Each road was named something different, moving out from a central point. In the vision, I found myself standing in the center of the road, with the need to turn in one direction and start walking. I sensed that God was telling me, "This is the place I've put you in so that you can make a choice about what to do." There were 4 different options. One street symbolized not stepping into the dream at all but staying comfortably where we were. Another street option was to take another job opportunity in a new area, moving in an entirely different direction to our dream. Another option was to just get on a plane and go right now. The last option was to go to the UK, by passing through Texas for several years first. I sensed God was telling me, "You will not be wrong by choosing one of these options that you may perceive to be more or less on target with me. In any of the 4 directions you choose, you can walk in my will."

Reflecting on this picture, I realized that God gives us choices about how we will follow him. This picture communicated to me that I did not always need to search for "the perfect answer," the "right solution," or the "one and only way" to walk out his call on my life. I could still please, serve, and obey him by not doing what seemed obvious. He did not want to prescribe, enforce, or solely direct me. What he wanted was for me to pursue him and his pleasure, to want the things that he wanted. He wanted me to step into the authority he had given me to exercise self-leadership and make choices. We always have a choice. We even have the choice to sin against him, disobey him, or go off in a direction he didn't want for us. Scripture talks about us not just being servants but friends. We are co-laborers, inheritors of the grace of life. We are not just servants and children but also friends and partners. This experience made me take greater responsibility for walking with him.

We ended up choosing to move to Texas. God sent confirmation there that we were still on the right path, and we saw his hand of provision and guidance. Eventually, we did arrive in England. There was a great deal of elation and joy! God showed up in a tangible way, beyond what we were expecting. We saw how the things that God did in preparing us were necessary to receive everything new in the UK.

Teens' Reactions to Case Study 2

Teens related Speaker Two's narrative to the bible, their families, and their own experiences of frustration. One teen mentioned that, like the speaker, his parents had gone through a similar discernment process about whether to move. Another teen highlighted that Speaker Two's crossroads resembled Abraham and Sarah's decision to leave their country. A

third teen mentioned how God had encountered Speaker Two in frustration, like Jonah (and herself). One student connected the concept of “free will” to this narrative but did not elaborate. One teen acknowledged that God’s goodness was reflected in each choice. She described that while God gives us options, he leads us toward wisdom because “God still wants what is best for you.”

Teens acknowledged that while no choice is without risk, God can redeem our choices. In the words of one teen:

“He is always there to guide us. I used to think that me choosing the path he did not choose would lead to a bad situation. And it would be stressful. God’s choice is the best choice. But he will make other paths useful and successful.”

This narrative incited many questions. One teen asked, “What do you do if you still don’t know what to choose?” Another asked, with lingering anxiety, “Is there a wrong choice?” One student’s reflections seemed to respond to this peer. He wrote, “As long as my goal is to please God, there is no objectively wrong choice.” He added that “some choices are just more right than others,” acknowledging that choices come with greater or lesser degrees of wisdom. Another teen said confidently that God knows her heart and can tell if her choices come from the right place. She remained convinced that God would bless choices made from the proper heart posture. The teens wanted to know what happened to Speaker Two and his family in the UK!

Case Study 3: God as the One Who Remains Faithful

I had this experience more than once, where God used the same imagery to speak to me several times throughout my life. Before this experience, I was raised in El Paso, Texas, a twin city with Juarez, Mexico. I moved to Minnesota to study teaching and met my husband there. We were living in St. Paul, Minnesota, with our 4 teenage children when we felt called as a family to buy a new home to use as a 24-hour praise and worship site. The house had many floors, spiral staircases, a turret, a balcony, murals, and was on the bank of a major river. The space transformation process required us to wait and live with family members, partner with local ministries to coordinate renovations and allow God to change us as a family. It had been an exhausting, multiyear process, and I needed confirmation before we opened that the

space and our family would be ready for ministry. I also needed confirmation that God sees me and knows me because I had not had many experiences of feeling close to him before. I told him, “Please tell me something that I do not know so I can see that you are speaking to me. Please reveal your presence.”

My husband and I were invited by leaders at the International House of Prayer (IHOP) in Kansas City, Missouri, to experience their worship rooms and receive ministry. I had wanted to travel further from St. Paul for many years but had not had an opportunity or felt a sense of freedom until then. IHOP removed any financial barriers for us to visit, generously paying for our plane tickets and stay. In IHOP, there are various prayer rooms designed beautifully by artists. As I was inside one of the rooms, I had a powerful sense of the presence of God in the room, something that felt like holiness or something clean. At that moment, I had an internal impression of God saying to me, “You were born in a twin city [El Paso]. I have brought you to a twin city to be born again.” I started weeping because I realized that, like Psalm 139:16, God does know me. For the first time, I had a sense of being fully seen and known. It felt like the story of Jesus talking to the woman at the well [John 4:5-30], or Philip talking to the Ethiopian eunuch [Acts 8:27-40]. I had a deep sense of being fully seen and known at that moment. God had always felt distant, and there had been times when I wondered if he knew me. I walked away with a stronger sense of who I was in Christ, which I needed for the challenges I faced in my marriage in the following season.

Several years later, God started reminding me of my dreams of traveling when I was younger. He began to refresh my hope, which had been damaged after my husband initiated our divorce. Despite my former community's skepticism, I remembered my dream as a girl to go to China. I arrived in Shanghai to continue my teaching career in a new context. When I met with the school's director, he told me I would work with kindergarteners near the Puxi campus. When he saw the surprised look on my face, he clarified. He said two campuses were divided by a river in the sister cities of Shanghai suburbs of Pu Xi and Pudong. When the director said, “sister cities,” I felt God reassuring me that I had found the right place. Teaching Kindergarten in China was a very stretching experience; it took me far outside my comfort zone. In that season, the same imagery helped me remember that God is faithful and has always been faithful. I learned deep breathing techniques to help me with my anxiety and to pass through times of pressure well. Since those years, I retired and moved to Seattle to help care for my grandchildren and daughter's family. I am still learning to hear God's voice but am grateful for how he taught me to trust him.

Teens' Reactions to Case Study 3

In general, teens struggled to connect with Speaker Three. Compared to teens' current ages, the length of this encounter narrative may have made it less relatable. Nevertheless, multiple teens noticed that God communicated to Speaker Three not in a vision or dream but in a 1–2-word pattern. One teen acknowledged that, like her previous experiences, “God can use 1-2

words to reveal good messages to you.” Another teen acknowledged that God's communication in this encounter narrative may relate to Speaker Three’s personality.

Despite not yet being ready to connect with how Speaker Three encountered God, one teen described being impressed by the speaker’s willingness to go to China. Acknowledging that Speaker Three eventually fulfilled her dream, he remarked that God had “great timing.” This case study extended one teen’s understanding of God’s symbolism, as he can “use the same thing twice.”

Post-Test

By the end of the Encounter Study, the Focus group had insightful reflections on the nature of prophetic ministry and encounter. When asked, “Why do you think God initiates encounters with people?” one teen highlighted, “He wants to talk to people. He wants people to abide in him. To trust, talk to him, and rest in his presence.” Another teen described how God uses encounters to help people navigate changes in “how they do things, maybe even convert them to him.” A third teen mentioned that God uses encounters to reach out to people “who are in a bad place, to give them hope, to strengthen them, to quench their spiritual thirst and hunger.” One teen acknowledged that individuals in these case studies “told others who confirmed” that their experience(s) were likely from God. This same teen acknowledged that the speakers discerned that the encounters were from God because they “felt different than what [the individuals] had experienced before.” Finally, one teen acknowledged that encountering God can be a simple, continuous part of the Christian life. She admitted that her experience(s) of encounter felt like “God’s presence washing all over you” and that during an encounter, “he doesn’t have to give you a word.”

Teens described prophetic ministry more specifically than encounter. While one teen indicated that “both were from God,” she explained how prophetic ministry “helps people make decisions” and “helps people just hear God’s voice.” Most teens indicated that people prophesy in connection to the needs of others. Teens acknowledged that individuals prophecy “to give people hope that God’s plan is good for them,” “out of clarity,” because “other people need to hear what God is saying,” and “to alter a misshapen belief about God’s will.”

Without explicitly examining encounters that may have been unhealthy, Teens compared what they felt would characterize encounters from God and spiritual encounters that were not from God. One teen used the example of the case studies to indicate that they “did not contradict the bible.” One teen indicated that encounters might happen in a time of personal prayer. Collectively, they noted that encounters with God might feel “supernaturally calming,” “like God knows you,” “overjoyed,” and “not scary or stressful.” In comparison, they indicated that spiritual encounters that were not from God could leave individuals feeling “numb,” “panicky,” “out of control,” “overall horrible,” or in “despair.”

The teens’ remaining questions reflected a desire for holiness and safety. They asked:

- “Is it ever possible that an individual, no matter how committed to Christ, would contort, and confirm certain words from God? So, it would run parallel to the bible and not be God’s message?”
- “Have any people you know experienced encounters that are not from God?”

In recorded discussions, teens named how different moments from these encounter narratives paralleled stories of Job, Abraham, and Moses. They often connected their frustration, isolation, or exhaustion to the encounter narratives. However, they were more able to connect

biblical narratives to the case studies than their own experiences. By the end of the study, teens used about twice as many words to describe their connections as they did at the beginning.

Therefore, it is likely that these connections would deepen with increased exposure.

Teens' takeaways from this Encounter Study may indirectly humble and encourage an adult audience. One said, "God communicates to his children more often than you would think; you just have to make time." Another responded, "God lets us choose."

Findings: Revisiting the Research Questions

To understand the efficacy of this project, it is worth returning to the original research questions. I have woven suggestions about how leaders might extend teens' understanding of spirituality by question.

Supporting Intergenerational Conversations through Ethnographic Interviewing

Based on elders' encounter narratives, most teens were able to connect the narratives to some previous understanding of the character of God. Most teens were unlikely to challenge elders' narratives explicitly, even when they remained anonymous. Instead, teens used the discussions as a canvas to discuss their insecurities and fears about hearing God, especially the fear of mishearing him. Future interviews could help address this fear. For example, leaders might ask community members: "Is there any time you misheard God and made the wrong decision? What happened?" or "Talk about a time you had an encounter that wasn't from God and how God helped you navigate it." Overall, using ethnographic interviews can effectively support teens' understanding of the nature of spiritual encounter in this context.

Future opportunities must allow teens to select the questions they want adults to answer. Intergenerational conversations about the nature of Christian spirituality might be possible, but only once adults have established that they are listening. These discussions could range in topic

from the nature of mission and vocation to, more immediately, how the community sees God working in Seattle. To participate in intergenerational dialogue, teens must have support discerning and describing their own experiences of God, with extended modeling opportunities.

Understanding Christian Spirituality

Based on teens' qualitative descriptions of encounter, this study's methods supported teen's understanding of how the Holy Spirit guides Christians towards life, wholeness, and deeper relationships with God.

These case studies encapsulated pivotal decision-making moments and lent evidence to God's continuous, faithful character. However, they weren't able to demonstrate how individuals practice hearing God's voice in the woven context of everyday life: in decisions about how to reach out to a friend, when to rest, how to shift an unhealthy pattern at home or school, or even seemingly-small choices about what clothes to wear. Realistically, adults must give equal attention to hearing God's voice in everyday circumstances for renewalist spirituality to become accessible to other Christian traditions or accurately testify to God's immanence.

Self-Reflection and Agency

Incorporating opportunities for self-reflection in small group discussions may support teen's deep engagement in discussions. Having wait time effectively assisted less vocal teens in sharing more equitably in small group discussions. Nevertheless, incorporating self-reflection only within discussions is insufficient to support teen's spirituality. To relate others' encounters to their own experiences, adults may encourage and coach teens to develop self-reflection methods like journaling as a spiritual discipline. Parents, community members, and church leaders may support teens in designing rhythms of life that support their interests and give them

room to hear God. Teens will draw connections organically in a ministry context where encounter narratives are frequently told.

Vocabulary and Background Knowledge

Teens' use of renewalist vocabulary grew throughout the encounter study. Teens' vocabulary growth was the most tangibly increased among all the research questions. This growth was especially evident when it became time for teens to compare the difference between encounter and prophetic ministry. Teens' vocabulary growth demonstrates the efficacy of using encounter narratives to grow teens' vocabulary about renewalist spirituality.

Limitations and Reflection

Ultimately, several factors limited this project's efficacy or its similarity to Latino/a/x Pentecostal approaches to testimony. More significantly than any other factor was the influence of hurry on Mosaic's Youth Ministry. While this project sought to scaffold teens' participation in deeply engaged spirituality and rhythms of self-reflection, the influence of hurry within this ministry context created confusion. Regardless of individual intentions or ideals, hurry may continue to disrupt Mosaic Church's deep engagement with God and others unless leaders decide to steward a more intentional pace. The limitations of this project demonstrate that intention alone will not be sufficient to eliminate the Industrial Era's influence of hurry in U.S. ministry contexts.

When I started this study, I hoped that proactive and regular communication would insulate it from the influence of hurry. As I shared the vision for this project with Mosaic's Youth Ministry director, I received a great deal of solidarity and openness. However, his support did not

usually translate into stewardship of what I shared about the project's organization or clear communication with the Youth Ministry team. Instead, aspects of this project were miscommunicated or unclear, causing confusion. Sometimes, these disruptions could not be helped. For example, during Case Study 2, another adult needed to replace the Youth Group Director as the second adult in the room. This change was timely, as leaders needed the Youth Group director to monitor a domestic violence situation unfolding directly outside the building doors. And yet, most miscommunication was preventable. For example, 3 separate adults served as "second adults in the room" without any context for the study's purpose. Although I had offered to enlist the Adult Youth Leaders' team proactively, the Youth Director asked these volunteers spontaneously to supervise a 30-minute discussion session without context. The experience of hosting 3 separate, confused adults was disorienting for the teens, myself, and adult leaders. In another instance, the Youth Ministry director's genuine expectation for this research led him to misinform parents about the purpose of the study. Although I explained the purpose of the study explicitly, both verbally and within written communication to families, at least one family assumed that the research was introductory training for teens in prophetic ministry rather than laying a foundation for teens to understand encounter. Trying to give and receive clear communication under this banner of hurry felt contradictory to the purpose of this research, which sought to lay a foundation for integrated, grounded renewalism spirituality. I wonder how the experience would have improved if the Youth Ministry Director and Youth Ministry team had slowed down, enlisted others with clear communication, and considered how teens' interests might guide further opportunities.

Within this ministry context, the constraints on time and structure did not allow this research to adequately reflect Latino/a/x approaches to facilitation or community. If this research

had imitated Latino/a/x approaches to facilitation, it may have invited teens to a dinner in someone's home, included a meal, offered candid, intergenerational conversation encountering God, and invited teens into a greater degree of participation. While this research did seem to affirm Mosaic's teen's interest in resources for renewalist spirituality, Mosaic Youth Ministry would need to prioritize forming deep partnerships with Latino/a/x Seattlites volunteers or leaders to experience Latino/a/x approaches to community. This would be a significant, ongoing change of direction for the church.

Beyond battling the influence of hurry, the structure of this research limited the amount of contact between teens and adult interviewees. After this series, I would have loved for teens to meet the community members who shared their encounters. Teens could have asked them their residual questions, and the adults may have had an opportunity to glimpse what parts of their encounter narratives challenged the teens. In keeping with the warmth and low-context sense of extended family within some Latino/a/x practices of familismo, I wonder how leaders in this ministry context might incorporate organic and informal intergenerational dialogue. As Howard Andreujol noted, apart from volunteering within Youth Ministry contexts or formally arranging mentorships, how might North American leaders create room for organic intergenerational learning?

As a leader, I was enormously encouraged by the sincerity of the teens' questions. Based on my prior experiences in renewalist contexts, the fear reflected in their pre-test questions did not surprise me. However, after exploring the Encounter narratives, I am relieved that teens reported greater affective trust in God. They also demonstrated an increased capacity to discern actions in keeping with his character. By the end of the study, their written reflections and body language during discussions reflected less fear of uncertainty. Regardless, I still feel that the

Mosaic Church community would benefit from more support to develop spiritually integrated, healthy lifestyles.

As a renewalism, directing this research was refreshing. I could relate to every adult speaker's experience and most teens' questions. Still, Speaker Two's narrative was the most personally impactful. It helped limit my anxiety and perfectionism regarding my present and future choices in ministry. Completing this project from start to finish deepened my trust in God's capacity to help me make wise choices.

Furthermore, this project extended my capacity to work with teens effectively. Most importantly, I am grateful to close this research with greater clarity and conviction about best practices to support youth spirituality. In the future, I hope to adjust, apply, and extend the methods of this research within other ministry contexts. As I do, I hope that receiving from the community cultural wealth of each context will enrich my experience of God's character.

Chapter 5 - Extending and Challenging U.S. Christian Spirituality

Throughout the composition of this thesis, I wove various threads and opportunities for future research. I hope that in the course of reading it, you may have encountered a schema that mirrors your ministry context, offers windows into certain spiritual practices, and presents doors to new possibilities for supporting young people's spirituality.³⁶² At this time of incredible national change, ministry leaders in the United States and other nations must consider, "What kind of spirituality do we want our children to inherit?" Rather than reducing the dissonance raised by these questions, this chapter will consolidate opportunities to inform U.S. ministry

³⁶²Bishop, "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors."

contexts. I hope this synopsis may give practical suggestions for leaders thirsty for richer spirituality and ready to embrace new directions.

Returning to Chapter 1: Pursuing New Community Identities and Spiritual Practices

One of my implicit goals in crafting this project was to discern more effective ways for Mosaic Church to relate to Seattle's spirituality. In Chapter 1, I applied a practical theological lens to this research by carefully analyzing Mosaic Church's regional context.

Before conducting this research, I noticed several patterns in most Christian Seattleites' community engagement. The most common trend was towards cultural assimilation without a clear sense of Christian identity. Furthermore, Seattle's regional tendency towards disaffiliation influenced many nominal Christians to disaffiliate from the Church. Few church members had a strong Christian identity. The majority had yet to discern how their design might intersect with the needs of this region or world. Many who had discerned their callings and regularly attended church struggled to find other Christians with a similar, shared mission.

Within these regional trends, Mosaic Church members seemed to lean towards isolationism. Many individuals at Mosaic Church have a clear sense of Christian identity and some sense of mission and vision. However, they sometimes struggle to relate to historically disaffiliated, culturally pluralist Seattleites. Like the Hebrews' struggle to connect with Hellenists in Acts 6, the subcultures these Christians build may sometimes prevent them from discerning how God might operate outside their church context, acting as barriers rather than fences. Instead of allowing Mosaic Church the safety and flexibility to engage with Seattle as a missional community, these structures may sometimes promote comfort and social separation rather than deep engagement with other Christian or non-Christian groups. I hoped that explicitly analyzing the spirituality of Mosaic Church in Chapter 1 would help individuals at Mosaic

participate more fluently in God's story in and outside of their church context. Moreover, I hoped to identify some elements of Mosaic Church's spirituality that could help individuals understand their community's specific role and assignment to our region.

These insights regarding spirituality in Seattle and Mosaic Church reflect that individual communities have distinct identities. Resisting the tendency to disaffiliate, communities with distinct values must understand their region's culture and develop effective avenues of engagement. Ultimately, sub-cultural communities carry shared histories that can influence and enrich their communication, structures of family, imagination, resilience, and sense of counter-cultural identity.³⁶³ Through a shared community spirituality, Mosaic Church members may embody their missional identity within and outside their community contexts, leaving them more available to respond to their region's needs. If leaders hope to see regional transformation through Jesus' health and wholeness, they must enlist their communities to reflect on their community cultural wealth and cast a new vision to serve their regions.³⁶⁴

At this time of tremendous social change, developing shared community spirituality and community identities is neither automatic nor for the faint of heart. As individual community members live together daily *en convivencia*, they must contradict the temptation to selfishly remain "aloof, unspoiled, and uninvested"³⁶⁵ from one another and their regions. By stewarding this responsibility in integrity and wholeness, mature Christians must abide in relationship with each other long enough for the Holy Spirit to sow authentic oneness, commonality of direction, and shared life. If well-tended, the wholeness in these relationships may grow into new community identities that will be healthy enough to displace false, outdated, or unhealthy approaches to ministry. Wherever two or more individuals abide under this banner of healthy

³⁶³Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?," 69–91.

³⁶⁴Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 25-27.

³⁶⁵Espín, *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, 183.

relationships in Jesus,³⁶⁶ the Holy Spirit can begin to sow community restoration and re-identification.

At the individual and community level, Christian leaders must have a clear sense of their own identity³⁶⁷ and their limits to collaborate effectively with others. In the same way, the limitations of this project related to unclear communication on roles, expectations, and responsibilities. Thankfully, these issues may be resolved if Mosaic's leaders invest in restful lifestyle rhythms and healthy communication practices. When individuals dare to authentically embody their strengths and tell the truth about their limits, relationships are healthy enough to sustain growth during times of uncertainty and change.

When ministry communities authentically steward their shared history, they can engage more faithfully with how the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus to their regions. Groups with a cohesive community identity may be better able to honor other groups' distinct spiritualities and create healthy, lasting regional change. This foundation of shared community spirituality may allow churches to fully respect the community cultural wealth of diverse groups as they serve them.

Rather than focusing on global uncertainties, Christian communities in the United States must be willing to sow regional restoration at the grassroots level. While the need to develop renewed national identities is not exclusive to the United States, U.S. Christian leaders can do their part by enlisting their communities in this restoration work. Practical theologians may support Christian communities in designing spiritual practices and developing ministry opportunities that align with their values.

³⁶⁶Matt. 18:20.

³⁶⁷Fisher, *The Thoughtful Leader*, 147.

Returning to Chapter 2: Latino/a/x Spiritualities of Community at Mosaic Church

Boundaries between Appropriation, Appreciation, and Preparation

Before this research, I wondered whether reflecting on Latino/a/x spiritualities of *familismo* and *mestizaje* would be culturally relevant to Mosaic Church's teens. I asked whether Latino/a/x Pentecostal patterns of responding collectively to individual narrative testimony would support teens in overcoming regional patterns of isolated individual spirituality. Examining these perspectives without appropriation felt daunting. I wondered, Is it possible to receive from the schema of another culture without appropriation, misidentification, or inauthenticity? Is it worth reflecting on Latino/a/x spiritualities to influence Mosaic's ministry practices in an overwhelmingly Anglo ministry context? Would teens have authentic opportunities to extend this project's schema within Seattle's predominantly Anglo regional context? Would participating in a narrative heuristic of testimony make teens more likely to earnestly engage others' differences, engage deeply with God, or gradually understand their own spirituality?

Approximately one year after this project was conducted, I was pleasantly surprised by changes within the Mosaic community that elevated Latino/a/x leaders and their spiritualities. These changes demonstrate that even within predominantly Anglo contexts, receiving from Latino/a/x spiritualities may support teens to navigate an increasingly Latinized, ecumenical, and renewalist U.S. landscape.

Over the last two years, I have had the pleasure of getting to know a handful of *evangélico* Latino/a/x individuals, couples, and families at Mosaic Church. These leaders have served on the church's outreach team, worship team, and hospitality ministry. Starting in the Fall of 2024, their service provided a pathway to incorporate occasional Spanish worship songs

during Sunday services. In the Fall of 2024, Latino/a/x leaders Vianca and Miguel Severino also launched a majority Caribbean Latino/a/x “Jesús (pero con acento)” small group at Mosaic Church. Compared to the Fall 2023, when I led this act of ministry project, Latino/a/x leaders now appear to more openly use Spanish in their Sunday morning conversations. I wonder how honoring these leaders’ contributions may be part of a long-term process of fulfilling Mosaic Church’s mission to be “followers of Jesus from drastically different backgrounds, with unique, Spirit-empowered gifts, [who] come together to form a mature, healthy expression of the family of God”³⁶⁸ within Seattle. Rather than expecting Mosaic’s Latino/a/x members be spokespeople for all Latino/a/x Seattlites, I wonder how resources from groups like Arrabon³⁶⁹ may catalyze Mosaic to develop deeper partnerships with non-Anglo spiritualities within and outside of Mosaic Church.

Outside of Mosaic Church, Latino/a/x spiritualities of *mestizaje* and *familismo* offer opportunities to inform U.S. Christian youth ministry. At its best, ecumenical, and intercultural conversations about praxis demonstrate “that God sent Jesus to make all things new.”³⁷⁰ Christian leaders who appreciate *mestizaje* will respect individuals’ and communities’ distinct identities, seeking to relate to rather than control. A mindset influenced by Latino/a/x understandings of *mestizaje* may promote an incarnational, egalitarian, and relationally just approach to youth ministry. Leaders who pursue *mestizaje* will resist oversimplifying multidimensional social issues, steward space for interpersonal differences, and create authentic organizational cultures so communities can work *en conjunto* to solve social problems.³⁷¹ The Holy Spirit is inviting U.S. youth ministries to embark on an intergenerational ministry of “place-sharing” by earnestly

³⁶⁸Mosaic Community Church, “About Mosaic Seattle.”

³⁶⁹“*Foundation of a Reconciling Community*,” Arrabon, 2022, <https://arrabon.com/foundation-of-a-reconciling-community/>.

³⁷⁰Carl Nelson, “*Crossing Relational Boundaries for Church Unity*,” National Association of Evangelicals, last modified February 23, 2024, <https://www.nae.org/crossing-relational-boundaries-for-church-unity/>.

³⁷¹Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 70-71.

attempting to bear the burdens of children, teens, and young adults.³⁷² Reflecting on Latino/a/x leaders' understanding of *mestizaje* and *familismo* may support U.S. teens in Gen Z and Alpha to engage more deeply with God and one another in an increasingly Latinized, ecumenical, and renewalist U.S. ministry context.

Supporting Latino/a/x and Mixed Ethnicity Communities on their terms

In completing this Encounter Study, I am aware of its limited scope. As someone who has spent various years learning alongside and supporting predominantly Latino/a/x communities, I hope that elements of this project may eventually benefit Latino/a/xs. At the same time, my methodological assumptions for this project (such as predominantly linear storytelling) may be less applicable to non-Anglo ministries. As I finalize this project, I hope that God will eventually orchestrate opportunities to change this project's methodology to serve mixed ethnicity or predominantly Latino/a/x communities.

Returning to Chapter 3: Scaffolding Teen's Agency in the Spiritual Journey

In developing Chapter 3's framework for supporting teens' spirituality, I hoped to begin to respond to the many renewalist Christian school leaders, youth ministers, and parents that I've spoken with over the last 4 years who do not feel that they have sufficient or age-appropriate resources to help their children understand spirituality. Due to the increasing influence of the U.S. Charismatic Renewal Movement, I hoped my survey of U.S. spirituality would help put diverse denominations and groups in conversation. As a protestant renewalist Christian who has observed and participated in protestant evangelical, Pentecostal, mainline protestant, and Roman Catholic ministry contexts, I argued that many of these groups have similar schema and goals for

³⁷²Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 124-197.

supporting young people's spirituality. Despite practical differences, many protestant ministries support a framework of spiritual accompaniment. The practice of spiritual direction within Catholic spirituality may also rely upon this schema.

Despite holding similar goals, Christian ministries in the United States and the Western Church have not put in the driver's seat regarding self-directed spirituality. Leaders have more often commodified age-specific ministries or attempted to influence teens rather than developing age-appropriate resources to support Gen Z and Alpha's interest in spirituality. Rather than tackling systemic challenges, leaders should focus on their spheres of influence and empowering youth inquiry. By allowing children's, teens', and young adults' interests to guide ministry opportunities, Christian leaders may consider developmentally appropriate ways to invite young people into a life of spirituality and ministry. Action research can support healthy spiritual formation as one element of the holistic care³⁷³ of young people and their communities, especially for those who experience supernatural phenomena during their lifetimes.

The Transformative Power of Authentic Relationships

In this time of national identity change, Christian leaders' approach toward teens' spirituality parallels the changing relationships between historically dominant and colonized nations. In keeping with this theme of egalitarian collaboration, Root calls for an incarnational, egalitarian, and relationally just approach to youth ministry.

God's complete acceptance of humanity in Jesus Christ³⁷⁴ and atoning sacrifice³⁷⁵ models healthy boundaries between Adult leaders and teens. Root's argument for authentically engaging teens reflects how Jesus offered humanity a relationship with himself without assimilation.³⁷⁶

³⁷³Mary Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, 46-48.

³⁷⁴Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 89.

³⁷⁵Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 118.

³⁷⁶Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 194.

Like the relationship between two sovereign nations, like the collaboration between Anglos and Latino/a/xs in the United States, Root argues that relationships between teens and adult leaders can be transformative, not as “connections of shared ideology,” but as places of encountering holy differences.³⁷⁷

Adults must instead engage teens’ interests, seriously consider teens’ questions, and practically support teens in navigating the unique challenges they will face in this era. Community members must testify as the Church’s historical witness, inviting children, teens, and young adults into an ancient dialogue about the nature of walking toward Christ. Just as Jesus met individuals in their place of greatest need, healthy and lasting youth ministries will only develop once adults take up a ministry of place-sharing and servanthood. Through elders’ willingness to meet teens in their places of greatest need, teens may perceive Jesus’ invitation to belong to a community that supersedes but honors developmental, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural differences.³⁷⁸ Based on Christ’s servanthood, Root and Andruejol³⁷⁹ argue that Christian youth leaders must relate to teens, accept where they are at in their spiritual journey, and draw attention to the opportunities for transformation in Christ woven into everyday life. If Christian leaders engage teens as co-travelers, seeking engagement rather than control, they will leave room for teens to encounter God authentically.

Developing Intergenerational Spiritual Communities

Communities that wish to integrate all ages into the life and work of ministry must actively pursue intergenerational dialogue about spirituality. Unlike the emergence of twentieth to twenty first century age-based ministries, communities must actively enlist the participation of

³⁷⁷Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 192.

³⁷⁸Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 194.

³⁷⁹Andruejol, “Adoptive Youth Ministry: A Latin American Perspective,” 269.

children, teens, and young adults in extending their ministry practices and identity. Rather than eliminating age-based ministries or scrambling to invent new initiatives, Andrew Root suggests that leaders attend to existing opportunities for intergenerational fellowship and ministry.³⁸⁰ Like Howard Andruejol's celebration of organic intergenerational mentoring relationships as youth ministry, Root argues that interest-based fellowship groups (such as a Women's bible study or specific hobbies group) may foster connection. Within intergenerational ministry contexts, leaders must consider how safeguarding measures and developmental best practices will ensure the well-being and continued participation of children, teens, and young adults. If elders hospitably and faithfully attend to the needs of different age groups, teens may find authentic opportunities to relate to elders and peers. Intergenerational dialogue about the nature of Christian spirituality may result in deeper conversations about community identity and belonging.

In addition to promoting fellowship opportunities, Catherine Stonehouse suggests how communities can support young people's spirituality within and beyond age-based ministry contexts. She suggests communities build structures for young people's spiritual formation that allow youth to experience spirituality, encounter God, process questions, and form identities based on their experiences. Ethnographic storytelling and conversation may lay the groundwork for this process. By walking alongside teens in a ministry of place-sharing, Root argues that leaders will "create opportunities for adolescents and adults to connect as adults share stories of their faith journeys and listen to adolescents tell theirs."³⁸¹

³⁸⁰Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 209.

³⁸¹Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 209.

Future Study: Spiritual Direction, Deep Engagement, and Young People's Relationship to Time

When I started this study, I hoped that investigating the nature of spiritual encounter would help teens at Mosaic Church begin to desire an integrated lifestyle of regularly pursuing God. In conducting this research, I noticed the continued influence of time poverty and hurry on Mosaic Church's spirituality. Today, I wonder whether the impact of slower-paced spiritual practices such as spiritual direction, prayer, and lectio divina may begin to support the work of integrated spirituality within this context. Furthermore, I wonder whether incorporating these spiritual practices may decrease teens' anxiety and create daily opportunities for them to engage with God and others. Collaboration between mainline or Catholic spiritual direction and Renewalist prophetic ministries may support Mosaic teens' holistic spiritual formation, resulting in less anxiety, increased resilience, and greater overall wellness.

Returning to Chapter 4: Other Opportunities to Support Youth Spirituality

In Chapter 4, I suggested numerous opportunities to extend this research among teens. I indicated that teens have greater autonomy in determining the questions and direction for intergenerational conversations about spirituality. I suggested that leaders invite teens to experiment with self-reflection practices like journaling. I also suggested leaders support teens in designing rhythms of life that support their interests and give them room to hear God. Within teens-specific ministry contexts, I also indicated that teens receive more support discerning and describing their experiences of God, especially within everyday life. Teens who can cultivate their interests, reflect on their spirituality, and provide leadership in their community's conversations about spirituality will have a greater sense of individual, communal, and Christian

identity. By leaving room to experience God and describe what they hear, teens will gradually develop a more missional sense of identity.

This research may be adapted to support children's spirituality. Project Zero's approach to questioning has demonstrated efficacy within early childhood classrooms. With sufficient modeling, children who have not read or written have found success drawing, describing, or acting out their responses. Applied to Christian spirituality, adults could share encounter stories from children's communities through interactive storytelling or demonstration. After collecting various encounter stories, adults may share the narratives that align most closely with their children's interests and feature familiar imagery or places. Children may understand encounter stories as one expression of worship, along with musical worship, creative arts, prayer, and celebrating the beauty of creation. Based on children's interests, adults may provide resources that support their self-directed inquiry into faith-related topics. Adults may use interactive encounter stories to support children's vocabulary about sensing God. If children are inclined, adults may safeguard children as they develop their own privately curated encounter stories.

This project may also be scaled to support young adults. Within everyday life, young adults may identify opportunities to relate their spirituality to diverse groups or causes. Through involvement with both Christian and secular campus groups, college students may use their spirituality as a schema to engage with social differences. Within Christian groups, young adults may brainstorm about how their spirituality can generate authentic conversations about the person of Jesus. Discipleship within Christian groups may focus on understanding Jesus' complex character. Diverse students may use question-stems from this project to develop common ground for shared mission and ministry.

Conclusion: U.S. Identity Change, Cascadia, and Community Spirituality

As the United States prepares for what will remain a “volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world” for the foreseeable future, practical theologians can support diverse, intergenerational church communities. Community leaders may demonstrate how relationships across age differences can be mutually transformative by relating to teens as co-travelers on a spiritual journey. In turn, leaders may model for teens how to engage others across a range of social differences.

The United States may navigate a time of broad social change for the foreseeable future. Rather than waiting for perfect conditions, Christian leaders have an opportunity to influence transformation at the grassroots level. Rather than being discouraged by uncertainty, Church leaders can focus on faithfully responding to the effects of social change within their remit. Moreover, communities that pursue more profound engagement with God and others during this time will be less distracted by uncertainty. They will develop healthier approaches to international missions, collaborate more equitably with other Christian communities, and be able to respond more fluently to the needs of their regions. To navigate this era well, Christian leaders must support their communities to deepen and define their shared community identities, spiritual practices, and curriculum.³⁸²

At our best, Cascadian Christians may contribute to this conversation in ways that echo James Empereur and Eduardo Fernandez’s approach to “cosmic sacramentality.”³⁸³ The ministries that flow out of Cascadia may offer opportunities for spiritual renewal, freshly revealing Jesus as a Tree of Life,³⁸⁴ Healer,³⁸⁵ and Reconciler of Nations.³⁸⁶ By elevating

³⁸²Grizzle, “Group Spiritual Direction,” 218–27.

³⁸³Empereur and Fernández, *La Vida Sacra*, 132.

³⁸⁴John 17:3, Rev. 22:1-21, John 14:6.

³⁸⁵Isa. 53:5, John 9:1-41, Matt. 23:37.

³⁸⁶John 10:16, Rev. 7:9, Matt. 28:19, Isa. 62.

common threads in community spirituality, Mosaic Church may more faithfully fulfill their mission to become “followers of Jesus from drastically different backgrounds, with unique, Spirit-empowered gifts, [who] come together to form a mature, healthy expression of the family of God”³⁸⁷ within Seattle. In appreciation of God’s presence across time, space, and land, renewalist Cascadians may “enact altar practices inside and outside of the church.”³⁸⁸ Within Cascadia, Christians can engage non-Christian mystics about the nature of spirituality, leaving room for the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to individuals³⁸⁹ who are searching. Cascadian Christians may find new ways to relate to Seattle by celebrating individuals' distinct designs and the community cultural wealth of various local subcultures. As Seattlite Christian communities develop healthy lifestyle rhythms that support deep engagement with God and others, they may develop increasingly sustainable, diverse ministries. Renewalist Cascadians may pursue a community spirituality that is collective yet “simultaneously personal and individualized,”³⁹⁰ developing culturally relevant approaches to shared encounter. By affirming an omnipresent, unhurried, devotional approach to encounter, Cascadian Christians may conversationally engage young people in understanding God.³⁹¹

³⁸⁷Mosaic Community Church, “About Mosaic Seattle.”

³⁸⁸Calvillo, “Sustaining the Altar Flow,” 144.

³⁸⁹John 16:13, John 3:8.

³⁹⁰Calvillo, “Sustaining the Altar Flow,” 144.

³⁹¹Empereur and Fernández, *La Vida Sacra*, 132.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Fall 2023 Mosaic Church Encounter Study Adult Letter and Consent Form

Greetings,

My name is Haley Nus, and I am currently enrolled in a Doctor of Educational Ministry program at Virginia Theological seminary. I am currently a member at Mosaic Church and serve with Mosaic's Youth Group. As part of my doctoral research, I will be gathering stories of encountering God from adults at Mosaic to understand how to better communicate characteristics of healthy supernatural encounter to teens. I will be interviewing approximately 4-6 individuals from late August through October.

If you agree to be interviewed, you will have the choice of meeting by Zoom or in person. I will ask you questions about your demographics, the context of your experience, what your experience taught you about the nature of God, and how that insight contributed to your spiritual formation. The interview will take approximately thirty minutes to one hour, and the audio will be recorded. After our interview, I will synthesize your account into a one-page case study document and remove identifying characteristics. After interviewing 4-6 individuals, I will select 3-4 case studies. These case studies will be shared with a focus group of 4-8 teens to support open ended discussion on the nature of encounter.

Participation in this interview is strictly voluntary and, if you do choose to participate, you only have to answer those questions that you want to answer. If you do decide to participate, please sign the consent below. If you prefer not to participate in an interview, that is fine and I am grateful that you gave it your thoughtful consideration. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me by email (hnus@vts.edu) or at (206-413-1819).

Consent to take Part in Research

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, **I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.**
- I have had the **purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing** and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves one **30–60-minute interview, which will be audio-recorded.**
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be **treated confidentially.** In any report on the results of this research my identity and any quotes **will remain anonymous.**
- I understand that participating in this research should not put me at increased risk for any physical or psychological harm.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a **password protected** Google Drive account until Fall 2025. I understand that **I can withdraw permission** to use data from my interview after the interview, in which case the **material will be deleted.**
- I understand that I am **free to contact** any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of Research Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix B: Fall 2023 Encounter Study Adults' Inventory Questions and Method

Sample:

Semi-ethnographic interviews to collect stories from approximately 4 Mosaic Church community members, young and old (18-70+), male and female.

Method:

Meeting in person or over Zoom, I will ask participants to describe an encounter they had with God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. I will ask them to describe the context of their encounter, what their experience taught them about the nature of God, and how that insight contributed to their spiritual formation.

Output:

I will distill each individual's encounter into a 1-page summary (case study), and then select 3-4 to use in small group discussion with the teen's focus group. I will discuss overall themes from all interviews in my thesis.

Safekeeping:

I will store the data on a cloud-based, password protected folder, with interview transcripts deleted after 3 years and get informed consent for recording interviews. There will be 1-2 individuals' stories that I will transcribe to share with teens. In these instances, I will remove all identifying characteristics of the speakers, transcribe, and condense the stories.

Research Capture Form

Name:

Age:

How long have you attended Mosaic?

Denomination or Christian Affiliations, past and present:

Current City:

Originally From:

1. Describe an encounter (dream, vision, other experience) you had with at least one member of the Holy Trinity.

How old were you when you had this experience? _____

2. What was going on in your life that provided context for the encounter/corresponded to the themes that made it meaningful?

“This encounter was meaningful because I was in a season of life when _____ [what was happening?]”

Ex: Healing after divorce

3. What did this experience teach you about the nature of God?

Ex: God is _____ (detail/attribute)

4. How did having that insight about God contribute to your spiritual formation journey?

Knowing ____ about God helped me _____

Appendix C: Two-Part Informed Consent Letter and Release for Teen Participants

Greetings,

My name is Haley Nus, and I currently serve as an adult leader in Mosaic Church's Youth group. I am currently enrolled in the final year of research at Virginia Theological Seminary, for a Doctor of Educational Ministry program. As part of my doctoral research, I will be gathering a focus group of teens to explore questions, connections, or challenges they may have about the nature of supernatural ministry and the prophetic. In this focus group, we will be examining 3-4 testimonies of visionary encounters that adults from Mosaic Church (ages 18-70+) have had with God. Teens will read and respond to these stories and have the opportunity to develop their own reflections on defining characteristics of healthy encounter.

This focus group will meet from October 22nd to November 19th from 4:20-5:00pm at Mosaic Church. Depending on students' interests, students may be able to continue exploring this topic as part of a discipleship group and/or whole group teaching in the Winter and Spring.

	Focus Group Topic	Logistics
Sunday, Oct 22nd 4:30-5pm	Pretest: What beliefs, prior knowledge do you have about Encounter?	-Permission Slip submitted by this time (E-Sign or Printed, will have extras at first meeting). -Arrive by 4:20pm, 10 minute window to chat, starting at 4:30pm on the dot
Oct 29th 4:30-5pm		Case Study 1
November 5th 4:30-5pm		Case Study 2
November 12th 4:30-5pm		Case Study 3
November 19th 4:30-5pm		Putting All the Pieces Together

Participation in this interview is strictly voluntary. If you or your teen decide to participate, please review, and sign the consent forms below. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me by email (_____) or at (_____).

Signature of Researcher:

Date:

Teen Focus Group Research Agreement

- **Purpose:**

- I understand that the purpose of this focus group is to help teens at Mosaic understand characteristics of healthy supernatural encounter with God. I understand that we will be reading true but anonymous stories of adults' experiences from Mosaic Church, and sharing our connections, challenges, or questions in open-ended discussion.
- I understand that my perspective is valuable, and adults may be able to learn from my connections, thoughts, or questions to this topic.
- I understand that as we discuss these stories, I will have the opportunity to share. I understand that discussions are open-ended and will be driven mostly by our group's interests. I will try my best to participate as much as I feel comfortable.

- **Group Discussion**

- I am aware that our focus group will include about 4-8 Mosaic Youth members who may have different thoughts, experiences, or beliefs about the supernatural than I do. I know that I can ask questions if I do not understand their point of view but understand that it is okay if we do not all have the same perspectives. I will try to be a generous listener and thoughtful conversation partner, treating people how I would want to be treated.

- **Participation**

- I agree to meet at Mosaic Church with 4-8 Mosaic youth members for about 4 weeks, meeting on Sundays at 4:20pm, from October 22nd until November 19th.
- I will communicate with my parents and do my best to manage my home and school responsibilities (like homework) so that I can attend.

- **Research**

- I recognize that the discussions for this focus group will be audio-recorded.
- I agree that leaders can anonymously quote my comments in research to help adults support teens to understand prophetic ministry.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, **I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences.**
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research, except for a chance to explore this topic with friends.

Signature of Teen (**First Name Last Name**): _____

Date (**MM-DD-YYYY**): _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

Parental Release for Participation in Focus Group

For Parents:

- **Communication:** I give my permission to the leaders of this focus group to communicate directly with my child(ren) on topics related to this group as part of a group text or email thread.
- **Transportation:** I understand that this focus group will meet during October and November at Mosaic Church, from 4:20-5:00pm. I agree to ensure that my teen has reliable transportation and can attend all or nearly all meetings. Barring emergencies, if my teen will be absent, I will do my best to communicate their absence at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.
- **Research:** I am aware that the Focus Group Facilitator (Haley Nus) is designing research and later, a practitioner's guide for adults to support teens in prophetic ministry as part of her doctoral research. I give my permission for her to anonymously quote my child as it pertains to these topics.
- **Data Confidentiality:** I understand that the focus group's conversations, release forms, and other essential information will be recorded for safety and research purposes, stored in a password protected folder on Google Drive for 2 years. I give my permission for this data to be collected and safely stored.

Signature of Parent/Carer (**First Name Last Name**):

Date (**MM-DD-YYYY**): _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

Signature of Researcher

I believe the teen participant and his/her guardian(s) are giving informed consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Researcher (**First Name Last Name**): _____

Date (**MM-DD-YYYY**): _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

Appendix D: Teen Discussion Guide

Name:

Date:

CONNECT

1. How is the story connected to what you already knew about encountering God?
2. Are there any stories from the bible that this encounter reminds you of?
3. Are there any stories from real life that this encounter reminds you of?

EXTEND

1. How did this story extend or push your thinking in new directions?
2. Why do you think God chose to reveal himself in this way?
3. How do you think you would have reacted if this encounter had been your experience?
4. What other aspects of God's character do you think the story demonstrated that the speaker did not name?

CHALLENGE

1. What is still challenging or confusing for you to understand?
What questions, wonderings, or puzzles do you now have?
2. What parts of this story surprised you?
3. What question(s) would you still want to ask the speaker?

Appendix E: Encounter Narrative Template (using Case Study 1)

I had this experience **[time period]**. I was in a season of [What God was doing thematically in your life], thinking about the different things I tell myself about my future, who I am as a person. I had believed that I was not worthy of good things. I needed to get used to carrying my own and the pain of others.

[Problem/Conflict] Because of that, I struggled to receive the truth about God's goodness and fully take it in. During this season, I was going back to examine my beliefs about whether God is good and what he wants for me. **[Clarify external conditions, conditions that made the need for Encounter necessary]** I needed to see how it lined up with the truth of scripture. I wanted to not just discover a better way to think about myself, but to understand how deeply I believed these lies and why it was hard to let go of them.

[Beginning of "small moment" encounter]

I was on the phone with a friend of mine from the East Coast and processing a sense of heaviness about these things. Towards the end of that conversation, we started praying. In my minds' eye, I got this picture when we prayed.

[Description of encounter, vision, event, etc]

In the vision, I saw myself sitting on the ground, cross-legged. And there was a bunch of gray smoke around me. From the perspective of sitting down, I could not see through it or past it. But I continued to pray. As I kept praying, I saw Jesus walk through the smoke, carrying a platter of fruit and other various snacks. I saw burgers, some of my favorite foods like mangoes and sushi. And I saw that he was laying out the food in front of me like a banquet. He came and sat down in front of me, holding the tray. And I remember that in the vision, I was afraid to take anything from the tray. But it all looked so good, so refreshing, so nourishing. I started to eat. And everything was bursting with flavor, color, everything was so vibrant and nourishing. It was the best tasting mango you have ever had, times ten, the best chicken nuggets you have ever had, times ten. As I ate the food in the vision, I started to feel in my physical body a recognition of what goodness feels like. It reminded me of Psalm 34:8, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." And I felt the Lord saying, "Keep eating. Keep going."

On the phone, I told my friend about the picture. She said, "It sounds like you really needed to be restored, spiritually. That you have been running on fumes."

[How did it influence your walk with God/influence your formation? What did it reveal about God's character?]

After we got off the phone, I was able to identify that what she said was true. In this vision, God showed me that the barriers I have, God can walk right through them. It taught me that the Lord really does have goodness in store for me, goodness that is in abundance. And he is not scared of running out! I can take as much as I want, eat as much as I want. He will not run out. I can go to God with my needs. I do not have to try to figure out everything on my own.

[After the fact, how has this experience contributed to your formation journey?]

Appendix F: Teen Encounter Background Knowledge Pre-Test

Encounter Study Focus Group: Brainstorming Session

Name:	Date:
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Do your best to answer these questions based on what you already think or know. This information will help me understand your interests and help you reflect at the end of our discussion series.

1. Fill in the blank with 1-2 descriptive words. Explain why you chose them.

Prophetic ministry (prophecy) is _____

2. What do you think you already know about prophetic ministry? Think about categories like who, what, when, where, and why people prophesy.
3. What do you wonder about prophetic ministry? What questions or puzzles do you have about this topic?
 - *Why...?*
 - *What if...?*
 - *What is the purpose of...?*
4. Does prophetic ministry relate to the character of God or the bible? If so, how?

Appendix G: Teen Encounter Background Knowledge Post-Test

Encounter Study Focus Group: Closing Session

Name:	Date:
-------	-------

Do your best to answer these questions based on what you learned in this series. If you need more space, feel free to write on the back!

1. What is the difference between an encounter and a prophetic word? What is the same?
2. In your opinion, what are some reasons people prophesy?
3. Why do you think God may initiate encounters with people?
4. Think about what people saw, heard, and felt in the encounters you read in this group. How do you think the people knew that they were from God?
5. Can you think of any kind of spiritual encounter that would not be from God? What might a person see, hear, or feel that would be different?

For Whole Group Discussion

6. What is something that you think you learned from this group?

7. What is something that you are still wondering about?

Appendix H: Copy of Adult Case Studies

Case Study 1: God Who is a Safe Provider

I had this experience a few months ago, in August 2023. I was in a season of processing, thinking about the different things I tell myself about my future and who I am as a person. I had believed that I was not worthy of good things. I needed to get used to carrying my own and the pain of others. Because of that, I struggled to receive the truth about God's goodness and fully take it in. During this season, I was going back to examine my beliefs about whether God is good and what he wants for me. I needed to see how it lined up with the truth of scripture. I wanted to not just discover a better way to think about myself but to understand how deeply I believed these lies and why it was hard to let go of them.

I was on the phone with a friend from the East Coast, processing a sense of heaviness about these things. Towards the end of that conversation, we started praying. In my mind's eye, I got this picture when we prayed.

In the vision, I saw myself sitting on the ground, cross-legged. And there was a bunch of gray smoke around me. From the perspective of sitting down, I could not see through it or past it. But I continued to pray. As I kept praying, I saw Jesus walk through the smoke, carrying a platter of fruit and another various snacks. I saw burgers and some of my favorite foods like mangoes and sushi. And I saw that he was laying out the food before me like a banquet. He came and sat down in front of me, holding the tray. And I remember that I was afraid to take anything from the tray in the vision. But it all looked so good, so refreshing, so nourishing. I started to eat. Everything was bursting with flavor and color; everything was so vibrant and nourishing. It was the best-tasting mango you have ever had, times ten, and the best chicken nuggets you have ever had. As I ate the food in the vision, I started to feel a recognition of what goodness feels like in my physical body. It reminded me of Psalm 34:8, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." And I felt the Lord saying, "Keep eating. Keep going."

On the phone, I told my friend about the picture. She said, "It sounds like you needed to be restored spiritually. That you have been running on fumes."

After we got off the phone, I could identify that what she said was true. In this vision, God showed me that the barriers I have, God can walk right through them. It taught me that the Lord really does have goodness in store for me, goodness that is in abundance. And he is not scared of running out! I can take as much as I want and eat as much as possible. He will not run out. I can go to God with my needs. I do not have to figure out everything on my own.

Since this experience, things have gotten a little easier. I am still working on the assumption that I have to look out for myself, and I'm still working that out in every aspect of my life. I am still trying to surrender it to the Lord.

Case Study 2: God who Gives us Choices

I had this encounter half a lifetime ago when I was about 30. My wife and I had 3 children under 10 years old. We were part of a church in the Foursquare Church Movement and were learning to “grow up”: how to talk with God in a more mature way and take responsibility to partner with him in making decisions. We attended the church for about 9 years, and around the end of that season, God revealed that he wanted us to be part of something he was going to do in the UK. It is one thing to get a vision in your heart and head, another thing to get in the prayer closet, to prepare to go, and let God form you. Before this experience, I was far less confident in my ability to hear God and was afraid of hearing him wrong. I was disappointed and angry at God that discerning our calling to the UK had already taken 3 years. I was afraid of disappointing our elders, my wife, and our friends, who were also trying to discern if they were called to the UK. My family doubted whether we were really called. They thought we were crazy to want to uproot our lives and our family and sell everything to follow a dream. I was struggling...praying, seeking God, trying to understand what practical steps were necessary...and we started to really need clarity. I went away for a weekend to seek God and had this experience.

When I was in prayer, I saw a picture in my mind’s eye of an intersection that was visually the same as an intersection near our home. Like the shape of a compass, this intersection was formed by the termination of 4 different roads. Each road was named something different, moving out from a central point. In the vision, I found myself standing in the center of the road, with the need to turn in one direction and start walking. I sensed that God was telling me, “This is the place I’ve put you in so that you can make a choice about what to do.” There were 4 different options. One street symbolized not stepping into the dream at all but staying comfortably where we were. Another street option was to take another job opportunity in a new area, moving in an entirely different direction to our dream. Another option was to just get on a plane and go right now. The last option was to go to the UK, by passing through Texas for several years first. I sensed God was telling me, “You will not be wrong by choosing one of these options that you may perceive to be more or less on target with me. In any of the 4 directions you choose, you can walk in my will.”

Reflecting on this picture, I realized that God gives us choices about how we will follow him. This picture communicated to me that I did not always need to search for “the perfect answer,” the “right solution,” or the “one and only way” to walk out his call on my life. I could still please, serve, and obey him by not doing what seemed obvious. He did not want to prescribe, enforce, or solely direct me. What he wanted was for me to pursue him and his pleasure, to want the things that he wanted. He wanted me to step into the authority he had given me to exercise self-leadership and make choices. We always have a choice. We even have the choice to sin against him, disobey him, or go off in a direction he didn’t want for us. Scripture talks about us not just being servants but friends. We are co-laborers, inheritors of the grace of life. We are not just servants and children but also friends and partners. This experience made me take greater responsibility for walking with him.

We ended up choosing to move to Texas. God sent confirmation there that we were still on the right path, and we saw his hand of provision and guidance. Eventually, we did arrive in England. There was a great deal of elation and joy! God showed up in a tangible way, beyond what we were expecting. We saw how the things that God did in preparing us were necessary to receive everything new in the UK.

Case Study 3: God as the One Who Remains Faithful

I had this experience more than once, where God used the same imagery to speak to me several times throughout my life. Before this experience, I was raised in El Paso, Texas, a twin city with Juarez, Mexico. I moved to Minnesota to study teaching and met my husband there. We were living in St. Paul, Minnesota, with our 4 teenage children when we felt called as a family to buy a new home to use as a 24-hour praise and worship site. The house had many floors, spiral staircases, a turret, a balcony, murals, and was on the bank of a major river. The space transformation process required us to wait and live with family members, partner with local ministries to coordinate renovations and allow God to change us as a family. It had been an exhausting, multiyear process, and I needed confirmation before we opened that the space and our family would be ready for ministry. I also needed confirmation that God sees me and knows me because I had not had many experiences of feeling close to him before. I told him, “Please tell me something that I do not know so I can see that you are speaking to me. Please reveal your presence.”

My husband and I were invited by leaders at the International House of Prayer (IHOP) in Kansas City, Missouri, to experience their worship rooms and receive ministry. I had wanted to travel further from St. Paul for many years but had not had an opportunity or felt a sense of freedom until then. IHOP removed any financial barriers for us to visit, generously paying for our plane tickets and stay. In IHOP, there are various prayer rooms designed beautifully by artists. As I was inside one of the rooms, I had a powerful sense of the presence of God in the room, something that felt like holiness or something clean. At that moment, I had an internal impression of God saying to me, “You were born in a twin city [El Paso]. I have brought you to a twin city to be born again.” I started weeping because I realized that, like Psalm 139:16, God does know me. For the first time, I had a sense of being fully seen and known. It felt like the story of Jesus talking to the woman at the well [John 4:5-30], or Philip talking to the Ethiopian eunuch [Acts 8:27-40]. I had a deep sense of being fully seen and known at that moment. God had always felt distant, and there had been times when I wondered if he knew me. I walked away with a stronger sense of who I was in Christ, which I needed for the challenges I faced in my marriage in the following season.

Several years later, God started reminding me of my dreams of traveling when I was younger. He began to refresh my hope, which had been damaged after my husband initiated our divorce. Despite my former community's skepticism, I remembered my dream as a girl to go to China. I arrived in Shanghai to continue my teaching career in a new context. When I met with the school's director, he told me I would work with kindergarteners near the Puxi campus. When he saw the surprised look on my face, he clarified. He said two campuses were divided by a river in the sister cities of Shanghai suburbs of Pu Xi and PuDong. When the director said, “sister cities,” I felt God reassuring me that I had found the right place. Teaching Kindergarten in China was a very stretching experience; it took me far outside my comfort zone. In that season, the same imagery helped me remember that God is faithful and has always been faithful. I learned deep breathing techniques to help me with my anxiety and to pass through times of pressure well. Since those years, I retired and moved to Seattle to help care for my grandchildren and daughter's family. I am still learning to hear God's voice but am grateful for how he taught me to trust him.