Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

The Hmong Spiritual Formation from Animism to Christianity

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the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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The research project is on the Hmong religion. Hmong people believe in a faith called "Animism – the way of the spirit," which is a created religion that they practiced and passed down from generation to generation. The Hmong like to live in the past and do not want to change their customs, traditions, and cultural practices that their ancestors practiced for centuries. They put all their hope in their dead ancestors' spirits to guide them until a new religion appeared to them, and it is called "the Christian faith." The Christian faith brings new hope to the Hmong people, and it also created divisions and limitations to the Hmong Christians, their families, friends, and relatives. The family would reject those who convert for choosing another religion over the one they worship, and there are some Hmong Christians who still practice the animistic faith to please their family. They would say that it is their custom and tradition, and their way to honor their family. The researcher must survey by interviewing participants who were once an animistic believer and now a Christian why they still hold on to something that cannot give them hope and believe in a faith that is not alive. Christians must present the Gospel effectively to the Hmong people so that they can become a follower of Christ. They must worship only one God and not two to have eternal life because Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." (John 14:6).
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Abbreviations

ANGEL  Active in Service, Nurturing our Faith, Giving Glory to God, Encouraging One Another, and Leading Other to Jesus Christ

CDC  Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CEV  Contemporary English Version

CSB  Christian Standard Bible

DMIN  Doctor of Ministry

ESV  English Standard Version

IRB  Institutional Review Board

KJV  King James Version

LCMS  The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

LUSOD  Liberty University School of Divinity

NASB  New American Standard Bible

NIV  New International Version

NLT  New Living Translation

NT  New Testament

OT  Old Testament

SWOT  Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

WHO  World Health Organization
Chapter 1

Introduction

Christians must present the Gospel effectively to the Hmong people so that they can become a follower of Christ as well. The Hmong people have practiced the religion of animism for centuries. Now the good news has reached the Hmong by Christians, and they must decide whether to believe in Christ and receive eternal life with Him in heaven or stand condemned with the belief that their ancestors practiced for generation after generation. The growth in the number of the Christian faith is causing some divisions among some families and clan members because the elders and clan leaders want their people to remain faithful to one faith, one belief, and one tradition. The believer knows, however, that once he converts, his spiritual formation will grow into the true belief of "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Eph 4:5). The believer also knows that faith is the inward disposition of the heart, baptism the means of grace, by which the Christians joined to the one Lord. The way to receive eternal life is to believe in one true God, live according to God's will, and trust in Him.

Ministry Context

People were gathered outside the house and listened to the chant of a man. He jumped on the table while chanting, then got down to the floor and ran around the table without ceasing the chanting. There was a black cloth-covered his face, and he was holding a pair of goat horns. He would toss the horns to see whether the horns would cooperate and land face up. Sometimes it

1 Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the Holy Bible, English Standard Version (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2016).

would take him several throws of the goat horns before he could get it right. Once he got the goat horns to face up, he would sit down and speak to the family about his findings. The ritual is a rite that the shaman used to communicate with the spirits and ancestors. He is the mediator between the living and the dead worlds. He performs the ritual to obtain information about the cause of the illness that the sick person is having. Hmong people believe everything that the shaman is telling them because he saw and spoke with the spirits, and they need to do all that is needing to help with the problem. In most cases, the ancestral spirits accepted the offering, and the sick healed.

The story noted above typifies the religious culture of the Hmong people, and this research will be used to help followers of Christ reach the Hmong. The ministry context of this research will strictly focus on the Hmong people who live in the areas of Lansing, Michigan. This researcher will only have limited resources because there are not many people left who can correctly show how the worshiping of the deceased ancestors, culture, and social life were practice within the community. There are not many elders who are actively practicing the Hmong religion of everyday life.

The Hmong people are an indigenous group of people that believe in the spirits of their dead ancestors, animals, and plants. The Hmong's identity came around 5000 B.C. Hmong people lived in the plains along the Yellow River in China, and about 3000 B.C., they moved to Southern China. The Chinese referred to the Hmong people as Miao or Meo, but the Hmong people called themselves Hmong or Mong. The Chinese call the Hmong Miao, which Hmong

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3 Bloomfield, Hmong American in Michigan: Discovering the Peoples of Michigan, IXX.

people consider a derogatory meaning. Chinese historical work had compared the word Miao to a cat, although the Hmong dialect may have reminded the Chinese that the Hmong people are skilled mountain climbers. Livo and Cha wrote that Bernatzik also cites an opinion that, "The term Miao arose from an agricultural context and that the ancient sinologists interpreted Miao-tse as a son of the soil—from the Chinese character for Miao. It is composed of two parts, one meaning "plant" and the other meaning "field," plus tse, meaning "child." The Chinese may have used Miao-tse or Miao to designate non-Chinese foreigners as "tillers of the soil" or "the peasants." It is implied that the Miao-tse were farmers who did not belong to the "great nation" of the Chinese." Hmong are proud, and they will only accept being called Hmong and not Miao.

According to Yang Dao, the first Hmong who attained a Ph. D in social science from Sorbonne, University of Paris, France in May 1972, defined the word Hmong to "Free people." Hmong wanted to be free from other people's rules and oppression. They are one of the tribal people in China, and they like to live in the highest peak of the mountains. They are free to do whatever they want. Bloomfield writes, "Hmong believe in animism, "the way of the spirit," holding that "living and nonliving objects, animals and plants, human beings and nature, all have souls or spirits and are interconnected." The Hmong practiced animism for many centuries, and the rituals that they sacrificed animals to the spirits are common and central for the people's


culture. The use of animals for the sacrificial ritual carries essential meaning for the Hmong because they believe that the animals are taking their place for the forgiveness of sins. Sociologists and anthropologists have labeled the Hmong religion as animism; the study of Spirits in Animism. The Hmong believe that some of the spirits are good, while others are bad. The good spirits, mostly are the spirits of their dead ancestors, can be called to help them in times of need, and they also know that the evil spirits, mainly are the spirits of the wild, can cause harm to them any time. They believe that the souls of the deceased ancestors are still alive and have influences on the living. They would call on the ancestral spirits to help them when they need healing, blessing, wealth, or harmful situations.

Sometimes the ancestral spirits would answer them, and sometimes they would cause more problems to the family that they need to sacrifice more to please the ancestors. At times like this, someone may say that the family's children or someone is causing the ancestor's spirits to be angry, so the family will have to spend more money to calm down the anger of the ancestor's spirits. This type of faith gives people hope to believe in human life instead of seeking out the truth for personal verification concerning the reason for hope.\(^\text{10}\) The people cannot see their ancestors' spirit, but they hope that the ancestor's good deeds of their past life and the good deeds that they are offering to the ancestral spirit will help them in the future. It is similar to the Christian faith as the Apostle Paul wrote, "For we live by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor 5:7, NIV).

Not only that, they believe in their dead ancestors; they also know that there is the devil. They know that he is an evil spirit that will cause harm to them because when something terrible happens, they always refer to the devil's evil deeds. In life, they know that there is a King of the

universe or an Almighty God who created the heavens and earth and everything in it. They need
to find God and believe in Him.\textsuperscript{11} When they need help in times of trouble, they also call on this
God to help and give him thanks. "The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on
him in truth. He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them." (Ps 145:18-19), but they do not know who He is.

Nevertheless, the core belief of the Hmong religion is re-incarnation. The Hmong believe
that a person has multiple souls. After death, one of the person's souls remained with the body at
the grave. One soul traveled on a journey to be with his/her ancestors in a place where they
would continue to desire food and material possessions. Another soul re-incarnated into this
world to be a different person, thing, or animal, and the process will start repeatedly. In
conjunction with this type of faith, they would practice animal sacrifices and shamanism. Ninety
percent of the Hmong in North America still believe in their traditional religion.\textsuperscript{12} The Hmong
people cling to their beliefs, which differ from the truth that Christians know.

The Hmong were skilled people but not educated. Their elders did not know how to read
and write, so they never wrote anything down. Still, through the process of memorization, the
practice of oral ritual passed down practices and traditions from generation to generation. The
routine orally handed down from father to son and through observation of clan and family.\textsuperscript{13} In
many cultures, information is hand down through oral presentation, and they retain it and
continue to learn, recite, and pass on to the next generation.\textsuperscript{14} The Hmong are known for their

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{11} A.W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishing, 2015), 63.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Will McRaney, Jr., The Art of Personal Evangelism (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2003), 7.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Donald P. Irish, Kathleen F. Lundquist, and Vivian Jenkins Nelsen, Ethnic Variations in Dying, and
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Harold A. Netland, Christianity and Religious Diversity: Clarifying Christian Commitment in a
\end{itemize}
kind hearts and skilled craftsmanship. One of the symbols that can best describe the Hmong people is the Qheng (Qeej), a type of pan flute, used for courtship, new year celebration, and most of all, for a funeral. To most of the Hmong today, the Qheng (Qeej), has a different meaning for its purpose. The nonbelievers use it to send the dead to the afterlife. Hmong men are encouraged to learn the text of pointing the way or guide the deceased to the spirit world by playing the Qheng (Qeej) and the drum (lub nruag) so that the dead can reach his destination. To the Christians, the Qheng (Qeej) is a musical instrument that some of the churches do not recognize it. It is forbidden to play the Qheng (Qeej) in some churches or any church-related functions. Christians claim that since the nonbelievers use it to play at funerals, it belongs to the devil. To the rest of the Hmong people around the world, it is an instrument that influences the Hmong's daily life, shaping who they are and keeping their culture alive.

One of the most practiced rituals that the Hmong people practice is the tying of a string (Khiteg). They believe that the tying of the thread can hold or tie the spirit or soul of a sick person. When someone is sick, they think that it is because the person's soul is wandering somewhere else rather than staying inside the body. Since the spirit is leaving the person's body, then a ritual must be performed to bring the soul back into the body again so that the sick person would heal again. A white string, red string, red and blue string, or copper bracelet are placed on the person's wrist, neck, or ankle, which indicates that the spirit is back to the body, or it also means that these objects will keep the evil spirits away. These objects will comfort the person that they will give him health and healing and protect him from any bad omen. This kind of belief is similar to Chinese practice, and it has been the cultural practice for the Hmong for generations since they lived in China. This kind of faith is very challenging for a low-income

15 Irish, Lundquist, and Nelsen, Ethnic Variations in Dying, and Grief: Diversity in Universality, 95.
family because a ritual will consist of many things such as animals for sacrifice, money for the
death, food for the guests, an annual ceremony for the family, and payment for the shaman. It is
challenging for some families to find these things, and sometimes they will have to borrow from
relatives then repay them with the next harvest of new crops. Each year at the beginning of the
new year, the family must make animal sacrifices for health and prosperity and must perform a
ritual ceremony to the spirits.

There is a relationship between this group of people and this researcher. This researcher's
family used to practice the belief of animism, ancestral worship, reincarnation, and shamanism.
He is familiar with the practice, and some of his relatives are still exercising this ritual. These
activities that are regularly occurring in connection to the research; people practice them mostly
at new year celebration, weddings, funerals, health and healing, prosperity, and good fortune.
People that are associating with the researcher's project relate to the same belief of animistic
faith. They cherish this belief even though they become Christians; they will still hold on to the
religion.

This researcher needs to explore more about the ways the people honor and respect their
ancestors. He needs to earn the people's trust, whether in animism or Christianity and not to rush
into the conclusion that all Hmong people are the same. The Hmong people still live with the
religion of their ancestors, but Christians should always be prepared to share Christ at every
opportunity. The Gospel of Christ must be proclaimed to the Hmong people so that they can
come and receive the gift of God's grace and have eternal life in Him. "Go therefore and make
disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit." (Matthew 28:19). Believe in Jesus and receive life, or do not believe and stand condemned.

Problem Presented

The problem this project will address is distinguishing between the Hmong religion of animism and the Christian faith. Because those in the Hmong religion believe in their dead ancestors' spirits, it is sometimes hard for them to practice in the United States. Most of the rituals they practice involve animal sacrifices, and to perform a ceremony in a hospital will have consequences because it is not allowed. The use of a chicken and sacrificing it for a Hmong patient in a hospital room by a shaman before surgery would not be allowed because there will be blood involved. It is just one of the many circumstances, concerning their animistic beliefs, that the Hmong who are not Christians are facing in the United States.

Another problem is to satisfy the spirits of their ancestors. When someone is sick, the family will need to pay a shaman to come and perform a ritual to see what is going on with the ill person. They will need to get a pair of chickens for sacrifice. If a couple of chickens is not enough, then a pig is necessary; if the pig is not enough, then a cow must be the ultimate sacrifice for the spirit to leave the sick person. The family would have to spend much money to buy all the things that are required by the shaman. With this type of belief, people always live in fear, wondering if they have done enough to please the spirits. They are afraid that if they do not do enough for the ancestor's souls, the ancestor's spirit will bring a curse or bad omen to their family. So, from their ancestors to their current generation and then to the next generation, they

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will carry this faith forward and continue to make sacrifices of animals, food, and monetary offerings to satisfy the desires of the spirits.

In the book of Leviticus, God instructed the Israelites to make sacrificial offerings for the remission of their sins. It was a covenant relationship that existed between God and His people. Three ways could describe the covenant relationship of sacrifice. First, it is a gift, second, communion or fellowship, and third, the healing gifts in the covenant relationship. Hamilton writes, "Wherever sin has driven a wedge between God and humankind, both sacrifice (the outer act) and penitence (the inner attitude) become incumbent upon the sinner. However, as one will see, some sacrifices have nothing to do with sin and atonement." People who practice animistic beliefs should know that when they make a sacrifice to appease the ancestors' spirit, those spirits cannot hear or accept the offering because their dust remains in their grave, and they cannot help the family. Whereas for believers, they know that Christ is the ultimate sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sins. Scripture says, "Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) and gives his life as a ransom for many." (Matt 20:28). The Gospel must be presented to the Hmong people so that they understand that once they become a believer, they need not make any more sacrifices to appease the ancestor spirit because Christ has already paid the price for the sacrifice on the cross for them.

The Hmong cultural practice and tradition will remain a big part of their daily living. The ritual practice becomes a routine because the family practices it, while others think of it as some therapeutic way to ease the fear. To distinguish from a non-believer from a believer, the non-

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believer will wear a red string around his/her wrist or ankle, sometimes a copper bracelet on the wrist is used to keep the evil spirits away. Animism believers see the tied string as a help to give them courage. People with the animistic practice believe that the evil spirits are afraid of red color and that copper is burning them if they come close to a person. Some of the believers also wear the red string and copper bracelet on them because they do not understand the Christian faith well, or their nonbeliever relatives told them to wear, and it will keep them from evil.

There are many disagreements on whose religion is the true religion. Many people choose the animism faith because they think that Christian faith is a new belief and the God that Christians believe is not real. After all, no one has seen Him. When the Christian missionaries came to the Hmong in Laos, for the Gospel to effectively present itself to the Hmong people so that they would become Christians, they taught the Hmong to write and read. They created the Hmong system of writing using the English alphabet. With this new method, they were able to reach out to the Hmong people proclaiming the Gospel to them. This new faith has stirred some of the Hmong peoples' hearts, and many of them became Christians, but the belief in animism still lives in most of the Hmong people because they do not understand the God that people called "Jesus Christ." The Gospel continues to grow as many of the churches are sending missionaries to different parts of the world, reaching out to the Hmong, who do not know Christ.

With a community that has a group of people actively protecting its belief, the research should analyze the traditions of the city and use the recommended strategies to change their culture where it needs to change. To change a Hmong person is hard, and to convince him to convert into Christianity is even harder because the Hmong likes to see or touch the things they hear before they believe. Sometimes it is best to respect their belief, but believers must continue

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to remain faithful to the Christian faith. If they do not, they will be doubtful like the Apostle Thomas, who said, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." (John 20:25).

For the good news of Jesus Christ to influence their faith, the researcher will need to learn their way of living and the cultural practice to familiarize himself with the ministry setting. He must understand the effectiveness of the ministry's culture and the environment as a result of the changes, whether it will be for a good cause to change or it will harm the group of people that he is researching. The researcher will not follow the former missionaries of promising "material allurement" in exchange for conversion as a false promise of future prosperity following conversion.21 The Hmong people believe in supernatural things, and the researcher will need to have enough resources to support his findings and search deeper on the problems that arise between the two worlds that they are living in today's society, the world of a nonbeliever and that of a Christian. Scripture says, "For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun." (Eccl 9:5-6). The Hmong people should know that their ancestors' dead bodies are now turning into dust, remaining in their grave, and are no longer alive. To believe and trust in their ancestors' spirits will only give them sorrow because the body of the dead will not hear their cries for help. Christians must present the Gospel effectively to the Hmong people so that they can become a follower of Christ as well. They must believe in Jesus for their eternal

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salvation and must prepare for eternity, for there will be no second chance. Jesus saw to it that His disciples learned His way of living with God and Man. The believer needs to learn to live his life so that others may see his good deeds. "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matt 5:16). He must take this truth and apply it to his life because there can be no other ways of evading the fact of showing Jesus is the Savior of the world to others.

God created humanity in His image, but no two persons are created exactly alike. The differences are a unique heritage and specific histories for each individual. Each one is born into a particular social context and family. Whether the person is a believer or a nonbeliever, he or she needs to learn and share with others, and in the process, people can respond to one another in culturally conditioned ways. People need to recognize that understanding other cultures becomes the cultural repertoire, a body of knowledge, learned skills, and relationships through mutual respect in their everyday lives.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to understand how to minister to the Hmong people who have a religion that they were practicing for centuries so that they can convert to Christianity for

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25 Repertoire is commonly used to describe a collection of musical pieces or plays that a performer knows and regularly performs.
their salvation in Christ. The Hmong who receive Christ and switch to a new faith need to know how to respond to the cultural practice of their culture. Now that they believe in something different from the hope that they used to see, it impacts their relationship with their family. Because people have different beliefs on truth, they must still be able to remain a family.  26 They sometimes distance themselves from their family because they believe that the new faith is preventing them from having fellowship with them. Some of the Hmong who converted to Christianity chose later to go back to animism because some well-meaning Christians told them that they should not associate with their non-Christian friends and family. To understand the situation with the Hmong, the researcher must take the time to interview the people who become Christians and ask them how spiritual formation has changed them. The research project is to prepare people to accept the changes and to stay faithful to their faith because believing in Christ allows them to fellowship with others.

Basic Assumptions

The underlying assumption of this research is that the researcher's understanding of Hmong's belief of animism is correct. It indicates that the animist believes their ancestors' spirit, but it has no proof or evidence. Many of the Hmong people say, "If you are a Hmong person, then you need to believe in the Hmong religion." Elders and many of the Hmong leaders in the community who practice animism wish that every Hmong person would believe in their dead ancestors. They also made a claim, "Jesus is a white man's Savior. A white man writes the Bible, and it is not for Hmong." The elder is afraid that the younger generation will no longer know how to worship the ancestor. The head of the household's duty is to understand the necessary

rituals for the family religion.\textsuperscript{27} The Hmong people should not misunderstand that Christ is a white man's God. Christ is the God of all people as Jesus said, "And I when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (John 12:32). The Apostle Paul writes, "Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act results in justification and life for all people." (Rom 5:18). Miles writes, "Romans 5:18 affirms that through the "righteous act" of Jesus in redemption, "there is life-giving justification for everyone."\textsuperscript{28} God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ and not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Cor 5:19, NIV). The text sees a declaration that all people come into a life-giving relationship with the Lord. 1 Timothy 4:10 asserts that Jesus is the "Savior of everyone, especially of those who believe."\textsuperscript{29} The Hmong people who are animists should not assume that Christ is only for the white people, but He is also their Savior. "On his robe and his thigh, he has a name written, King of kings, and the Lord of lords." (Rev 19:16).

The researcher should let the people know about evaluating the ritual practices that they are performing to what the Bible teaches. He could advise them that some of the Hmong beliefs and practices have already been written in the Bible. Hmong has many cultural and customary practices that are similar to the old traditions of the Bible. One example of the practices is the use of the Hmong Shaman, who performs the rite of "\textit{Ua Neeb Thib Sub.}" It is a ritual for the

\textsuperscript{27} Nicholas Tapp and Gary Yia Lee, \textit{The Hmong of Australia: Cultural and Diaspora} (Canberra, AU: Anu Press, 2010), 21.

\textsuperscript{28} Todd L. Miles, \textit{A God of Many Understandings: A Gospel and a Theology of Religion} (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 112.

\textsuperscript{29} Miles, \textit{A God of Many Understandings: A Gospel and a Theology of Religion}, 113.
forgiveness of sins using a goat. Scripture writes, "The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness." (Lev 16:22).

The Hmong, who are nonbelievers, say that they do not believe in Jesus Christ, but they use materials, animals, and other means that are in the Bible to perform their ritual practice. They use animals to take the place of their sins, just as Jesus Christ is the atonement for the sin of the world. Christians no longer need to use any goat or other animals for the atonement of the sin because Christ already did on the cross. The Apostle Peter wrote, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds, you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." (1 Pet 2:24-25). The researcher will also help the people to understand that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29) and that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6). Unlimited atonement is for universal justification that salvation is for all.30 "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to for all people." (Titus 2:11). God wants all people to turn away from their sins and seek redemption through His Son, Jesus Christ.

After the researcher gathers all his resources, the fundamental commitments, presupposition, analysis, problem outlines, and the purpose of the research project should help him to determine the research question. To the Hmong people, there is a God, but they refuse to accept Him as Lord and Savior. When temptation comes to them, they know that there is a God who will punish them if they sin, and they are afraid of Him. They know that if they do not honor their parents, elders, or someone in authority, they will be cursed. Hmong children are afraid that they will not be fruitful if they disobey their parents. Richard and O'Brien write, "In shame

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cultures, people are more likely to choose the right behavior based on what society expects from them. It is not a matter of guilt, nor an inner voice of direction, but outer pressures and opinion that direct a person to behave a certain way."³¹ With this culture, rules and laws are less a deterrent for bad behavior than the risk of disgracing oneself or one's family.³²

It is similar for the Christians because God commands them to obey and honor their parents and those in authority, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." (Eph 6:3-4). People need to be open to those who are like or unlike them so that they may share the blessing. Elmer writes, "Openness with people different from yourself requires that you are willing to step out of your comfort zone to initiate and sustain relationships in a world of cultural differences."³³ Christians need to go and be salt and light to the world.

Definitions

The anthropologist Edward B. Tylor developed the word animism in his 1871 book Primitive Culture. He defined it as "The Doctrine of Soul's after Death; its main divisions, Transmigration, and Future Life – Transmission of Souls; re-birth in Human and Animals Bodies, transference to plants and Objects – Resurrection of Body scarcely held in savage religion – Future Life."³⁴ Ngo defined it this way, "Animism is a life that is living with the past


²² Ibid., 116.


because the traditional Hmong belief, religion, everything is tied with the past. How our grandfather, great grandfather, our clan did the ceremony, we have to do the same. When you die, you go back to the same root. You live for the past, with the past."\(^{35}\) It is a battle between two theories of the soul. Animism is the property of the soul."\(^{36}\) To the Hmong people, the belief of animism is the only one they know because their parents practice it, and the Christian faith is a new belief that they are not familiar. Some of the people never heard of it, and it surprises them when they hear about it; they have practiced their ancestral belief for centuries, and suddenly, a new faith introduces itself to them. This new faith stirs some of the Hmong's hearts, and they want to receive it. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." (Rom 10:17).

The researcher will describe his findings of the research project on animism. The Hmong are clan and family-oriented people, and they are known for and proud of their hospitality, friendliness, and self-sufficiency. They like to live close to their family members and clan members so that they can help each other in times of need. It is a social organization to function with the community.\(^{37}\) Parents teach their children to honor and respect, and when someone is speaking, everyone is listening. The Hmong family beliefs and practices, as well as


achievements, operate within the community so that people may praise them for success for themselves, family, and clan.  

Limitations

The Hmong people are all over the world, and they have similar practices of the faith that they believe. Still, some may have distanced themselves from the original method of the ritual practice of animism because they lack information and training. However, for this research, it will focus on the local area Hmong community only. The Hmong men have pride and ego, and they want people and their households to respect them, and if they are leaders within the city, they want people to honor them as someone with high authority. The Hmong elders teach their sons that, "Men must learn the customs and rituals for the religious ceremonies and ritual in the faith of animism." It means that each male of the family must learn how to practice the ritual in case of hardships. It is a custom for most Hmong men to have their parents, grandparents, and relatives to live with them in the same household.

The limitation is not just for the men, but it is also for the women. The woman's role is to care for the children and manage the household. Toomey-Ting and Chung write, "Females in many cultures are expected to act in a nurturing manner, to be more effective, and to play the primary caregiver role." Once a woman is married, she belongs to the husband's side of the family. The in-laws have full influence on how she is to live her life with her husband and his

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clan. It is similar to Ruth when she said to her mother-in-law Naomi "...For where you go I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16). The women do not have any voice when it comes to faith, and their husbands always have the final decision. It will limit her right to choose the belief that she wanted, and if she wants to be a follower of Jesus Christ, she has dishonored her virtue as a good daughter to her parents or her husband and his clan.

The Christian children, as well as brothers or relatives, also have limited choices when it comes to faith. Every one of the households must honor the cultural practice of the Hmong, and no one must ignore it. When a member of the family converted to a new faith, they are considered outcasts and banned from the clan. The conversion causes division among the Hmong, and they say that the spiritual formation made the believers distance themselves from other family members because once they converted, they did not want anything to do with the nonbelievers. They are forbidden to contact their families because of the faith they choose. They have dishonored the family's name. Understandably, the believers must put their trust in Christ because God uses Christians to point out the truth of the good news to others.41 They need to stay connected not only to the Christians but also to the nonbelievers.

Delimitations

The researcher finds that the Hmong culture is a belief that they do not want to stop practicing because of the respect that they have for their clan leaders and elders. He must know what is holding the people to a religion that they practiced even though they cannot see any path for eternal salvation. He must strive to understand why when someone dies, friends and family

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do not send the deceased to heaven but to hell instead, and what the critical role of a shaman or an elder with the knowledge of performing ritual sacrifices is. To bridge the gap between two beliefs, the researcher must distinguish the differences between the two. The researcher should tell the target group what the Christian faith is and how it can have an impact on their life if they decide to believe Christ.

The researcher will implement his findings to help the target people to understand the path to salvation. He will introduce the Gospel to the Hmong people in a way that does not offend their tradition, and through the preaching of the good news, they will be lead to believe in Jesus. They need to know that the salvation for eternal life is free because Christ has paid for their sins on the cross. Eternal salvation has no limit, and it is open to all; the church does not force them to convert from their traditional belief to Christianity, but it is by choice. Once someone's heart is stirring, he is committed to pursuing his desire for salvation. A person does not do spiritual formation through his own accord, but God divinely enables it through three essential resources: God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's people (the church).

To help fix the issue between the nonbelievers and the believers for the Hmong people, the researcher will provide useful information about the Christian faith versus the Animism belief. The researcher will use the skills of observation, analysis, data, and good judgment. Vyhmeister and Robertson write, "The ability to think critically – and that does not mean criticizing others or their ideas, but weighing all the evidence carefully – is enhanced by learning

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the research process."44 The researcher will tell the people that when people accept Christ as their Savior, they are only seeking eternal salvation. It is not that they are abandoning their heritage or people. The Hmong has a saying in this regard, "Lawb dlaab tsi lawb neej – convert to Christianity but do not disown your people," it means that one can become a Christian, but one cannot forget who one is and will always remain a Hmong. Because they believe in Jesus, they have eternal life (John 3:16).

The researcher should encourage parents and clan leaders to allow people to choose their faith. It is their choice, and they should be able to arrange for their own sake. The researcher should tell them that it is not a matter of "who has the true religion?"45 It is understandable that when someone chooses another religion over the one that was in the family for generation after generation, his family will cast him out. Still, the researcher should share with the family, relatives, and clan that it is God's grace, which is given freely to all people, that their loved one receives. Earley and Dempsey write, "We are saved through Christ to bring God glory; we grow spiritually to bring God glory; we serve to bring God glory; in our suffering, we bring God glory; we use our gifts, bearing fruit to bring God glory. Every aspect of our lives should live to fulfill God's plan for our lives, namely, to bring Him glory."46 The researcher will share with them that they should trust in Jesus Christ's death and His resurrection for their sins, and they will have


eternal life.\textsuperscript{47} He is planting the seed in them, he will water it with the Word of God, and it is up to God to make it grow.

Thesis Statement

Christians must present the Gospel effectively to the Hmong people so that they can become a follower of Christ as well. Most of the Hmong people who accept Christ do not know how to write and read because they are old, and some of them never attended school. To be able to educate and teach them about their faith, the researcher will present the Gospel to the Hmong people in person. For the Hmong, accepting a new faith even as they do not fully understand the meaning of trust is very difficult for them, so Christians must go and proclaim the Gospel effectively to them so that they know that what they believe is something real. They need to learn about Christian doctrine. A person converted will have a change of belief, behavior, identity, and a sense of belonging.\textsuperscript{48} McClendon writes, "Faithful living is who Christ is, and what he has done, not the physical benefits following Christ might bring."\textsuperscript{49}


\textsuperscript{48}Elmer John Thiessen, \textit{The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defense of Proselytizing and Persuasion} (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 27.

Chapter 2
Conceptual Framework

The Hmong people must understand that there is no way to receive salvation if they continue to put their faith and trust in the dead ancestor. The researcher should develop a way to address this issue with them. This research will show that the Gospel can effectively be proclaimed to the Hmong people so that they can become Christians without offending their traditional beliefs.

Literature Review

The book, An Introduction to Hmong Culture, written by Ya Po Cha, shares with its audience the life of a group of people whose lives were shattered by wars. It also introduces the Hmong cultural tradition of how they maintain their identity by keeping their artwork, instruments, and how it carries its traditions from generation to generation as a proud group of people. The Hmong people are proud of their culture. Because they did not have a written language to record the teachings of their religion, people remember it through folktales, religious rites, oral history, and Chinese government documentaries. Historians have been able to piece together a sketchy timeline of ancient Hmong history. The word Hmong means "Free people." The Hmong called themselves free because they want to be free from other people's rules and oppression. History says that over 5,000 years ago, the Hmong people lived under the control of imperial China. They did not want to be ruled by the Chinese government.

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Thinking that they could escape from the government, they moved to live in the highest peaks of the mountains where they would have their freedom. They wanted to live and roam their country freely without the government intervening in their daily lives. Even though they tried to live and enjoy their freedom, the Chinese continued to oppress the Hmong people, and many of them immigrated to different parts of Southeast Asia. Most of the Hmong people settled in Laos, where they thought that they had finally found a place of freedom. When the Vietnam war began, and many of them became refugees.\(^5\) Some of the Hmong have settled in the Western world. Around 200,000 Hmong people currently live in the United States, mostly in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.\(^5\)

Cha's book, An Introduction to Hmong Culture, says that the family is vital to the Hmong people. Many families live under the same roof because they like to live close to each other so that they can support and help one another in times of need. To keep the honor of the family's name is what every Hmong family wants, so a son would always be most valued because he would carry down the family line. Hmong women in the past, and even now still treated with inequality.\(^5\) Women's role in the house has to do with cooking, cleaning, raising children. Almost all Hmong women have no education because their parents would not allow them to go to school to learn how to read and write. They say that only men are allowed to study. It is a tradition that the Hmong carried down from generations. The female, one day, will be married

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and will belong to another clan, and she is to be obedient to her husband. Respecting and honoring one's elders is expected of Hmong children, and this is crucial to the Hmong culture. Hmong children are to care for their elders when they can no longer take care of themselves. Usually, this duty falls to the youngest son of all the siblings for any Hmong family. Children are to love, honor, and be obedient to their parents so that they can be blessed and achieve success in life.

Hmong people value their history and identity. Young men are to learn and preserve their integrity. Cha says that Hmong clan leaders must have an open mind and not let anything cloud their judgment. They must have a vast knowledge of Hmong culture, leadership, and communication skills. There has never been a single Hmong leader who could unite all the Hmong people. The Hmong try to live peacefully and strive to be self-sufficient. Cha wrote, "For peaceful co-existence, we need to adapt to a life that reflects the laws and habits of the dominant society. We must learn to improve our socio-economic status, participate in civil service, and pursue higher education." Those who aim for higher education have become successful businessmen. Many of these have gone back to study the history of the Hmong and get more involved in participating in and preserving Hmong cultural history.

Cha also talked about the Hmong cultural traditions that remain a big part of the Hmong life. Those who have not converted to Christianity still practice their traditional religious rituals.

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57 Cha, *An Introduction to Hmong Culture*, 201.

for celebrations such as New Year, the birth of a child, weddings, and funerals. The Hmong, wedding, and funeral ceremonies are two of the most important celebrations.

The Hmong wedding is a long process. Some will last up to three days because it is not just focusing on the groom and the bride, but it is all about the uniting of the two families. There are lots of negotiating between the families dowry that will meet the need. It is also how the groom gets his bride. In the past, most of the Hmong brides are brides that were kidnapped by Hmong men. If a man likes a woman, but he cannot get to court her, then he would wait by the road where she always goes to work in the field to kidnap her for his wife.

In some cases, if a man likes a woman, but she refuses to marry him, he would find a way to take a piece of the things that belong to her, such as a string of hair, comb, belt, or hairpin. He would bring the items to the family as evidence; because the man had in his possession, she cannot deny him in marriage. The family would force her to marry the man in order not to bring shame to the family.

The act of kidnapping brides was already in the Old Testament. The tribe of Benjamin practiced the kidnapping of brides. Scripture wrote, "And they commanded the people of Benjamin, saying, "Go and lie in ambush in the vineyards and watch. If the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come out of the vineyards and snatch each man his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin." (Judg 21:20-21). Hmong people may not remember or know this, but similar in the Old Testament, and today, it still practiced in some Asian countries. When they first came to the United States, they did use the same practice, but they ended up being charged and fined or got jailed for kidnapping. Now the Hmong have stopped this practice in the United States.
Marriage between two people is essential to the Hmong. Once two people decide to get married, because they love each other, marriage is for life because they are married to the family and clan. Divorce seldom happens, and the bride's side of the family will always force her to go back with her husband. Negotiating is the way that both sides of the family can finalize the wedding. It is a method both sides of the family use a mediator to settle the dowry of the bride. In the United States, a dowry for a bride is six thousand dollars. Five thousand dollars is for the price of the bride, and the other one thousand dollars is for the feast to celebrate the occasion. The dowry for the Hmong people is an endowment, another way for the bride's brother to pay for his bride. The dowry price is identical in the Old Testament. Scripture writes, "And the servant brought out jewelry of silver and gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave to her brother and her mother costly ornaments." (Gen 24:53). Marriage is God's divine plan for the human race.59 The dowry system is a long-standing practice in Eastern culture that is still in use today.

Besides the dowry of the bride, there are still other matters that both mediators need to do. The mediator for the Hmong is called "Mejkoob." In the Hmong wedding, there is more than one mediator or negotiator between the families. There are two dialects for the Hmong, the Blue and White dialect. If the bride is a Blue Hmong, it requires one negotiator, but if she is a White Hmong, then it will require two negotiators. The negotiator will discuss if there was any dispute or issue with the families in the past. If there were, then it needs to be resolved during the negotiation to avoid further problems in the future, and the groom will have to pay a fine to fix the issue. The negotiation process can go from several hours to three days. It can be a long

process of talk, but a meal is provided to all the guests when both parties agree to the term. After the feast, the groom takes his bride home, and there will also be a meal awaiting them, welcoming the bride and groom. The mediator (Mejkoob) will give them a blessing about the relationship, marriage, morality, parenting, money, and the world.60

Honor and respect are two more essential traits for the Hmong. Parents teach their children to respect others as their parents taught them. Two Hmong with the same last name cannot marry each other. It means that a man with a last name "Yang" cannot marry a woman with the same last name, "Yang." People with the same last name are brothers and sisters, and they came from the same ancestors. If anyone chooses to disobey this order, people will cast them out because they caused an embarrassed to the clan and family.

Today, many of the Hmong men and women have entered an interracial marriage. Some Hmong parents accepted this practice while others disowned their children. Some of the Hmong who live in the new world are Christians, and as a believer of Christ, they understand that it is God's will for a man and a woman to be as husband and wife. Scripture writes, "Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man." (Gen 2:18; 21-22). Erickson writes, "According to Genesis 2:24, man and woman are to become one, a union of two separate entities is entailed."61 Hmong people believe that once they married the one they love, they become one. They also think that the women they married are chosen for them by God because it predestined

60 Andy Stanley, Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love To (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 102.

that the woman was from his rib and that she was to be united with him as one to make it complete.

Another important celebration for the Hmong people is death. A Hmong funeral is not a one-day funeral. In the past, a funeral would last up to seven days for someone who died and people respected. The traditional Hmong funeral is not a short one to two-hour visitation and then a brief funeral service before the internment. Hmong people treat death as an essential event in a person's life.\textsuperscript{62} Death is a transition of this world into the afterlife. Even though the body dies, the soul lives on. The funeral is to celebrate the success of a person's life and their soul to enter the spirit world and the next life. Family, relatives, and friends will pay their final respect to the deceased. Hmong have a saying, "Moog hlub ua zag kawg – Go and pay the last respect." It is a way to show love and support to the deceased's family during his/her funeral.

A Hmong funeral needs lots of preparation. The nonbelievers, there is a need for a path pointer (\textit{Tug taw kev}). The family must pay this man to perform a ritual for the deceased during the funeral. His job is to point the way for the departed's spirit to find his way back to the house where he was born with a chant so that he may enter his placenta and that he could reincarnate into another person. If the deceased was born in Laos, the path pointer must include all the cities, states, places, and countries where he has been or lived. While the path pointer chants, he must also burn fake money to the spirits' world, asking the leader of those places for permission to enter and pay for the spirit of the deceased to cross their territories. He must perform his duty correctly for the dead to find his way back to his birthplace for re-birth without any mistake. The path pointer (\textit{Tug taw kev}) must not miss any small details. If the path pointer made a mistake or

\textsuperscript{62} Cha, \textit{An Introduction to Hmong Culture}, 101.
left out a particular place without mentioning it, then the dead's spirit would be lost, and he cannot reincarnate.

The family also needs someone who plays an instrument to accompany the dead person. This person is called Qheng player (Txiv qeej). He will play the instrument Qheng (Qeej) to guide the dead's spirit to reach the dead ancestors and to his afterlife. The Qheng (Qeej) usually plays with a drum (lub nruag) from a slow tune to a fast beat. While the Qheng player (Txiv Qeej) is playing, there is another person called blesser (Txiv xaiv). This person's job is to bless the family of the deceased with words of wisdom. He blessed them to have success in life. In some cases, this person usually does not give all the blessings to the family; he needs to keep some for himself; otherwise, his life will be miserable because he gave all to others, and there is nothing left for him.

The family of the deceased not only must worry about finding the people to send their loved one to the afterlife; they still have to worry about feeding the guests. Most of the Hmong funerals, the family must spend days preparing food for the funeral. They must assign different people to different tasks. There will be killing of animals such as cows, pigs, chicken, and other types of livestock. It is in preparation to receive their guests who come to pay their last respect to their loved one who has died. A family must kill at least one cow to ten cows for the deceased to take on his journey. The offering is only for the dead in name, and the meat is share with all the guests. A wealthy or well-known person will have a significant and grand funeral that will cost twenty to fifty thousand dollars, while most families spent far less than that for their loved ones.

Hmong Christians view funerals differently from the nonbelievers. When a believer dies, the family will consult with their pastor and let the church take care of the funeral service. In some cases, if the deceased family does not have any family, then the church will help care for
most of the cooking and preparations, but most of the time, Hmong people always have a large family, so it still falls on the family to find help. A Christian funeral will last two or three days, and it usually happens on the weekends. The reason that the family chooses to have the funeral on the weekend is because of distant relatives. Funerals for the Hmong are as crucial as a wedding. When someone dies, people from all around the world will come to visit and say their goodbyes and choosing the weekend (Saturday, Sunday, and Monday) is best for the family to travel.

Sometimes it is hard for a pastor to do a funeral for so many days. He has two services on Saturday, one service on Sunday evening, and the internment is on Monday with a short message. He will use other pastors to help, and there are times that the deceased family will request a preferred pastor to give a sermon during the funeral. It is up to the pastor to decline their request or allow it with strict guidelines. During the funeral worship services, the pastor shares and proclaims the Gospel to both the believers and nonbelievers. It is the opportunity to give hope to the living about the resurrection and the life of Jesus Christ that they will see their loved one again in heaven and live with Him forever and ever.

The dead's spirit may not find his way back to his birthplace in the animism faith, but a Christian knows that Christ saved him already. Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6). Jesus is the way to heaven. Believe and trust in Jesus, you have life. (John 3:16). There is no re-incarnation to be another person as the nonbelievers believe. The Christians know that when someone dies, his spirit lives with God in heaven. While Christians do not fear death, they also weep with families who face death and comfort them with the God who loved them and has conquered death itself.63 Death is

not the end; the Scripture tells us that "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Rev 21:4).

The Hmong perform a traditional ritual for almost every event that they have. The Hmong believe in animism, "the way of the spirit," holding that "living and nonliving objects, animals and plants, human beings and nature, all have souls or spirits and are interconnected." The shaman, or holy man, is the mediator between both worlds, and between the living and the dead. The Shamans provided additional insight into the perceived relationship between aging, weakness, and illness. Often in this belief, the human being has multiple souls. It is difficult to explain what all Hmong believe because there is no structure or written source. There is much disagreement between them as to who has the true religion in the world. There is no Bible or written law to dictate Hmong traditions, culture, and life. Some Hmong cultural rituals may be practiced more in certain parts of the world than in others due to political or societal norms. Hmong love to sing traditional songs while working in the fields. During courtship, weddings, and funerals, they sing with traditional Hmong instruments. After dinner, they love to tell stories. The two musical instruments that are most recognized are the Qheng (Qeej) and the mouth harp (Ncaas). The Hmong women are known for their embroidery on festival clothing, and it is a signature of Hmong culture.

The Gospel can be presented more effectively to the Hmong when one knows about their

64 Bloomfield, Hmong American in Michigan: Discovering the Peoples of Michigan, 17.
65 Mark Edward Pfeifer, Monica Chiu, and Kou Yang, Diversity in Diaspora (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2013), 198.
67 Cha, An Introduction to Hmong Culture, 131.
tradition and cultural practice. Understanding Hmong beliefs about working to please the spirits is essential when sharing with them God's grace, which is given freely to all people, and this will not offend many of their cultural practices, even though it may conflict with some.

Theological Foundations

The theological foundations of this research are a commitment to the continuity of the Old Testament and New Testaments in the redemptive work of bringing the human race back to God. When God created the human race, He created them in His image. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God, he created him; male and female he created them." (Gen 1:27). God created the entire human race in the perfect image of God. Walvoord and Zuck wrote, "This image was imparted only to humans."68 Humans were placed in the garden to take care of God's creation, and their service is to God.

God commanded humans, saying, "But the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die." (Gen 2:17). Satan tempted the first humans Adam and Eve to fall into his trap, and so they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Since they disobeyed God's command, they sinned. God separated them from Him and removed them from the Garden of Eden. Sin caused a broken relationship between humanity and God, the Creator. The devil wants to destroy the things that God created and continue to make people stray away from God's presence. Sin comes in every person, and human beings continue to need salvation and discipline to be able to be reconciled to God.69 Because Satan lied, God's


promises said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Gen 3:15, NIV). Hamilton wrote, "It is an event that is a foreordained as the incarnation of Jesus."70 To redeem the human race, God will send His Son to save the world because He is a holy, loving, merciful, and just God who will not forsake His creation.

Jesus was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus suffered and was nailed to the cross to free sinners and reconcile them back to God. While He was on the cross, Scripture writes, "When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished,' and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." (John 19:30). Jesus meant that He finished His work of saving the world. He died for the sin of the world. He conquered sin, death, and the devil. Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16). Satan will continue to deceive and tempt people to believe in other gods and love earthly things so that people can fall into his trap of eternal condemnation. God loves His creation, and He sent His one and only Son to dwell among the people and redeem His creation so that He can help humanity return to God. Jesus came and completed the task on the cross, but the human race continues to sin and refuses to believe in Jesus. Even though people continue to ignore God's grace, He does not forsake sinners. He still wants to redeem all.

Like any sinner, the Hmong people resist the Christian faith. They would rather believe a religion that their ancestors believed for generations, which is the belief of spirits or dead ancestors instead of believing in the resurrected Christ for their salvation. They feel that the people who converted to the Christian faith are simply repeating another traditional story about

this world and the next. They see this religion just as another religion like any other, and their belief is better because they have practiced it for centuries. The Hmong people worship their ancestors, plants, animals, or objects that cannot give eternal life. God, the Creator, created the things that the Hmong worship, but they still deny God and will not acknowledge Him in their presence. The Hmong people should believe in a God who is all-powerful, mighty, and righteous, and they should know that the things they trust have no power to forgive sins or to give them eternal salvation. The only way to have salvation is through Christ. (John 14:6).

Hmong people need to understand that it is not through their parents or ancestors that they will find salvation but only through true faith in Jesus. (John 3:16). God did not send Jesus to condemn the world but saving through Him. Jesus said, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:17-18).

As mentioned previously, one of the most popular rituals that the Hmong people practice is the tying of string (Khiteg), an object with no life or power. It is a ritual that the Laotian people practiced, and since the Hmong people live among them, it became a custom for them, and they adopted it to be one of their rituals for almost any event, whether in good times or bad times. Whether in sickness, for weddings, at farewells or visitations from relatives, at birthdays, and on many other occasions, the Hmong will perform the ritual of tying a string (Khiteg) for their loved ones. Tying the white string is actively practiced among nonbelievers. The head of the event will bless the roll of white strings and give them to the guests to bless or wish the sick to be healthy.

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and that the white string will bring health and wealth to him or her. In the case of illness, they believe that the white string will tie and keep the spirit with his or her body so that the person can heal quicker. They think that the soul of the sick left the body, and that is the cause of the sickness. The white string has no power, and it is just an object with no life. It is an idol, and it will not be able to give the sick any healing and hope, but the Hmong people still think that this idolatrous worship will save them.

When Moses went to the mountains for an extended period, the people thought that Moses had died. They began to worship the golden calf, an idol image that has no life. (Exod 32:8). The Hmong people are like the Israelites; they have lost their way from the true religion, and the truth which can save their souls. They picked up other faiths or traditions from the places that they lived. They added or adopted other people's beliefs to their daily lives and carried them as their own beliefs. Nevertheless, God sees and loves the Hmong people, and He sent missionaries to spread the Gospel, telling them that Jesus is the way to the truth and the life. (John 14:6). He wants the Hmong to know that Jesus is the sacrifice that can save and free them from all their worries about health or wealth. They just need to put their faith in God and believe. God's word said, "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32). God wants them to know the truth about God that people believe. He is the Creator, and all the things that people worship belong to Him. The Hmong people should seek the true religion that can save their souls when they leave this earth because the faith that they believe in now only gives them despair. Jesus Christ is the bridge that connects the believers to heaven, and all they have to do is to trust and accept Christ. The Hmong must know that they can count on God when they are facing obstacles in their lives because God's word said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matt 11:28, NIV).
To the Hmong Christians, their family is fundamental to them, and to please the family, clan, relatives, or friends, they feel that they must do whatever they can to stay connected or close to them. In a Hmong family, the children do not leave home. The whole household lives under the same roof, and it is part of the way that they honor their parents and family. Parents teach their children never to disobey them. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." (Eph 6:1-3). In joining their parents, family, and relatives in ritual ceremonies like tying the string (Khiteg), they want to show the family that they are still true to their identity as Hmong brothers and sisters. The truth is that they do not know that whatever they did is wrong in the eyes of God, and it is not an excellent way to witness to another believer of Christ. Scripture writes, "Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." (Exod 34:14, NIV). Sometimes the influences of others can blind believers, and they cannot see that what they do will impact their faith and the faith of others. God despises idol worshippers, and He wants idol worshippers to come to Him and repent. The Hmong believers who fall back into the old belief are usually the ones who do not have a strong faith or still want to keep the practice of animism with their Christian faith. Others can quickly become brainwashed because they want to stay true to their family's tradition and do not want to be called an outcast. The family is indeed essential, but a believer should always put God as his number one priority and should remember that God always comes first. Scripture said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matt 6:33). God is more powerful than a piece of string wrapped around a person's wrist. He is alive and listens, hears, and answers all prayers of the righteous.
The Hmong must know and understand the importance of what Jesus has done for them because it is crucial for shaping their faith. The researcher understands the tradition and culture of this target group because he is Hmong and has grown up in that culture. The presentation to the Hmong should begin with how God created the world as well as all humans. In the Old Testament, Scripture began with, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen 1:1). The Apostle John wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1). The Apostle John established a canonical link between the first words of the Old Testament Scriptures and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

God sent Jesus to save humanity from their sin. He wanted them to be blameless and holy. When people sin, they are separate from God. To redeem the world, God sent His Son not to condemn the world but to redeem the world. Kretzman wrote, "The believer accepts the redemption of Christ and becomes a follower of Jesus, thereby is save from the judgment of damnation." They are not to worship any other "gods" except God, the Creator. God's First Commandment said, "You shall have no other gods before me." (Exod 20:3). Paul wrote, "Encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory." (1 Thess 2:12, NIV). The righteousness of God has been made known. The good news has become a reality now. Jesus Christ is the connection for the Hmong people's salvation, and they need to stop worrying about being righteous for their ancestors. They do not have to worry about pleasing their ancestors' spirits anymore; they need to put their faith in Christ for all their needs.

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God wants all people, including the Hmong people, to submit to Him and be His children. He wants them to belong in His family. God's word wrote,

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." (Galatians 4:4-7).

God sends an invitation to all people, believers, and nonbelievers, to enter His heavenly kingdom and for those who are willing to accept God's grace and believe in Christ will become children of God and receive eternal salvation. The believers can proclaim the Gospel effectively to those who are still unsure of the Christian faith so that they can become Christians without offending their traditional beliefs. McRaney Jr. wrote, "God's purpose for us involves our responding to His invitation to join His family. He extends this desire to all the people of the world. God's desire is open to all who would respond because He desires none to perish, regardless of race or heritage."74 They must tell the people that God is a living God, loving, gracious, mighty, and powerful. He does not choose the color, ethnicity, tribe, language of a person, "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28).

It is necessary to tell the people that being a believer is not just saying or claiming to be one. A believer follows Jesus with a life of obedience, attending worship, having fellowship with other Christians, participating in activities within the groups, and learning more about the doctrine of the faith. People should not abuse the grace of God that He gave them but embrace it and live according to His will. Issler wrote, "Rather than focusing primarily on external conformity to moral rules—which becomes burdensome—Jesus teaches that we need to give

74 McRaney, Jr., The Art of Personal Evangelism, 16.
closer attention to our inner life.”75 People should use all the talents and gifts that God has given to them to proclaim His love and mercy to other nonbelievers so that they, too, can have the same blessing from God. The believer should have the same attitude of concern for people’s salvation. Spencer wrote, "Paul is concerned that Timothy communicates God's concern to save sinners (e.g., Paul in Tim 1:15), everyone, including rulers, men and women (Tim 2:1–14), believers and nonbelievers (Tim 2:1; 4:10, 16), and even Timothy himself (Tim 4:16)."76 The ones who receive this blessing should not keep it for themselves, but they need to share it because God's salvation is for all people.

This researcher encourages believers that it is not only on Sundays that they believe, but it is for the rest of the week. The believers cannot do whatever they please or say that the one hour they gave on Sunday was sufficient. They need to have Christ twenty-four seven and praise Him every day of their lives. Fowl wrote, "The Greek word hagioi translated as "holy ones." This term sometimes rendered in the commentary as "saints."77 They are the living saints serving God and others in this world. A true believer will use his life to glorify God and serve Him, so the Hmong, who convert into the Christian faith, should also learn how to live the way Christians do. Though some of the Hmong believers should know that the Christian faith does not prevent them from fellowship with their nonbelieving friends and relatives and that there are some of the things that they need to avoid are the participation in pagan ritual activities. If they involve themselves in such events, then they are sinning, and their church denomination can ask them to

repent, and if they do not, the church can excommunicate them for such action. Scripture writes, "If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." (John 20:23, NIV). God gave the office of the keys to the church with the authority to forgive or not to forgive a person who is unrepentant when they commit sins.

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matt 16:19, NIV). Luther's Small Catechism explains that "The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the repentant as long as they do not repent." 78

The pastor and other church leaders must not ignore those who do not commit themselves fully to the church, but they should encourage them and pray for them. If there are one or two more members who rarely attend church regularly, they need to personally reach out to the members and encourage them to come back to church. "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (1 Thess 5:11).

There is an old story about the devil who was once advertising his tools for sale. These tools were displayed for public inspection on the date of the deal, each one priced accordingly. The apparatus shown are hatred, envy, jealousy, deceit, lying, pride, and so on. There was one unique tool that was set apart from the rest, a harmless-looking tool, well-worn and rusted, but the price was very high. A curious customer asked the devil, "What is this tool?" "That is discouragement," replied the devil. "Why have you priced it so high?" "Because it is my most used tool, more than the others. I can pry open and get inside a person's heart with that tool when other tools cannot get near them. Once it gets inside, I can make them do whatever I choose. The

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78 Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism*, 224.
tool is worn because it used on almost everyone." This illustration shows that discouragement works in people's hearts and will cause them not to be able to encourage and support another person. In this journey of life, whether one is a Christian leader or a friend when one gets discouraged or feels let down by someone or something, one will lose heart. It is also true for pastors and for the people they want to encourage to do the right thing.

Constant connection and encouragement from the pastor, elders, and believers may help the person realizes that he needs to reconnect himself back to the church. If the person is not encouraged continually, he will fall into the temptations of the world, and his faith will be weak. The pastor should visit his members weekly and go through the membership of his parish in a year so that they know that the pastor cares for them.\textsuperscript{80} The believer is not only open to the followers of Jesus Christ, but His mission is for all nations. Dyck wrote, "Being a missional church doesn't necessarily mean being a congregation and community center in a city core. But it does mean being open to all."\textsuperscript{81} It is the will of God that the Hmong people come to faith through the hearing of the Gospel, so the believers need to go and share the good news of Jesus to them so that they too may be saved.

"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (Romans 10:14-15).


Christians need to continue to learn, live, and share Jesus Christ with the world. Strong foundations require strong leadership, and if the pastor and leaders of the church continue to show their support, encouragement, and love to those who are weak in faith, providing them proper discipline and instruction, the members will improve and remain faithful. Lowe and Lowe wrote, "When we encourage others, they can reciprocate by engaging in kind deeds or words. If growth and development in a human ecosystem mirror growth and development in the natural order, it stands to reason that spiritual formation follows similar patterns of development." In a healthy church, everyone must give their time, input, and involvement because it is not just one person who can make the church stand firm, but it takes every part of the church's body to build a lasting and robust church. It will take teamwork to achieve this goal with God's help.

God's Great Commission is for the believers to share the Gospel with all nations and tell them that the foundation of the true faith is in Jesus Christ. The Hmong people must understand that once a person becomes a believer, he cannot go back and practice the religion of animism anymore. He cannot worship two gods as Scripture says, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." (Matt 6:24, NIV). They must know that if they are being ridiculed or persecuted for their faith, they need not be afraid but stand firm to the end because God's word said that "It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed." (Deut 31:18). "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong." (1 Cor 16:13, NIV). "Stand firm, and you will

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82 Stephen D. Lowe and Mary E. Lowe, *Ecologies of Faith in a Digital Age: Spiritual Growth through Online Education* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 126.
win life." (Luke 21:19, NIV). Live a life worthy of the calling of being Christ disciples. The glory and honor are His.

Theoretical Foundations

This researcher must gather all the useful resources for this research topic. Any person who is working with the Hmong must be able to defend what they say with Scripture because the truths of the Christian faith are in the scriptures. Scripture is not only written for the Israelites, but it is for all nations. The Bible is the source of information for all people, so that they may come to faith in Jesus. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr. wrote, "In his wisdom, God has given his people the kind of revelation he decided would be best for us. Our task is to understand by responding to what God has communicated in ways that demonstrate our obedience and faithfulness to that revelation." The Bible is God's Word, yet it has come to all people through human means. Some people point to similarities between the Bible and their cultural practices, but these may not be similar at all.

There is an example that people usually refer the Hmong's religion to a comparison of a shaman and Moses. In a ritual, the shaman wears a black veil to cover his face as he performs his chanting ritual. The reason that the shaman is wearing the black mask is to cover his face while he is speaking to the spirits. It is how he is communicating with the spirits. After the ritual, the shaman will give the family the answer that he got from the unknown spirits about the problem that the family or the sick person is experiencing. In the Old Testament, Moses, too, wore a veil. Scripture wrote, "Whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would remove the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he

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commanded, the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again until he went in to speak with him." (Exod 34:34-35). Walton, Matthew, and Chavalas wrote, "Moses and the people recognize it as evidence that Moses has had direct contact with God. Subsequently, he wears a veil over his face to hide the radiance of his skin from the people."84 The Hmong people also believe that the shaman has direct contact with the spirits and that whatever the people did wrong, the shaman can negotiate the deal with the spirits on their behalf, but actually, it is not the same at all. Most of the time, many shamans stated that when they cover their eyes with the veil, all they see is darkness in front of their eyes. They do not know any spirit or hear any voice talking to them. They have already pre-planned what they want to say so that the family will believe them, and then they will tell the family to offer an animal sacrifice as a way to relieve the hardship.

Psychologically, if the family does as the shaman said, then they feel that something has satisfied the spirit, and it solved the problem. They want to believe the shaman because they have lost hope and desperately need that comfort, and all they want is to let it be as the shaman told them. Most of the Hmong who converted to the Christian faith see that the pastor is like the mediator between them and God. Their hope is in the pastor; he can ask God for the things that they need. Christians have faith in a loving God, and their hope is in Jesus Christ because He said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened." (Matt 7:7-8). The researcher also encourages the believers the way that the Apostle John encouraged the believers, "And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that

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if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him." (1 John 5:14-15). The Gospel of Mark wrote, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (Mark 11:24). God's words give hope to the people who live in despair.

This researcher understands that he is working with a group of people that has a rich history and tradition. They have practiced their religion for centuries and may not want to change because they do not wish to dishonor their parents and clan elders. The researcher must tell the Hmong that they cannot mix the Christian faith with the animism faith. Jesus said, "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins." (Mark 2:21-22). Any believer, who still hangs on to the old religion of animism, and put his faith and trust in his dead ancestors' spirits that they will do righteous works for him, is following the path to destruction. Kretzman wrote, "And the new wine of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake does not suit the hearts of that are still bound up in self-righteousness."85 The researcher will use his ministry experiences to encourage the people that each person must believe and have faith for themselves; they cannot believe for their family. Kretzman wrote, "Where the hearts have been renewed, made entirely new by the power of the Word, there the hearts accept the glorious news of their redemption and are preparing for life eternal."86 The researcher must tell the Hmong that if someone keeps on

86 Ibid., 174.
holding to his old faith is not worthy of being Christ's followers. Scripture said that "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62).

Someone who is working with the Hmong should be able to discern the problems that arise within the group of people that have a tradition that they cherish strongly. The younger generation wants to convert as soon as they can, and they do not want to offend their parents and clan elders. They witness that some older people have lost hope when a ritual does not seem enough to please the spirits. They see that Christianity will give them what they want. It will be a faith that they do not have to make a sacrifice to the spirits for their sins. In the back of their minds, they are still afraid of the lack of support from clan and family if they are converting. The researcher must find out what is behind the problems. He needs to evaluate the strengths and witnesses of the people who turn to the Christian faith so that he can help with the spiritual formation of the group. He must lead his people to see that they can believe in Christ and stand firm in their faith while they can still be involved with the nonbelievers in their family, relatives, and friends.

The researcher must use church models to display the structure of spiritual formation to the Hmong. He can show them how the Gospel can be presented effectively to the Hmong through the church involvement, prayer, and with the help of the Holy Spirit. The message that the researcher is addressing to the Hmong people needs to be clear that they would understand. He needs to tell them that Christ came to this earth to be born of the virgin, was made man with flesh and blood like all humanity, experienced what humankind experienced, suffered, and crucified on the cross for our sins. Christ, who conquered sin, death, and the devil, is now alive. He sits at the right hand of God in heaven and will return to take the believers to be with Him in heaven forever and ever. Jesus said, "I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one
may seize your crown." (Rev 3:11). The researcher must encourage the believers to stand firm and hold fast to their faith, and to understand that they will lose the crown of life if they do not have steadfast faith. Believers will struggle on their life's journey of faith in this world, but it is only for a little while because their home is in heaven. When Jesus comes, He will say, ‘Well done good and faithful servant! Come and share your master's happiness!’ (Matt 25:23, NIV).

It will be a joy for the researcher to know that the Christians, who were once animistic believers, are now Christ's followers. They, in turn, will go back to their families and share Jesus so that they, too, can receive the joy of salvation. Earley and Wheeler write, "It also brings me joy because when I evangelize, I am making the name of Jesus famous."87 The people who share the glory of Jesus' name, they, too, will experience the same joy. Keener writes, "Yet in all phases, we are created to bring God glory: we are saved to bring God glory; we grow spiritually to bring God glory; we serve to bring God glory; in our suffering, we bring God glory; we use our gifts, bearing fruit to bring God glory. Every aspect of our lives should be lived to fulfill God's plan for our lives, namely, to bring Him glory."88

There will be weaknesses in Christians, but despite all the criticism from the people that they love, they become God's children, and God is sending them to reach out to others so that they, too, may come to receive the inheritance of eternal life. Putman, Harrington, and Coleman write, "God is involved in evangelism at every point and level. Regeneration/conversion is 100 percent, God. However, He chooses to use various instruments to draw people to Himself."89 God gives them the promise of eternal salvation in heaven, which is the strength of their faith.

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They follow Christ's Great Commission, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28:19-20). They are imitating Christ. The disciples listened to Jesus teach, they taught to others, and others came to faith. In the same way, when the believer is teaching the Gospel to others, and others receive it, they have become part of the disciple-making process. God wants to save all humanity. Those that rejected Him already condemned, but the one who accepted Him has eternal life. Christ said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35). The researcher must show the Hmong that they need to love one another just as Christ loved them, and they need to discipline themselves to serve Christ as His disciples to the world.
Chapter 3
Methodology

This research focused on the study research on the Hmong people who live in the areas of Lansing, Michigan. How is this problem being addressed? The researcher discussed the issues of spiritual formation to the participants who have become Christian and live among the nonbelievers, and how the Christian lives changed them. He interviewed the participants to see if they could still participate in rituals that their family or relatives are performing. Were there any restrictions on what they could not do if they were converting? What were the positive and negative impacts that were happening within their community? What were their involvements with nonbelievers regarding spiritual beliefs? The researcher encouraged the participants that people could judge them by their words and deeds.

The Hmong people liked to keep their traditions and customs the same way as they continue to keep their identity, and this is crucial to them. Family background was more important than individual accomplishments.  

90 Personal prestige and worth are often determined based on birth. The Apostle Paul also had many traditions as he advanced his training in Judaism, he wrote to the Galatians, "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers." (Gal 1:14). Paul did not stop being a Jew when he became a follower of Jesus Christ. Paul said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today." (Acts 22:3). He was "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a
Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee." (Phil 3:5). He preached the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ so that others may share God's blessings. He wrote, "To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the Gospel that I may share in its blessings." (1 Cor 9:22-23).

What will help the Hmong keep their identity when they convert to the Christian faith? Can they still practice their traditional belief and follow the Christian faith in Jesus Christ? The researcher knew that before the Gospel could effectively present to the Hmong people, he needed to find ways to make the people understand what it is to be a Christian. He interviewed the participants, and with the use of a recording device, he recorded the response of the people who converted to the new faith. He listened to them telling their story of conversion and how their spiritual formation impacted their daily lives. He knew that there was a need for improvement on how to present the word of God, teach the Christian doctrine, and lead the people to accept the Gospel and live a godly life. The objective was to help people understand the Christian faith so that they could leave their animistic belief behind and take the Christian faith seriously by stand firm in their faith as followers of Jesus Christ.

The researcher made a list of what method is needed to conduct the survey. First, he identified those who were willing to talk about their faith and spiritual formation by sending out flyers, letters, e-mails, and call potential participants. He asked the participants if they were willing to meet with him and sign a consent form for the participation of the research. The researcher collected data and information about the group of people that he was researching and learn about their culture and daily life. The participants could be a person who believed in the Christian faith for many years or someone who just converted. The purpose was not to
evangelize them, but it was to find out how the change has affected their daily life as a Christian because he noticed that the conversion or transformation of faith had affected a person's tradition and cultural practice. The researcher assured the participants that everything shared is kept confidential, and any recorded pieces of information were for the research project only. The data was not be shared or sold to any outside agent. The initially gathered information consisted of personal information such as name, age, gender, marital status, and occupation. The researcher could email a consent form to the participants in advance, and on the day of the interview, the participants could sign it. The participants could read the last section under "Your Consent" stated, "By signing this document, you agree to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above. I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study." (See Appendix A). The researcher determined that the methodology was the best way to gather all the resources and materials that he needed for his research.

The researcher collected his data with the use of a recording device and taking notes. He advised all the participants that he used the recording for the initial research project visit or meeting, and all participants had to comply with these directives. He also reminded the participants that they agreed to share information without reluctance, or under compulsion, coercion, or under duress and that they signed the consent of their own free will. The researcher then asked the participants if they consented to endorse the consent form and authorized the
Intervention Design

Liberty's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the field research project (See Appendix C for IRB approval). The researcher began to send out e-mails, flyers, and brochures to invite eligible participants to join the research study. The participant had to be a Hmong, who once practiced animism and was now Christian and 18 years of age or older. The researcher asked the participants who were willing to take part in the study a series of questions about their animism beliefs and the Christian faith experiences during a one-on-one interview. The interview session was recorded and could take approximately one hour to complete. The researcher might ask the participants to complete a follow-up interview if he finds that the data he collected was not clear, and it might take thirty minutes to complete the clarification. The participants who wanted to participate in the research study, they could contact the researcher through telephone or e-mail to schedule an interview. The researcher emailed a consent form to the participants once he secured the appointment time, and the participants had to sign the consent form before the conversation began. The researcher used the Participant Interview Schedule (See Figure 1) as an example to call and set up an interview with the participants.

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Figure 1. Participant Interview Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:00 AM</td>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:30 PM</td>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12:30 – 1:30 PM</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:00 PM</td>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:00 PM</td>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4:00 PM</td>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5:00 PM</td>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>Resident</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:00 AM</td>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:30 PM</td>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12:30 – 1:30 PM</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:00 PM</td>
<td>Participant 11</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:00 PM</td>
<td>Participant 12</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4:00 PM</td>
<td>Participant 13</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5:00 PM</td>
<td>Participant 14</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The yellow highlighted indicated the scheduled month and year for the interview. The green color was the confirmed appointment with the participant with the time—the red color indicated that the participant was not available. The blue color meant that an e-mail and flyer were e-mailing to the participants, and there was no response from them.

The researcher mailed follow-up letters to the participants who have not responded to the request. The message briefly stated, "Last week, an e-mail was sent to you, inviting you to participate in a research study. The e-mail is a follow-up e-mail to remind you to respond whether you would like to participate in the survey if you have not already done so. The deadline for the participation is June 13, 2020. If you are willing to participate in the research study, you may contact the researcher through telephone or e-mail to schedule an interview."
The purpose and objectives of the project intervention design plan were for the research facilitator to address the problem to the participants so that they understand the difference between animism and Christianity. The researcher could look for an agreement that animism only leads them to condemnation, and the Christian faith could point the people to Christ for eternal salvation. It was crucial to let them know that once they have accepted the Christian faith and became a follower of Christ, they remained faithful to their denomination's teaching and could not go back to the animistic religion. The researcher asked the participants if they had any pressure from their family, relatives, and clan, or one way to the other, and that have these people influenced them to go back to animism? He also asked them if they have ever reached out for help or prayed that their faith remains firm. Christianity might impact all the relationships in the believers' lives, sometimes with moms, dads, wives, husbands, children, church workers, teachers, and friends of all kinds, and their witness could be both positive and negative.92 The researcher had hope that this intervention could make a change in the problem that still draws the people to participate in animism because once they knew the truth, the truth could set them free, as Scripture wrote, "and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32). The Scripture could open their hearts and allowed them to embrace the true faith and had faith in Christ. The true faith taught them that they did not have to pray to their dead ancestors or make any more sacrifices for their sins, and through believing in Christ, they have life in Him. The researcher wanted to make sure that they did not get distracted or redirected in a different direction but focused on the emphasized research.93 The goal of the study was to narrow the topics between animism and Christianity.


Data Triangulation

The researcher started with a "data triangulation" identifying key features:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Individual Input</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pastor and members</td>
<td>Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and members</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative and clan</td>
<td>Outcomes and significant event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information sharing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidentiality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written and verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting location</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assess and record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants provided the answers to the questions, and the researcher applied an analysis based on the data and emerging model. It was crucial to know where the participants were coming from when they answered the questions. The researcher was not to judge the answers but analyzed them and figured out how the Gospel could be effectively proclaimed to the Hmong Christians so that they could understand their faith. The researcher used the data and emerging analysis (Figure 2.) to record his findings.

Figure 2. Data and Emerging Analysis

![Diagram of data and emerging analysis process]
Questions for the Participant

The researcher not only took notes, but engaged with the issues, asked questions, interpreted what the participants were saying, and critique the outcome of the session. He provided the basis for planning by establishing the basic six-questions framework - why, what, how, who, where, and when. He could also send the interview questions to the participants in advance (Appendix B). He used the following fundamental questions to respond to the participants' questions if they have any so that they understood the purpose, impacts, and consequences of the research study of a Hmong Christian once converted.

Why?
- Why are we studying "The Hmong Spiritual Formation from Animism to Christianity."
- Why is it significant to believe in dead ancestor spirits or believing in Jesus Christ?
- Why is it important to choose life (heaven) or death (hell)?

What?
- What is the issue relevant to the problem?
- What do they value?
- What is their purpose of believing in their belief?

How?
- How is the decision made within the individual, family, or group?
- How much influence do they have on the decision?
- How is the individual related to Animism and Christianity?

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Who?
- Who is centrally involved?
- Who has the resource?
- Who is linked to whom? In what ways?
Where?
- Where do people live, meet, work, and interact?
- Where are resources located?
- Where do the events happen? Home, church, or elsewhere?
When?
- When do things happen?
- When does the problem occur?
- When are resources available?
  During the interview, the participants focused on answering the issues of "The Hmong Spiritual Formation from Animism to Christianity," and the difference between Animism and Christianity:
Vision
  • Vision. What is the purpose of believing in the Animism or the Christian faith?
Mission
  • Mission. In which way does Animism enact its vision? The faith in providing health and spiritual well-being?
Goal and Objective
  • Goal. How does Animism or the Christian faith achieve its purposes?
  • Objective. Who will receive the desired outcome of the faith?
Structure and the Animism and Christianity faith

- **Roles.** Who has the authority to make the decision and give direction?
- **Responsibilities.** Who will perform which types of tasks?
- **Rules and procedures.** How will it be done?
- **Resources.** Are the required resources available?

Operation

- Who is responsible? Individual, shaman, or pastor?
- What factor that will hinder the responsibilities?
- What are the barriers?

Problems, Issues, and Concerns

- What are the questions, issues, and concerns are expressed by the participant?
- Who is associated with the participant?
- How do participants interpret problems, issues, and concerns?

The participants and the research facilitator worked together through these issues, and by doing that, they had a better understanding of the problems, questions, and concerns of Hmong Spiritual Formation from Animism to Christianity. The issue that the Hmong Christians still practiced and participated in their family rituals was that this religion existed far too long in their tradition and custom practices. The research facilitator's attempt was to focus only on the situation within the participants and to identify the effect situation with them so that the Gospel could effectively present to the Hmong people so that they could become faithful Christians.

The research facilitator described the problem and defined keys elements to help the participants understand the problem and situations that he was investigating. The best way to
guide the participants and increase their understandings, the research facilitator formulated a concept map and took the following steps:

- Using a large poster, write down words or phrases that characterize the central differences between animism and Christianity, and then enclose the words or phrases inside a geometric figure.
- Link the figures that are related to each other.
- Extend the mapping process until the participant is satisfied.

The concept map helped the participants visualize the problems of the animism faith. Hmong people thought of the animism faith as if their dead ancestor's spirits were alive. They believed that their ancestors could give them health and wealth, but they did not understand that the ancestors could not provide them with health and wealth if their bodies were in the grave.

The participants knew that they had to make animal sacrifices such as "chicken, pig, and cow" to the ancestors and continuously live in fear, worrying that they might not have done enough to appease the ancestors, and they never found peace if they continue to live with this faith. The researcher helped the participants identifying these issues, negative consequences, and any other significant matters that could enable them to have a clear understanding of the problem and formulate a possible solution to the problem.

The example in Figure 3 was a concept map that explained how the animistic faith works. It showed an interpretation of an animism belief where the animist continues to have problems if the individual puts his or her trust in their dead ancestors; they continued to live in fear, and they could never do enough to please their ancestors.
The Christian faith, shown on the concept map for comparison, described that if the participant believed in Jesus, which is the Christian faith, had eternal life (John 3:16) the moment he accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. The map showed that the participant could go to Jesus in prayer if he had any concerns; he no longer had to make any animal sacrifice for the atonement of his sins. Christ made the ultimate sacrifice on the cross to atone for the sin of the world, and Christians are a new creation in Christ. (John 1:29, 2 Cor 5:17-21). Christians knew that they have peace, joy, and hope, and live in God's love through *sola fide, sola gratia and sola scripture* ‘faith alone, grace alone, and scripture alone.’ The participant understood that Jesus is the only way to heaven and eternal life; he sees the difference when he accepted the faith.

96 Van Aarde and A. Timothy, "The Missional Church Structure and the Priesthood of All Believers (Ephesians 4: 7-16) in the Light of the Inward and Outward Function of the Church," *Verbum Et CClesia*;
Figure 4. was an example of a concept map for an interpretation of the Christian faith.

Figure 4. Christian Faith Concept Map

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The fair trial period for implementation of the intervention design projected a six months trial. It consisted of the process of monitoring the people's involvement in the faith of the spiritual formation process. It gave the research facilitator a chance to evaluate his research regarding the problem addressed and the time needed to go over all the questions and answers.

asked during the interview and listened to the recording that he has recorded. The researcher used an approach to critical thinking to implement the necessary tools for the research.97

The intervention plan needed to be sensitive to time and location, "But all things should be done decently and in order. (1 Cor 14:40). The implementation of the intervention plan wasbiblically based and was not depending on the researcher personally. The researcher would use the 5 C's Mission strategies for the study. First - the Great Commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Matt 22:37-38). Second - the Great Commission, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28:19-20). Third - the Great Compassion, "For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was a stranger, and you welcomed me, I was naked, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you visited me, I was in prison, and you came to me." (Matt 25:35-36). Fourth - the Great Compulsion, "And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction." (Matt 9:35). Fifth – the Great Commitment, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8). These mission strategies have helped believers understand the value of being God's children and heirs. God promised them Eternal Inheritance in heaven. The believers could share the Gospel with their families and children at home, in congregational fellowship, and community so that they, too, could receive the same inheritance as God's children.

Road Map, Four-Step Process

One of the ways to see this Implementation of the intervention design process was to use the *road map* of the four-step process of becoming a believer in Jesus Christ and a member of Our Savior Lutheran Church. People might have a different mindset when they come to visit Our Savior Hmong Ministry because of the different cultures, ethnicities, and customs. God planned to unite the world back to Himself through the Gospel. Sliger wrote, "God separates a people from the world—uniting them in the Gospel—so that the world might no longer be separate from him."98 Our Savior Lutheran Church – Hmong Ministry was established to help people to take the next step in their relationship with Christ. Whether it was their first step or their hundredth, everyone should take the following actions to the next level.

**Step One-Come Experience**
Most people started when a friend or someone they knew invited them to come and visit Our Savior Hmong Ministry – worship, picnic, gathering, or service events. They were involved.

**Step Two-Starting Point**
When people came to Our Savior, they thought that it might be the right place for them, or they wanted to know more about God. They heard about God through the Gospel.

**Step Three-Try it out**
People wanted to know the faith, the denomination, and the group and consequently wished to become members. Encouraged them to learn more.

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64
Step Four—Invest in

The people that became Christian invested their time in worshiping God and grew in their spiritual walk with God's help through the following steps. Road Map, in Figure 5, Our Savior Lutheran Church – Hmong Ministry, these steps helped and encouraged the participants to form their spiritual life in Christ Jesus. It reminded them of how they first came to faith and where they are now and why they stand firm to their faith.

Figure 5. Our Savior Lutheran Church – Hmong Ministry, Road Map

Our Savior Lutheran Church – Hmong Ministry
Road Map

Invest in
Try it out

My relationship with God
My relationship with OSL
My relationship with others

Next Step
Starting Point

Invite
Come Experience

The Christians valued the promised Eternal Inheritance for being God's children and heirs, building a lasting legacy through their relationship with God, their relationship with Our Savior Lutheran Church, and their relationship with others.
Their relationship with **God**

- Attend worship regularly
- Begin and increase in personal devotions
- Develop a regular prayer life
- Begin giving periodically and growing in giving

Their relationship with **Our Savior Lutheran Church**

- Serve on a ministry team
- Commit to Our Savior mission
- Pray regularly for Our Savior people and ministry
- Support Our Savior ministry with time, talents, and treasurer

Their relationship with **others**

- Attend small group and functions
- Connect with others
- Serve with others in ministry
- Reach out to the community

Invite

The mission to proclaim the Gospel to others depended on how active the members of the church were. Jesus commanded, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matt 28:19). The good news of Jesus Christ was not to keep it in the church and forget about it. Every member that had the will to serve could reach out, invite, and help people to discover a relationship with Jesus. Individuals who received the word of God have more of an outward-focus than inward-focus, more people-oriented than program-oriented, and more community-conscious than a building-
conscious attitude. The church members needed to reach out to the people whom most churches did not want to contact anymore, those who were hard-to-reach, and those who did not like church.

Animism could not show the way for people to have hope so that they know where they could go when they died. One thing for sure was that many Hmong people continue to believe in their ancestors' spirit and reincarnation. The animism faith made Hmong people think that if a person wishes to reincarnate, he/she should wear traditional Hmong clothing when they died. It might be challenging to tell non-believers that when they died, they could not reincarnate. The Christians understood and knew that when they died, their soul went to heaven to be with God for eternity, and they did not have to worry about reincarnation. The believers could still encourage the nonbelievers to visit in their worship, plant the seed and water with God's word, and God will bring them to faith. A relationship built through respect and trust is a fruitful way to establish a longtime friendship. When someone invested his time in other people's lives, they eventually trusted him. They saw the godly life he lived because he has set a perfect example of being a disciple of Christ is like, and with that, they might decide to believe and trust in Christ as well. The relationship that he built with the people reflect the work that he was doing; he has

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developed a bond for life. He encouraged the people to seek God and trust in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection for their sins, and by doing that they have eternal life.102 The best way to establish a good relationship with the Hmong was to get to know them, become familiar with their way of life, and understand why the Hmong are free people. Honor and respect were always what the Hmong people are proud of being called.

The implementation of the intervention design might take weeks or years before the person comes to faith; God called each individual according to God's will. In the Apostles' Creed, Luther's Small Catechism explained the third article about sanctification. Luther wrote, "I believe that I cannot by my reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But, the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified, and kept me in the true faith." 103 The passage from the book undoubtedly stated that God calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. 104 Christians understood that no one could bring another person to believe in Jesus, but it was God who calls them out of darkness to His marvelous light so that they could receive salvation. The Apostle Peter wrote, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9).

The intervention evaluated the changes in a believer's life that enable him to keep walking faithfully in his new life. The researcher needed to stay focus on the issue to have a successful intervention plan. Stringer wrote, "Sometimes the results of analysis identify a single

102 Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, Disciple Shift, 19.

103 Luther, Luther's Small Catechism, 17.

issue needing attention, and research participants may formulate a plan immediately.\textsuperscript{105} Multiple related issues required action, but the participants could make decisions about the items at the moment during the discussion. The priorities needed to be in order and to accomplish this; the researcher had to:

- Identify the significant issue(s) on which the investigation needs to be focused
- Review concerns from the interpretation of Animism (use concept map Figure.3 Animism)
- Organize the issues in order of importance
- Choose the issues they will work on first
- Rank the rest in order of priority for action

The researcher identified the major issues and constructed an action plan, a series of steps, or tasks for the study to achieve the solution of issues(s) investigated. The researcher advised the participants that if they continue to pray to the "ancestors' spirit" for intervening on their behalf, then they could be referring to Figure 3, "Animism shows that the problem will continue if the participants return to the animism faith." The participants also understood that if they decide to return to the animistic belief, they could never do enough to please their ancestors and constantly live in fear without any hope. The researcher helped the participants to develop a plan to help them know that they could still maintain the Christian faith while honoring their mother and father, "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you." (Exod 20:12, NIV). He reminded them that they could not pray or worship any other person or gods except God. The Apostle John wrote, "I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship

at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." (Rev 22:8-9). The researcher gave the members another related option that they could have; he encouraged the participants to join or participate in a ministry within the church to help support the church's decision making and encourage everyone's faith to remain firm. The plan was important to help provide the basic planning for the participants:

- **Goal (Why)**
  State the purpose of the project – issues to be addressed.

- **Objective (What)**
  What is the action taken – join a ministry program

- **Tasks (How)**
  Define what each ministry will do for the objective.

- **Persons (Who)**
  List the people who will be responsible (Chairperson) and participant (committee) for the ministry program.

- **Place (Where)**
  The tasks can be done at church, home, coffee shop, and park, etc.

- **Timeline (When)**
  When each task will commence and when it will be complete. Schedule an outline of the starting and finishing date.

- **Resources**
  The resource should be Bible, flyer, cd tracks, food for the pantry, and meals for the homeless, etc.
The plan that the ministry had to achieve its goal showed in the Action Plan in Figure 6. Each ministry program within the church had a purpose, and they could serve God and His church to the fullest of their ability with their time, talent, and treasure, once they fully invested.

Our Savior Lutheran Church Hmong Ministry had seven primary ministries that each member could connect to in service to God’s Kingdom. The *Spiritual Life Team* is called Elders. These elected men were to be the extension of the Pastoral Office, shall concern itself with assisting the pastor(s) with all matters concerning the spiritual welfare of the congregation. The *Women's Ministry* was to encourage women to grow in their faith in Christ, to develop and strengthen friendships with other women, and to provide opportunities to serve and reach out to the community for Christ. The *Youth Ministry* was to work with the youth. The elected person could act as an advisor, coordinator, conduct Bible class workshop and conference, teach the Hmong language, and find resources for the youth group. The *Children's Ministry* was to coordinate Bible study, child care, find support for a project, and provide fun lessons for the children. The *Bible Study* was to have Sunday educational hour for families to connect and come to study God's word together. The *Small Group Ministry* was to have different age groups that can gather at a convenient place such as home, coffee shop, or restaurant. It could be a place that works best for the group to do a specific topic of Bible study or related to family life ministry. It could be a prayer group that prays for the church, members, pastors, community, state, and the world. The *Community Outreach Ministry* was a caring ministry that helped the church members and the community. Churches that had this ministry had food banks to help with the community at large. It not only served the church and the believers but also served the nonbelievers as well. The caring ministry provided support to needy members, such as meals to less fortunate families,
the birth of a child, someone who undergoes surgery, support for the loss of a loved one, funerals, school backpack, and make Thanksgiving baskets for the members and the community.

The church had a chairperson to lead the ministry tasks, and the participants could sign up under person/who, in Figure 6, An Action Plan that served on the ministry team. The people who took on a task in the church planning were held responsible and accountable for the job. They reported any problems to the chairperson or the person who coordinated the program if a problem arises.

Figure 6. An Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Person(s)</th>
<th>Person(s)</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry Program</td>
<td>*Spiritual Life Team</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Church Home Coffee Shop Park</td>
<td>Mo/Yrs.</td>
<td>Bible Flyer CD Tracks Food for Pantry Meals for Homeless</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Women's Ministry</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Youth Ministry</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Children's Ministry</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Bible Study</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Small Group Ministry</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Community Outreach Ministry</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The goal of the Implementation of the Intervention Design was for the participant's best interest and excitement. It was also for their engagement with the church activities and to remain faithful
to their call. Their involvement helped the work of Christ's Churches.

The Implementation of the Intervention Design was to point the participant toward making the Christian faith the most precious thing in his life. He put God as a number one priority before anything else and accept the Christian faith with joy and gladness. Figure 7 showed the comparison of the old and new approaches.

Figure 7. Old and New Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Approach</th>
<th>New Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What must I do if I were to die</td>
<td>1. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tonight?</td>
<td>believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. You must do good work to earn</td>
<td>2. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eternal life.</td>
<td>doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8-9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Love and honor your parents first.</td>
<td>3. And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (Matt 22:37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The best way to compare the new approach to the old method was that the participant could live freely, and he did not have to make sacrificial offerings. The participant continued to devote his life to God and lived according to God's will. His spiritual formation transformed him to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, who believed honestly, not only for one hour on Sundays but to live 24/7 for Christ.
Chapter 4

Results

The researcher started conducting his research through a face-to-face interview with the participants who were Hmong residing in Lansing, Michigan. Lansing is the capital of Michigan, and the Hmong people who lived in Lansing are a small percentage of the Asian demographic population. Most Hmong families have working-class members; some of them had become entrepreneurs in the "restaurant" businesses. In the census for Lansing, MI, Figure 8, Hmong would fall under the Race and Hispanic Origin, Asian alone, percentage (a).

Figure 8. US Census for July 1, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quick Facts</th>
<th>Lansing City, Michigan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population estimates, July 1, 2019, (V2019)</td>
<td>118,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population estimates, July 1, 2019, (V2019)</td>
<td>114,265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population, percent change - April 1, 2010 (estimates base) to July 1, 2019, (V2019)</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population, Census, April 2010</td>
<td>114,297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age and Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons under 5 years, percent</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons under 18 years, percent</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons 65 years and over, percent</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female persons, percent</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race and Hispanic Origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White alone, percent</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American alone, percent (a)</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent (a)</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian alone, percentage (a)</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent (a)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or Races, percent</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino, percent (a)</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note (a): Reports one race only

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During the interview, Figure 9, Participant Mapping Example showed the data triangulation of how the participants connected to the researcher. The researcher has developed an understanding of the setting and social dynamic of the participants. They are related to each other and the researcher.

Figure 9. Participant Mapping Example
The Relationship Between Participants and the Researcher

The researcher would address the data triangulation of identifying the relationship and the reason for the research to the participants. The researcher and the participants should understand that the survey would not affect their involvement within the church, and their relationship would remain the same as before. The study would help the researcher understand better the reason why the Gospel should present effectively to the Hmong so that they could become Christian and remain firm in their faith.

The participants understood that the researcher is the current Director of the Hmong Ministry at Our Savior Lutheran Church, where he serves as the Hmong Pastor for the Hmong members. The researcher explained that there would be questions that the participants would need to answer, and they were participating in the Hmong spiritual formation study. The study was to understand the experiences of the participants as they changed from the animistic belief to the Christian faith: what they discovered through their personal experiences, and the differences from being a nonbeliever and a believer. The participants also shared the value and purpose of their faith. They needed to understand the reason that they were seeking for their salvation.

The study would help identify the meaning of their spiritual formation, and the participants should know that the choice of faith they chose was for themselves, and it was not for their wives, husbands, children, and family. The road that they were traveling might be narrow, and they would face obstacles, but it would lead them to eternal life. The church could encourage the people to get their faith stronger through individual devotion, self-study time through reading the Scripture, fellowship with other Christians, and prayer groups. They have to be centrally involved. The researcher should encourage the people that the time is now and not tomorrow. The church understood that most new or old Christians alike were not growing in
their faith. The lack, it seemed to them, was of the more proper way to apply their faith to everyday life. Individuals who wanted to use their faith and find God, they should search for God like they were seeking how to breathe. A person who does not have air, eventually he would die. Similarly, people should put all their other wishes and needs aside and let God become the center of their life.

The study also helped the participants understand the reason why other believers still kept practicing the animism rituals even though they converted to the Christian faith. Why do the believers always involve themselves with members of the family who practice the animism faith? Is it significant that they still believe and hope in their dead ancestors that have no life? These were usually the questions that most people asked, but no one got the answer. The researcher should point the people to an eternal hope, which is Jesus Christ. The message should be clear that they understand and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; they needed to follow the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. (Matt 22:37-39; 28:19-20). They needed to reach out to others so that they, too, know about God's salvation. They should be an external witness that goes and shares the Gospel with them. The external witness should be the individual with the help of the Holy Spirit, assisting the Christian in sharing the Gospel to the nonbeliever.

The researcher would give the participants a series of questions so that he could better evaluate the needs for improvement in the current ministry to the Hmong. The researcher should also encourage the participants to distinguish between the relationship of the church and its practice. The participants should understand the ways that the church is operating, and they

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needed to know that they could not use other methods of belief practices to mix with their Christian faith. Most importantly, they needed to share the hope of eternal life to the nonbelievers, while reminding them that they would stand condemned for putting their belief in their dead ancestors that could not guarantee them a promise of eternal life. The researcher hoped to understand why the participants were still hanging onto the animism faith and why their family practice was essential to them. He should find out why the Hmong people once converted always seek the shaman's help for reassurance instead of Christ's.

In the study, the emerging analysis showed clear evidence that the participants were still practicing the animism faith while they remained Christians. Many of the participants knew that it was wrong to call upon the ancestors for help, but they thought that it should be fine as long as they only call their ancestors by name and felt comfortable in their minds that the ancestors would still help them. Other participants thought that it was fine to call upon the ancestors to bless them or remember them during their journey on this earth. They said that it was no harm done if the ancestors keep watch over them. There would be more explanation for these conflicting beliefs on one of the survey questions.

Survey Questions

The survey consisted of twenty-nine volunteer participants. There were twenty-five questions for the study. Question one to three was asking for the primary demographic of the participants' names, ages, and how long they have been a Christian. The youngest participant was thirty-three, and the oldest was sixty-nine years old. The newest Christian just converted five years ago, and the participant, who became a Christian, has believed in Jesus Christ for fifty-two years. Figure 10 showed the percentage of participants who answered the twenty-five questions survey (Appendix B).
Question four showed that ninety-seven percent of the participants revealed that they came to faith through parent, relative, friend, and pastor. The other three percent indicated that they heard about the Christian faith without being invited to church; they decided to attend the nearest church and chose to believe in Jesus Christ on their own. A survey from the Institute of American Church Growth showed that 75 to 90 percent of new believers come to Christ through a friend or acquaintance who explains the good news on a one-to-one basis.\textsuperscript{109} They put their faith in Christ because God used Christians to point out the truth. Even though some of them claimed that they came to Christ by themselves, they would have heard the Gospel through someone, and then God called them to faith. (John 15:16).

\textsuperscript{109} Fay and Shepherd, \textit{Share Jesus Without Fear}, 18.
Question five asked the participants, "How has Christian faith impacted your daily life?"

Most of the participants answered that believing Jesus Christ assured them the hope of eternal life. They thanked God for calling them out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Pet 2:9). They knew that faith brings salvation and gives them an answer to a prayer. Faith brings hope, love, joy, and peace. (Gal 5:22). Some of the people said that faith brings the assurance that they no longer have to call upon the ancestors for help. They believed that Jesus Christ is a loving God who loves sinners, and He was willing to die for the sins of the world. (Rom 5:8). God promises that He will be with the world to the end of the age. (Matt 28:20).

One of the participants stated that after her divorce, the community called her a divorcee "Puj nrauj." She lost her respected name, and she had no moral comfort, support, love, and encouragement from anyone. She stated, "Now I have Jesus as my Lord and Savior. He is my comfort, my strength, and my support. I don't know if I would have survived if it wasn't for God's love. I thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for being there for me when I needed Him the most." Another participant stated, "As a clan leader, I used to lead in rituals of the animism faith. I have left the Animism faith so that others cannot depend on me to lead, teach, and practice the religion. If they want to practice it, they will have to ask someone else because now I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. I hope that my Christian faith will help make a difference and lead others to Jesus Christ." The animistic believers always challenged and criticized the Christian faith because they argued that the story of Jesus was written only in the Bible and that no one could see Him physically. Regardless of their ridicule, the Christian faith impacted the believers' daily life, "For we live by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor 5:7).

Question six asked, "Has the animism faith ever affected your life?" Sixty percent said no, while forty percent say yes. Those who responded with a yes meant that they have to live
under the life of honoring the elders. It was part of their life and that they felt obligated to participate with the family under any circumstance. They described that as a child of a nonbeliever family, they were in the middle between the animism faith and the Christian faith. The more reason was that if they did not join in the ritual or practice of the family, then it meant that they were disobedient children. Children were to be obedient to their parents and elders. They had to show their respect always. One of the participants said, "In my younger days, my parents were animistic believers, and as the oldest daughter, I have to participate in everything that they do, whether I understood it or not." Another participant stated, "Practicing the animism faith, I always have to live a life in fear. I don't know if I will ever do enough to please my ancestors. The less I do, the more I worry that they would not accept my offering. If I spend more money on a bigger animal, I don't know if I will be able to afford it next time. The Christian faith is much easier because I don't have to worry about the ancestors asking for more. Jesus Christ is the answer to all of my fears, and now I am at peace." The truth was that Christ is always the way to comfort for anyone who had a disturbed heart.

Question seven asked, "Do you still participate in the ritual of animism while you are a Christian?" Sixty percent showed that they were still practicing the animism faith while they remained a Christian. It was hard to believe that most Christians stay connected to the animistic religion even though they knew that it would not save them. A Christian who practiced a belief that is contradictory to the Christian faith should understand why he still does it. The participants should understand the difference between God and their dead ancestors and decide what they need to choose. The participants who answered that they should remain faithful to their ancestors needed to realize that they could not worship two gods because they would worship one more

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110 Cha, An Introduction to Hmong Culture, 34.
than the other. They could not just put God in a temporary place to stand by and use Him whenever or however they please. They have to choose God or their ancestors.

Most of the participants referred to the tying of the string (Khiteg) on the person's wrist. It was a ritual borrowed from the Lao people, and the Hmong adapted it to be theirs. It had become popular in most of the Hmong ritual ceremonies, events, or parties. The participants stated that they wanted to respect and honor their family and their guest when they tied the string. Most of the time, there would be a feast to honor their guest who has traveled from far away to visit them. The family invited relatives and friends to dinner to celebrate the visit. The elder or leader of the family would give a white string to all guests so that they could participate in the ceremonial of tying of the string (Khiteg) on the honor guest's wrist. The participants would go, and as they tied the string to the guest's wrist, they would say, "May God bless you." The researcher asked the participant, "When you say, ‘God bless you,' what do you mean by that? Do you know that you are mixing God's name, He who is Holy with an idolatry object (string) that has no life?" The participant answered, "I used God's name instead of saying, ‘I bless you,' and that should be fine."

The tying of the string (Khiteg) was a symbolic gesture in which people used the string or thread to represent an idolatry object for saving them from bad omen. They worshiped the thread as a holy thing. Scripture wrote, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt 6:24, KJV). The string was a false object to worship and a deception for the person who received it. A Christian who knew that God is almighty and powerful should never tie a string (Khiteg) to anyone; he should instead say to the honored guest without the string that, "The Lord bless you, and keep you; The Lord make His face shine on you, And be
gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26, NASB). He should remind the participants that God instructed Moses to give it to Aaron to tell his sons that when they bless the Israelites, they shall use the blessing that comes from God. They should always remember this blessing everywhere they go and continue to practice it.

The participants thought that they were doing it as a gesture of kindness and love towards the person, and maybe their gestures would help the nonbelievers to see that the believers could also participate in rituals as well. They did not realize that their participation contradicted their faith and Scripture. They also thought that maybe by doing this, the nonbelievers would come to trust in Jesus and come to faith. The researcher explained to the participants that the nonbelievers would not follow Jesus because of their participation. Their involvement meant that they were already in agreement and approved of the nonbelievers' practice of the tying of the string (Khiteg). It was the participant's job to know and stand firm in the faith that they believe, and they should not participate in any tying of the string (Khiteg) ritual. The use of God's word to bless the honored guest would set an excellent example to the people who were present that God is more powerful than a piece of string. It would also open an opportunity for the people to ask the participants about the faith and the God that they believe. The participants would then have the time to share God with the people because the blessings came from God and not the people.

Question eight asked, "Have any of your relatives, friends, and family ever influenced you to go back and practice the animism belief?" Most of the participants said that they had, while others said no. The researcher interviewed a couple who were trying to conceive for a couple of years, but they were not successful. The wife told the researcher, "I have tried to conceive for five years, and it was not successful. My family would say 'give us one of your belongings, such as a shirt, and we will ask the Shaman to perform his ritual. It will help you to
conceive.’ The pressure was more from my parents because they still believe in the animist faith. I trusted western medicine, and most importantly, I trusted God, and I prayed to God. Since then, I have conceived and had two girls. My family tried to influence me to go back, and I know that if I trust God, He will answer my prayer.” Another participant said, "My husband had a seizure, and my family said that a demon is possessing his body. They want my husband to let the Shaman perform his ritual, and my family must turn back to the animistic practice to do away with my husband's seizure. We refused and trusted God, and modern medicine has stabilized my husband's condition.”

Another participant stated that his cousins tried to influence him that animism is better and real. His cousins were in their fifties, and they were barren. They wanted his wife to give them some of her clothes so that they could use it to hold while they sleep. It would bring them luck, and they would conceive as long as they held on to it. It was a belief that some say it could be successful if people with lots of children gave their clothing to the ones who were unsuccessful. The participant expressed to the researcher that he felt terrible and struggled with the idea that his cousins were suggesting. He knew that it was impossible because the clothes could not bless the barren women, and only God has the power to do that. He also understood that his cousins desperately wanted to be pregnant and needed his help, but due to his faith, he told his cousins that he could not help them because children are a blessing from God. Scripture said, "Children are a blessing and a gift from the Lord." (Ps 127:3, CEV). The cousins tried to put the animistic faith before God, but the participant put God before them and told them that he would pray for them and asked God to bless them. The participant also commented that a piece
of clothing could not help his cousins to conceive; it has no power. He promised to pray for the cousins and share Christ with them.\footnote{Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, Disciple Shift, 229.}

The animistic faith continued to influence Christians to go back and practice it. During the interview, the researcher noticed that the couple he interviewed was wearing some objects on them. He was on the subject of idolatry objects that people wear on their bodies; the couple looked at each other uncomfortably and said nothing. The man had a red and blue string on his neck, and his wife wore a copper bracelet on her wrist as most nonbelievers wear them for protection from evil omen. They both have been Christians for a long time. The researcher knew that someone must have influenced them to wear these objects for protection. They could not put these on themselves; a shaman or an older man had to put it on them. A ritual of security needed to perform or the protection objects would not be valid. The couple did not want to share with the researcher about the things they wore, but the researcher encouraged them that idolatry objects such as copper bracelets or string on the neck or wrist would not give people hope. He also wanted to ensure that the couple understood the true meaning of the objects. However, the researcher did not want to make the couple feel uncomfortable; he explained the reason why Christians should not wear objects on their bodies, such as a string or copper bracelet that could not protect them or give them hope. The hope of a Christian should always be in Christ; the believer should know only to turn to Christ for comfort, confidence, and protection.

Comparison Between Animism and Christianity

Participants should understand the difference between animism and Christianity. They should know what animism and Christianity could do for them and the future of the Hmong
people. The nonbelievers said that animism is the faith that could give them hope for a better future while Christianity is for the ones who believe in a God that no one could see. Someone once told the Hmong people who migrated to the United States that they needed to settle in a place that should be at the end of the world. The Hmong people who believed in someone like this man, moved to Alaska because it is at the end of the world. Christianity among the Hmong still faced many challenges because animism influenced the older people and clan leaders to use Hmong traditions and cultural practices to control people's beliefs. For a comparison of Animism and Christianity, Figure 11 showed the differences between the two faiths.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God</th>
<th>Animism</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animists believe that gods and spirits are found in trees, rocks, plants, wind, air, and other things. A greater god called the god of all or god of the universe (yawan saub losyog fuabtai rtau).</td>
<td>Listen, Israel! The LORD our God is the only true God! (Deut 6:4, CEV). Jesus Christ the Son of God has come and shown us the true God. And because of Jesus, we now belong to the true God who gives eternal life. (1 John 5:20, CEV).</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| What is God like? | In Animism, the spirits and gods are unpredictable. They may bring sickness or "bad luck" to people who do not please them. | God. "he is not far from any one of us" (Acts 17:27, NIV). "God is love." (1 John 4:6, NIV). "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Pet 5:7, NIV). |

| Ancestor Worship | Pray and ask the spirits of their ancestor to bring them good health and wealth. | Christians worship only God. "You shall have no other gods before me." (Exod 20:3, NIV). |

| Shaman | The shaman acts as a witch doctor or medicine man that has a unique understanding of the spirit world. Animists go to them for help, healing, and protection in times of need. | Seeking other divination is not pleasing to God. "There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you." (Deut 18:10-12, ESV). |

| Words of Follower | "I live in fear—slave to the evil spirits. I never do enough to please the soul of the dead ancestors. I want to be free." — Anonymous | "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8, ESV). "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32, ESV) |

| Altar | Split horn, joss stick, two bowls filled with rice. One hold egg and one hold incense, three glasses filled with water, rice bowl, a bowl of water, and finger bells. | The altar has a table covered with parament for church season and year. The Bible is at the center. A cross, a baptismal candle, a podium for reading Scripture, a pulpit for preaching, and font for baptism. |

| Sacrifice Animals | The animal used for sacrifice can be chicken, pig, cow, water buffalo, and other animals. The sacrifice depends on sin against the spirits or gods. | Jesus is the one who made the perfect sacrifice on the cross. "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29, CSB). He finished the task for the sins of the world. |
There are many more comparisons, and the researcher only listed a few for comparison.

Hmong tradition and Christian tradition were different in one particular way, in which one pertains mostly to the women at childbirth. This Hmong tradition was particularly hard to practice in the Western context as Tapp and Lee write, "Hmong people want to be able to openly practice their rituals as to how their culture and religion are, instead of doing it behind a closed door."112 One of the most respected practices of the Hmong cultural tradition was the practice of a woman's diet after giving birth. A woman should strictly follow a special diet after giving birth to a child – she should only eat chicken and drink warm water to cleanse the body for a whole month. The family practiced this tradition in private, and it only occurred at her home. She was not allowed to visit anyone. A lactating mother should not allow any dropping of her breast milk to the ground, or lightning would strike her. She was not to have any visitors after giving birth, and if a visitor visited her during the fasting period, her breast milk would be low due to the visitor. The visitor would be informed because they had violated the tradition during the woman's fasting period; the visitor then would bring a bag of rice for the nursing mother. The rice was a signal for the mother's breast to produce milk again. These practices were hard to understand, but the nonbelievers still adhered to the old cultural norms, and Hmong people strictly observed these traditions. Hmong Christian women would not have to worry about most of the cultural traditions that most of the Hmong women have to comply with after giving birth. Some of them might choose to eat chicken for the whole month, while others would not have to.

Other traditions for the Hmong were special holidays. Christmas might be one of the most revered holidays for Christians. The nonbelievers generally thought that Santa Claus, or decorating Christmas trees, and gift exchanges were the main reason for Christmas rather than

112 Tapp and Lee, The Hmong of Australia: Cultural and Diaspora, 37.
the birth of Jesus Christ. The Christians celebrated traditions such as Christmas, Easter, All Saint's Days, Advent Wreath, Special Feast of Festival, and Prayer. The nonbelievers celebrate traditions like new crops, new year, and other festivities that usually involved a ritual of animal sacrifice.

The researcher's study showed that ninety percent of the participants said that they had no hope in their ancestors because these spirits could not give them peace. One of the participants said that he still prays and asks his deceased father to provide him with courage, wisdom, and guidance. Another participant, who lost her son last year to a car accident, said that she continued to pray that her son would continue to provide her family's protection and watch over her. She said, "My son is like an angel watching over me." These were expressions coming from those who still think that their deceased loved ones would guide them and watching over them. They did not understand that the dead could not give them peace and comfort. The researcher was surprised that they were asking the dead to bless them instead of asking God for guidance and protection. The researcher encouraged the participant who lost her son that it was hard for him as well, and he understood the pain she went through. He affirmed to her that it is hard for people to let go of someone they loved, but the dead could not give her the hope she wanted. Her son was among the angels, but he could not be an angel because God created the angels.

The researcher shared with her that he had lost his son, who was seventeen years old, and the longing and heartache that she was experiencing, he had experienced that as well. He encouraged the participant to remember that "Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him." (Ps 127:3, NIV). The time and memories that they created together were gifts from God, and he encouraged her to remember what Jesus said whenever she is in pain. Jesus said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt 11:28). He
also assured her that there is someone who could give her comfort, and that person is Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, He will provide her with peace, support, and courage to move forward with her life until God calls her home.

The researcher reminded all the participants that the reason why they should not pray to the deceased or ask them to help in times of need was that the dead could not hear their prayers, and they are not alive; only God could help in times of need, and they should pray to God. The Apostle John said, "Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said, 'No, don't worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers and sisters who testify about their faith in Jesus. Worship only God. For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus. ' " (Rev 19:10, NLT). Christians should not be supposed to pray to any person or gods except God.

Hmong Identity

The Hmong people were proud of their identity. No matter where they are, they would always remember who they are through their artwork, craftsmanship, and cultural practices. Most of the Hmong who converted into the new faith and have become Christians; they would keep their identity and would not forget that they are Hmong. The animist would say, "You are Hmong, you should only worship the ancestors, the animist belief, that is the Hmong religion. Jesus is a white man’s God." The nonbelievers did not understand that no matter what religion they believe in, it would not assure them of life eternal. They could reject Christ, but Jesus said, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12). The Hmong people were part of the human race, and God loves all people because all were sinners, and no one was righteous. God sent His one and only Son to redeem the world. Whoever believes in Him has eternal life. (John 3:16). God wanted all nations to turn back to Him for their salvation. In heaven, all people worshiped God as Scripture wrote, "Then I
saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal Gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language, and people." (Rev 14:6, NIV). The Gospel had reached the Hmong people through the missionaries, and now they were receiving the good news with joy. In a 2010 CD album sung by Lang Yang, "Kuv Yog Hmoob Ntseeg Vaajtswv – I Am a Hmong Christian." It declared that the Hmong had received the Gospel, and they have accepted it with joy. The Hmong people, who lived in different parts of the world, are hungry for the Word of God because they knew that it gives them hope for a better future. Some of the Hmong people who live in other countries would risk their lives to have a Bible in their hands. The Gospel should be presented effectively to the Hmong so that they could become Christians, and it would depend much on those who were willing to proclaim it to the Hmong. The Hmong will keep the faith, but they would not lose their identity.

As the researcher interviewed the participants, and their answers to question 14 were likely to have the same response. They would say that the animistic religion was not overpowering their community or the world, but perhaps they misunderstood the question. They probably did not see it, but the animism faith was overwhelming the community in which they live. Everywhere that there were events or social gatherings in the city, the nonbelievers were leading the activities. The researcher then asked, "Why is it that in every function, the animists are always taking the lead, in a gathering at a picnic function (no prayer), the new year celebration (no prayer or a word of blessing from the pastor), or other activities that involved the Hmong people? Why is it that no Christian steps up and leads the celebration, such as giving an invocation at a gathering? If the animistic religion is not overpowering the community, then why is God not there in the midst of the crowd when everyone should give Him the honor and glory?"

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113 Lang Yang, Kuv Yog Hmoob Ntseeg Vaajtswv (Richville, MI: Suabzoo Studio, 2010), 3, CD-ROM.
The majority of the participants said that this is a country with freedom of religion, and everyone has the right to choose what they want to do. They felt that it was not essential because people have the right to their religious practice.

They also stated that there is a devil, and there is also a God. It was the reason why some of them choose to believe in Christ because they did not want to serve the devil. They knew that when it comes to involving their faith with the nonbelievers, they just wanted to stay quiet because it was better not to share their faith with anyone. It was what the Hmong Christians feel, then how could they present the Gospel effectively to the Hmong so that they could become Christian? The researcher encouraged the participants to realize that every opportunity they had is the chance for them to seize the moment to share Christ with others so that the people could hear the Gospel and bring them closer to Christ for their salvation. It is through their words and deeds that the Gospel could reach the nonbelievers.

The participants said that the Hmong identity was significant. They had had a strong relationship with their family, friends, relatives, and clans, even though they are Christians. They remained connected to their family. They believed that honoring family traditions was also essential. One of the participants said that "If someone wrongs you, you must give an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. If someone hurt you, you are to get even or make sure that the other person loses face and apologize for their wrong. You live in a world that you have to bow down or offer money for someone to help you. So keeping your identity is essential because it shows who you are." The participants stated that the animist's life was complicated, but when they became Christians, the Christian faith taught them to forgive and love one another and love their enemies. (Matt 5:44; John 13:34-35; Eph 3:13; Col 3:13). They understood that the love of God flows through them and made them want to help others without expecting anything in return. The
grace of God has been poured upon them freely, and they were returning the blessing to others freely. Most of the participants that the researcher interviewed stated that they were not facing any consequences for being a Christian. However, they have heard that some of their Christian friends faced discrimination and threats with their families. Some families even disowned their sons and daughters because they chose the Christian faith and were no longer practicing the animistic faith. One participant said, "After I married my husband, who is a Christian, my family threatened to disown me because I have become a follower of Jesus Christ. They could not carry out the threat after they saw how the Christian life had changed me. I have become a better daughter and a better person for both sides of the family." She stated that she would continue to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to her friends and family in the hope that one day God would bring them to faith. Believing in Christ would not make them lose their identity, but it would make them keep their identity more durable.

The core of the study was to analyze the function of the church and its members. The research study was to find out how much involvement the members of the church put in their denominational churches. The researcher found out that only twenty percent of the participants were holding positions within their church, and eighty percent had no place, nor would they want to keep any church positions in the future. The people, who held no positions or participated in any activities, generally used the excuses of, "I don't have time, ask someone else to do it. I want to help if I have time, I am too old, or it is not my job; it is the pastor's job to do it."

The researcher’s church ministry context currently has board and committee positions. The people who were willing to serve in the church would have to take a board position and two other committee positions for the job to be filled for the two years term. The researcher found out that there is a lack of duties and areas in the church that the members did not want to serve, and it
is certain that the ministry is growing slowly. The church ministry has only one chairman who is serving on the spiritual team, one woman who is serving on the women's ministry team. The youth ministry was adopted, but there are no youth activities for the youth because the majority of the youth stopped coming to church. Parents were not willing to encourage their children to attend church. There are no children's ministry, small group ministry, and community outreach ministry because no one was willing to take any part of these positions. The Bible study is the only fruitful ministry for the church on Sunday. It was the time where the pastor is giving an educational Bible study for those who were faithfully attending and wanted to learn more about the grace of God. It is usually the same group of people who came to the class. Other members were encouraged to attend, but it seemed that they did not know the true meaning of being Christ's disciples. The only time that the members are engaging in questions and answers was during Bible study.

The researcher advised the participants that the time to learn, live, and share Christ with their community, state, and nation is now, and they should encourage each other to be more active in church and give their time and talents to expand God's kingdom. Figure 12. Our Savior Lutheran Church – Hmong Ministry Role in Action Plan, showed the most participation of the members in Bible Study.
Some of the participants said that church attendance was good, but not great. The researcher found that some members would instead go to their relatives' function on Sunday than to come to church. They liked to help the people outside of the church than volunteering their time to help with the church's mission. God and church seemed to be secondary to them. They came to church only if they did not have anything planned for the week while others come to church to keep their membership active, but they did not care about any of the church functions. The researcher found that it is hard to convince people to become more active in the church. He encouraged the participants that when it comes to giving their time to God, they should let their relatives know that on Sundays, they needed to go to church first and come to the party later. The participants who could do that; their actions would show their relatives that God and church are important to them. The researcher advised the participants that it is fine to miss church sometimes, but it should not happen all the time. It would be good practice for the Christians,
and when other believers and nonbelievers see the way they live their faith, they too would want to live their lives as Christians do. The participants should encourage other Christians that they should seek God first and put God as their number one priority before anything else.

The researcher found that most of the participants have talents, but they did not want to use them for the expansion of God's kingdom. Participants said that they would like for the church to grow, but they do not want to go and evangelize to others. Some of them even made comments like, "We have been here for over thirty years. People should know that we are here. Let them come to us; we do not need to go and reach out to them. It is the pastor's job and not ours." They liked their comfort zone and did not want to change it. The question of, "What can you do for your church?" was asked, seventy percent stated that they do not have the gift to serve Christ's Church. Ten percent said that they are too old, and let the younger generation take the leadership role and use their talents to help out the church, and twenty percent of the members said that they were willing to help if they are available. The researcher explained to the participants that to achieve the goals for the expansion of Christ's Kingdom, God gave each person a different gift so that they could use to help with the ministry.

God’s Word said,

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

The participants and the rest of the members should use their talents to help their church ministries. The researcher explained to the participants that they should not expect what the church could do for them, but they should ask the question back to themselves, "How can I help the church?" Participants should see that the functions of the church are a body with different
parts. Each part of the body has a unique purpose, so each member should use their unique talents to help the church.

The researcher would encourage the participants to open up and use their gifts to serve the church. They should not ignore or neglect these gifts. The researcher should explain to the participants that the ones who could lead Sunday school, let them lead. The one who could sing and play instruments, let him lead the choir. The one who knows how to cook, let her take care of the potluck dinner. They should continue to encourage the members to participate. The people who wanted to take part in any of these functions should be those who are willing to give their time to serve. It should be volunteering time, and they should be ready to commit and contribute to the team effort. Everyone should be a team player and work together to achieve the same common goal. God's word describes the church as "the body of Christ." (1 Cor 12:27), and if any part of the body is not functioning, then the whole body would suffer, but when everyone used their gifts, the Lord's work flourished. Everyone should use the gifts that God gave and helped taking part in the church ministry so that everything they do would be a light to the world.

Question twenty-two asked, "Why do the Hmong people who believe in animism hold on to something that is not real or has no life? The participants answered that the Hmong still held on to the animistic faith because it was how their family, relatives, and ancestors taught them to believe. It did not matter if the belief was something that has no life; it was a religion that they practiced for centuries and passed down from generations. Their grandparents practiced it, their parents taught them to practice it, and now they are practicing it. The animism faith became a traditional practice, a custom that they have used for health and healing, wealth, and blessings. They held onto the animism belief because it gives them the hope that their dead ancestors would bless them when they called upon them to help. It made them feel good knowing that their
ancestors would bring them good fortune when they made enough sacrifices to please them. The participants said that if the ancestors did not give them what they asked for, they would either curse the ancestors for not helping them or would be more afraid because they might not have done enough for the ancestors. The researcher encouraged the participants that they should not need to hold on to something that is not true or has no life. They should not remain faithfully in a belief that continually asked for more sacrifices because it is not true faith, and it is not real. They should seek a genuine religion that would guarantee their deliverance from the devil and his schemes. The Christian faith would give them hope and life eternal in heaven. Jesus Christ said that He is the way, the truth, and the life no one can go to heaven except through Him. All believers understood that for them to receive eternal life, they have to trust in Jesus, accept Him, and stand firm in the true faith.

Hmong Christians sometimes had a difficult time grasping the Gospel because they did not understand it. How could the Gospel be effectively presented to the Hmong so that they can become a follower of Christ? The researcher found that the Hmong people honored the elders and clans, and if they disrespected them, they would face banishment and outcasting. The researcher would need to encourage them that by accepting the Christian faith, they would have to commit their lives to God and take all criticism from others. It meant that they would have to live their lives according to the faith that they believe. They would have to set good examples for the world to see that they are genuinely Christ's disciples and that they are no longer participating in the practice of the animistic religion. They should be the salt and light for the world. (Matt 5:13-15). "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matt 5:16). People would see the good deeds that the Christians are doing, and they will praise God, the Father in heaven.
Christian Needs to Be Active in Service

Christians would need to be Active in Service, Nurturing their Faith, Giving Glory to God, Encouraging one Another, and Leading others to Jesus Christ (ANGEL):

**Active in Service** – Using the talents to help the church

Every believer is to do a ministry using his or her abilities and gifts. Be faithful to serve others. Everyone needs to love their neighbor as they love themselves. Be a part of God's family.

**Nurturing their Faith** - Education and Bible Study

Christians study the Bible, learn about God, and live according to His will. Whatever they do, it should be done heartily, as working for the Lord. (Col 3:23-24).

**Giving Glory to God** – Worship

The things that Christians achieve in life are all gifts, talents, and treasures from God. They should love God with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind. (Luke 10:27).

Worship God and serve Him only.

**Encouraging one Another** – Fellowship with others

Christians should come together as a family of Christ and encourage each other. Love and support God's family and others.

**Leading Others to Jesus** – Evangelism

Making disciples of all nations. Be witness to the end of the earth. (Matt 28:20, Acts 1:8) Christians should continue to learn, live, and share Christ so that others may share God's grace for their salvation.

The ANGEL acronym is one of the ways to help remind Christians to believe, trust, and serve God.
Journey as an Animist and Live in Fear

The researcher shared some of the stories that the participants told him during the study survey. Listening to their stories made the researcher realize how difficult it was for some of the participants to convert to a new faith. The journey that one took on the path of becoming a Christian from an animistic believer was hard. One of the participants stated, "As a young girl, I had to help my parents set up the shaman items such as gong, table, finger ring, sword, jars filled with rice, water, egg, joss paper for burnt offerings, and split horns. These items must be ready before the shaman's arrival. I did not know what I was doing at the time, but my parents told me to do it without any question." The nonbelievers hired a shaman, a mediator between the physical world of the living and the spirit world, to perform the animistic ritual for their needs. Most of the time, they would call the shaman to cure the sick, and for this ritual, the shaman required animals for the sacrifice. The slaughter of animals was to make amends for the wrongdoings that the family was causing the spirits' anger. The sacrifice would depend on the demands of the angry spirits; if the sin was not too severe, then a chicken is required. The price could go up as high as a cow if a sick person's sin is critical. The dead ancestors sometimes demanded animal sacrifices from their living families annually, and the family is required to kill a cow to appease the ancestors. It was always a burden for most families that are poor because they were not wealthy and did not own cows. They would have to borrow money from relatives, friends, or neighbors to purchase the cows for the rituals. They would have to work harder for the next harvest to pay back the money borrowed.

Another participant stated that "I lived a life of fear. Each night when I went to bed, I would see a shadow coming and laid on top of me. Every night when this happened, it caused me to be unable to breathe. The Shaman told me that a spirit (ghost) was pressing on my body each
night. He told my father that I had to sleep with a knife under my pillow and should only sleep on my side to avoid having this ghost coming into the room." In the Western world, this shadow figure is called a night hag or old hag. It is the name given to a supernatural creature, used to explain the phenomenon of sleep paralysis. It is a phenomenon during which a person feels the presence of a supernatural evil being. It usually immobilizes the person as if sitting on their chest or the foot of their bed. The night-hag is a form of the nightmare; the succubus, a witch or hag, is his female counterpart. The participant also stated that when nightfall comes, she was afraid of what would happen to her, and she did not know if she would live to see the next day or not. Her family called the village shaman to perform a ritual to keep the night hag away from her. The shaman put a red string on her ankle, a copper bracelet on her wrist, and a red and blue twine around her neck for protection. No matter what the shaman did, nothing happened, and she continued to have the night-hag sitting on top of her each night. Her problem was solved when she married her husband. He was a Christian and brought her to the Christian faith, and the pastor baptized her. She no longer had the tormented evil spirit "night-hag" bothering her, and she is now free. "Jesus Christ had set me free," she said. Scripture wrote, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36). The participant was wearing a cross as a reminder of being set free through Christ's crucifixion, and she was very content that she no longer had to wear any colored string or copper bracelet for protection. She said, "I am free because Christ lives in me, and His power protects me."

The last participant stated,

"My mother is a Shaman, and at the end of the year, she had to release the altar spirit (Tso Qhua). At the beginning of the new year, she had to call the altar's spirit (Hu Qhua) to come back to help and guide her as she performs her rituals. If she forgot to summon the

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evil spirit on time, the evil spirit would torment her, causing her to be unable to sleep, always feeling ill, and feel uneasiness throughout the day until she completed her ritual. She could never sit and eat with the family on the same table because whenever she does, her whole body started to shake vigorously. Her altar’s spirit would not allow her to sit with the family, or it disliked her to be with other people. She was forbidden to use the same dishes as the family used.” (Anonymous – a son witness of account)

The participant said that after two years of constant tormenting by the spirit, she finally stopped being a shaman and converted to Christianity. Her torture ended; the evil spirit could not control her or made her shake anymore. God released her from the evil spirit, and she was free. The researcher thanked all the participants for sharing their stories, and he also shared his story of how he came to faith in 1979 at the age of eleven years old with them.

"My family practiced the animism faith. I remembered the words that my mother always told us when we were little that "Our ancestors will look upon us and protect us, they will put us in the palm of their hands." We escaped the Vietnam War in 1975 from Laos, and my family came to Thailand. The Thai people put us in a refugee camp called Ban Vinai. My life there was hard, and because my parents were divorced, and they left me with my three other siblings at the refugee camp. Living in the refugee camp, without any help or parents, was even harder. The Thai government gave us little food to eat, two times per week, just enough to help the refugee to survive, and we had to find additional resources to help throughout the week. God has not forsaken me, so in February of 1979, my friend Ge Yang invited me to go worship with him at the church that he attended. That night after the pastor finished his sermon, my life changed. He urged people to come and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. I remembered the passage of the Bible that the pastor used, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16). God stirred up my heart, and I went to the altar and accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior that night. My life had changed so much from that night, and as I looked back, my life would have been a lot different if I have not known Christ. God’s word said, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11). God has prepared me well to serve Him; here, I stand firm with my faith and ready to go and be "witness…to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) and "…to make disciples of all nations." (Matthew 28:19). (Researcher)

Free in Christ

The research found that people are coming to the Christian faith at different stages in their life. The Hmong Spiritual Formation from Animism to Christianity resulted that being a
follower of Jesus Christ is the best choice for an individual's salvation. People who believe in animism would have no hope when they practice the animistic faith because it would lead them to live in constant fear. The Christian faith gave them freedom because Christ died on the cross for their sins, and He had delivered them from the devil. God's word clearly said that He would save them if they seek Him for their eternal salvation. People who accepted the Christian faith, they knew that there is a loving God who is on their side, and no one could do anything against God. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31). "The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." (Deut 31:8, NIV). The researcher assured the participants that being followers of Jesus Christ, He would lead their life's journey to freedom with peace, joy, and hope.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

The researcher concluded that the need to help change the Hmong Christians in their Spiritual Formation from Animism to Christianity was great. The Hmong Christians needed more training to understand the Christian faith and how to become a Christ-follower fully. They should learn to discipline themselves and stand firm to the true faith that would give them eternal salvation and know what God's Great Commandment "Love God with all your heart mind and soul" and The Great Commission "Make disciples of all nations." (Matt 22:36-40; Matt 28:18-20) and how they could apply God's commands to their daily life. They should bind God's Commandments in their hearts and learn how to be obedient (Deut 6:1-9). The Hmong Christians should understand that there is only one God that they would choose to worship and not two gods. They could not become Christian but still practice the animism faith because they could not use God whenever they please. They either choose God for life eternal in heaven or go back to the animistic faith and be condemned in hell forever.

Where Should Research Regarding this Problem Go from Here?

The researcher found that the problem was that more and more Christians had lost the drive to share Christ in the world. They heard the word, but they were not doers, or they were too lazy to go out and proclaim or share Christ with their community, state, or nation. Another reason might be that the church did not give them the proper training, or they were not equipped with materials to evangelize to others, and that is why their ministry was not thriving like other ministries? Hancke, Pierter, and Verster asked the questions, "Why are the majority of Christians in the world not missionally involved through personal witness and which factors consequently
influence personal witness and missional involvement?" When pastors and the leaders of the church asked the members to evangelize and be witnesses for Christ's mission, the members usually put their agenda before God. They were too comfortable in their little circle and did not want to go and share Christ outside their comfort zone. Too many churches failed and closed their doors because their mission and vision for the expansion of Christ's Kingdom were not the core values of the church. When these things happened, as Scripture wrote, "So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." (Rev 3:16). Other countries like Africa, India, China, Vietnam are hungry for the word of God, but here at home, Christians stayed in their comfort zone and were not willing to share Christ.

The vision and mission of some churches did not meet because of a lack of interest from the members. Some churches would not unite in Christ through believing, teaching, and confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. Graham wrote, "One of the greatest missiological challenges in our generation is to learn to grow thriving missional churches in the urban centers of the West." The Church would need to have a structure to become more like Jesus; it needs to have four characteristics of healthy and organize structure:

1. A Healthy Church Will Be Theologically Centered
2. A Healthy Church Will Be Sensitive to Process
3. A Healthy Church Will Be Open to Change

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4. A Healthy Church Will Be Led by Pastors in Community

The church that could bring Christ to the world would be a church that followed Scriptural teaching, was willing to be sensitive to the process of change in time and place, and had a passionate pastor with the drive for a mission. The pastor could not do it alone; he would need the church and its members to bring honor and glory to Christ; everyone had to contribute. Churches of different denominations could still work together through the cooperation of networking without compromising their doctrine for Christ's glory so that others may come to faith. Christians should be like the seeds that fell on the good soil and multiply. Jesus said, "As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience." (Luke 8:15).

How Does the Literature Review Interact with this Study?

The literature review confirmed that the animistic belief systems of the Hmong were crucial to them because they were placing their hope and trust in their ancestors. They embedded the preservation of the integrity of the generational family relationship in their culture and identity, and they carried the tradition and custom from one generation to the next. Animistic believers continued to thank their deceased parents or ancestors for helping them throughout their lives. It was the way that the Hmong people honor and trust the ancestors for the continuation of blessings.

Xiong-Lor wrote, "Ua tsaug, kuv niamb thiab kuv txiv, uas neb pub txoj sia rau kuv thiab ua kab ua noog cawm kuv dim ntawm txoj kev mob kev ntsaj, kev ploj kev tuag thaum kuv yau thiab yog ib tug menyuam xya hli xwb – Thank you, mom and dad, that both of you gave me life and you became insects and birds to save me from the sickness and groaning pain, loss, and
death when I was only a baby of seven months old."

The quote from this person described the hope that she put in her parents. Could the faith and hope where she visualizes her parents transforming into insects and birds to watch over and protect her when she was only seven months old be practical? Could the faith and trust in animals and plants save anyone? Dead parents could not turn themselves into plants, insects, and birds to protect the living. God created everything in this world, and why could people not put their faith and trust in God, the Creator? The author’s prayer expressed her deep feelings that her parents were watching over her because they raised her in an animistic belief, and it was the belief that they taught her to believe. Christians knew that no person would re-incarnate into another form of animal or person to protect the living, and when they died, they would go to heaven to be with God and have eternal life forever and ever.

The Hmong people did not have a country named after themselves, but wherever they moved to and lived, they learned how to adapt to the country’s culture. They would involve in civil service to bring respect and honor to the Hmong people. In the United States, many Hmong are successful people; they have many medical doctors, lawyers, judges, state senators, members of Congress, and business owners. It did not matter what country they live; they called it home and made it their country, one that they would serve and protect. The Hmong people knew that they were living in a country where the majority religion is Christianity; still, they continued to hold on to their animist faith. Some of the Hmong stated that the practice of the animism faith in other countries was difficult for them, but they would continue to practice it. They said that the animism faith was the force that would sustain the generational family, which is the core of their

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118 Vicky Xiong-Lor, "Current Hmong Perceptions of Their Speaking, Reading, and Writing Ability and Cultural Values as Related to Language and Cultural Maintenance" (PhD diss., California State University, Fresno, 2015), V. in ProQuest, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1722263214/1FA9D96FC1994E7FPQ/1?accountid=12085.
culture and identity. They could not be apart from it because if they do, it would be like neglecting their culture and showing disrespect towards the family and clan.

This study, unsurprisingly, revealed that Hmong Christians still involve in animistic practices. They although understood that it was wrong to participate in any ritual; they did it to honor their family and elders. In many states in America, the law of the land forbade the animist to practice ritual rites fully. The practices that had a lack or gap in rites would be displeasing to the ancestors. The people were afraid that if the method of ritual ceremonies is missing some specific actions, then the ancestors' spirits would not receive the full benefit in the afterlife. Other circumstances were that as the Hmong people moved from one region to another, they lost some of the rites to the ritual because of the location that would not allow them to practice their beliefs fully, in most cases, they would try to make the best of it.

Famine, earthquake, fire, sickness, and other misfortunes also occurred and disrupted people's lives that the Hmong could not fully practice their religion to pleases their ancestors. On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, China, encountered a cluster of cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei Province. The novel Coronavirus was eventually identified to be the cause of the illness. The first case of COVID-19 in the United States was confirmed on January 20, 2020, and reported to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on January 22, 2020. The COVID-19 interrupted the animist believer's hope for the future. Several Hmong people have died due to the COVID-19. In the fifty states, governors have placed an executive order for people to stay home,

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practice social distancing, allow no visitation, and have no outside contact. The pandemic virus caused many Hmong people to be unable to practice their traditional beliefs. It caused the family of the deceased to have a hard time finding the path pointer (Tug taw kev) who would perform a ritual for the dead to find his or her way back to the country and home where they were born and would be able to re-incarnate. They also needed the Qheng Player (Txiv qeej) along with the drum player (Tug ntau nruag) to help guide the way for the deceased. The final rite for the family to fulfill was to find the blesser (Txiv xaiv) to bless the family for a successful life in the future. The immediate families and relatives could not "go and pay their last respect - Moog hlub ua zag kawg." Hmong funeral was always a full house of guests consisting of hundreds of people gathering together to show their support to the deceased family. The funeral could last for days before the burial. The pandemic had put a burden and stress on the family because their loved one could not get the funeral rites, and they were worried that the deceased would be wandering somewhere in time and space or lost forever. It was a sad time for the relatives and friends as well that they could not support the family during their times of grief because of social distancing.

The Hmong, who are nonbelievers, worried about the deceased loved ones, but the Christians did not have to worry where the dead would go because they had faith in Jesus Christ, and they had hope and assurance that they will see their loved one again in heaven. The Apostle Paul wrote, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep." (1 Thess 4:13-14). Christians knew that the physical body and life on earth were only temporary on this earth. "For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we
live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.” (Rom 14:8). It is at times like this that the Christians should proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the Hmong people to bring them peace and hope. They should present the Gospel effectively to the Hmong people so that they would become Christians. The Christians should tell the Hmong that they do not need to practice the animism faith for sending their loved ones to the afterlife and be reincarnated again. The study allowed the researcher the opportunity to educate and affirm the believers that when they believe in Christ, these types of practices would no longer require them to honor the ancestors by sacrificing animals, they could still honor their ancestors by living a godly life. The researcher encouraged the participants to accept the grace and forgiveness of Jesus; He is the only one who could save them from the bitterness sinful life of the world.

What Did the Researcher Learn Implementing the Project?

The researcher found that Our Savior Lutheran Church should evaluate the current ministry by implementing a new strategy to move the church ministry forward. The Hmong members at Our Savior Lutheran Church should take charge of new projects and put together a better way to serve the members, church, and community. The implementing project procedure would include the teaching of the Christian faith. The members seemed to be at the stage of drinking milk instead of eating solid food. Their belief should be firm and robust in God's word. The researcher learned that by implementing the new project to the members of the church, they looked confused and lost because they never had to go and plant God's word outside of their comfort zone. The researcher challenged the members to think about the following four questions:

One, what is the Church Mission? Is the Hmong Ministry mission founded based on Scripture, or is it an organization to help the social needs? The researcher explained to the
members what he meant by social needs. Many Hmong Christians founded their churches for social needs. They thought that the more members the church had, the more help the church would have during social events. The members treated the church more likely to be a social club for the needs of the members instead of their need for God's word. The church members rarely attended church, and they came once in a while so that they could keep their membership active. They wanted their children or grandchildren baptized in the church and asked the pastor to pray for illness, weddings, special dinners, and other needs. They did not want to get involved in any church functions, but when they have any urgency, they turned to the church for help. The to-do list to support the work of the church was at the bottom of their schedule, and they always put God last. Christians should understand that the church is an organism, not an organization, and the people should focus on sharing the Mission of Jesus Christ.\(^{121}\)

Two, what are the top three priorities in your Church that need to be addressed? The members should know that the top three priorities are commitment, discipline, and teamwork. People should discipline themselves to serve God and His church, and they should commit to their duty. The researcher advised the members that there are positions in the church that needed to fill, yet no one is making a move to take part in it. They would wait for other people to make the first move and step back to see if they are doing a good job or not. The members were not working as a team, and the researcher explained to them that for the church to grow, everyone would have to put lots of effort and do their part accordingly. Without teamwork, nothing would get done, and if the leaders are not ready to lead then, the church could not reach or achieve their mission and vision. The church should have people who are willing to take the leadership role

\(^{121}\) Hellerman, *Why We Need the Church to Become More Like Jesus: Reflections About Community, Spiritual Formation, and the Story of Scripture*, 36.
and put God as their top priority by committing their time to be active in service and sharing Jesus Christ.

Three, how do you measure your church’s success? The researcher told the members that success is measured by how it transforms the members’ lives. The church’s success would help to conduct ministry effectively and monitors spiritual growth. A triumphant church would need the participation of all its members to be successful.

Four, what assistance do you need from outside of your Church? The researcher advised the members that the Hmong Ministry is not a separate congregation from Our Savior Lutheran Church and School. The Hmong are members of the church, and because the Hmong members wanted to hear the Gospel in their native language, the church allowed the members to have separate worship services in Hmong with a Hmong pastor who would minister them. He also told them that they are part of the Anglo congregation, and they had its full support. The outside help that the Hmong ministry could have is from the Hmong Mission Society, an organization created to network with all other Lutheran Churches – Missouri Synod (LCMS) Hmong Ministry in North America and Southeast Asia. They could use the strategic planning process SWOT for the current Hmong Ministry. The SWOT analysis chart in Figure 13 would help guide the church members in assessing their ongoing ministry.
Helms and Nixon wrote, "While SWOT analysis is primarily used to aid an organization plan future strategies, the framework can also be applied to individuals."\(^{122}\) The acronym SWOT stands for "Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats." It is a strategic tool that would help the Hmong Ministry developing insights and policy-making for the expansion of its current ministry.

**SWOT Analysis**

**Strengths:** The characteristics of the Church or projects that give an advantage over others.

1. What does the church do well?

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The Hmong Ministry has existed for forty years, and it continues to send its support to the Hmong Ministry Annual Conference.

2. What unique resource can the church draw on to assist them?

The Hmong Ministry could draw its resources from the Anglo members, the Michigan District LCMS, and the Hmong Mission Society.

3. What are the church’s strengths that others can see?

The strength of the church came from the persistent teaching of the Scripture. The Hmong ministry has a competent pastor with an explicit doctrine of Law and Gospel.

Weaknesses: The characteristics that would place the Church or projects at a disadvantage relative to others.

1. What could the church improve?

The church could improve its members' involvement when people are taking leadership roles on the board or committees. See Figure 6—an Action Plan. Members should be proactive.

2. Why does the church have fewer resources than others?

The Hmong ministry did not have enough funds to provide resources for its members.

3. What are the weaknesses of the Hmong ministry?

The Hmong ministry's weakness was the lack of participation from the members; they are not willing to support LCMS Hmong Ministry as one organization that is united in Christ, working toward one goal of expanding Christ's Kingdom.

Opportunities: The elements that the project could exploit to its advantage.

1. What are the excellent opportunities open to the church?
The location of the church was in an area that had plenty of opportunities to witness to others where members of the church could plant seeds to events, social gatherings, fundraising booths, and invite people to church.

2. What trends could you take advantage of to help the church?

The church should seek out its circuit and district for resources.

3. What are the strengths of the church?

The church's strength was the willingness of the members to help with the community. They showed their love to help the believers and nonbelievers during hardships, such as the death of a family member. The church would benefit more if they organized a prayer team to pray for the local, state, and the world, and take the evangelism flyers and share with the non-believers.

**Threats**: The elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the Church or project.

1. What trends could harm the church?

The lack of attendance of the members could harm the church if the church members do not participate with other Hmong Ministry. They should know how important it is for them to help improve their ministry. They should not neglect their church, and they need to get involved.

2. What is church competition doing?

The church should discipline its members to be more active in the church. Other Hmong denominations had committed members who could pray, sing, and evangelize.

3. What response does the church have to help with the threats in the youth?

The church should respond to the need for a youth ministry. The number of youth coming to church is decreasing, and elders and leaders should encourage the parents to discipline
their children and bring them to church. The youth program would benefit the children as well as the adults if the church could offer an education program to help Hmong from all ages to learn the Hmong language. The Hmong literacy program could serve and meet the demand of non-Christian communities, as well as it would help the members of the church.

**Goals Grid**

The ministry should use the goals grid after the completion and implementation of the SWOT analysis. The 2 X 2 goals grid had four categories:

1. Achieve; What is it that we want and do not have? What do we want to achieve?
2. Preserve; What is it that we have and want to keep? What do we want to preserve?
3. Avoid; What is it that we do not have and do not want? What do we want to avoid?
4. Eliminate; What is it that we have and do not want? What do we want to eliminate?

The goals grid was a tool used to help facilitate the needs of the Hmong Ministry to adapt and fit their circumstance in doing ministry. Figure 14 is a blank form that the individual could fill from their view of the current Hmong Ministry. The goals of the grid were for the individual to fill out how they see the needs of the Hmong Ministry in their response related to each quadrant. The group could put it together to see the patterns of similarity to help decide the future of the Hmong Ministry when they meet to view the goals. They would insert the vision, mission, and purpose to the Hmong Ministry once they completed the grid.

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The following was a suggestion to add to what the current Hmong Ministry already has.

**Vision**

Intimacy with God, Journey in Grace, and Inheritance for all.

**Mission**

To Learn, Live, and Share Christ. (Matt 11:29; Phil 1:21; Matt 28:19)

**Purpose**

To educate and inspire the Hmong Christians through the Word of God for the service of God's Kingdom.
How Might the Result Apply in Other Ministry Settings?

The research results revealed that the Hmong ministry at Our Savior Lutheran should change its strategy to improve the church ministry. It appeared that most of the participants were older and did not want to take any part in doing ministry, and the younger generation is not willing to step up to lead. The SWOT and goals grid helped to apply the changes and have a plan of action for the various other ministry settings such as:

The *Spiritual Life Team* - The church should designate a group of men who have a passion for ministry and nominate officers for the church's operational needs. The group should meet at least one day per month to discuss the functions and obligations of the church. They should have a team that will take care of the welfare of the full time-worker, a team prayer that will pray for the church, local, state, and nation, and a team of volunteers to look for the welfare of the church.

The *Women's Ministry* - This ministry would need motivated women, young and old, to carry out the ministry for women. The women of the church would appoint a dedicated person to lead them. They would have Bible study, prayers, provide programs and resources, plan retreats and special events, stay connected with the Christian and non-Christian women, give workshops to improve the faith in women, and fundraise for the church.

The *Youth Ministry* - Parents should encourage their children to come to church. The youth are slowly coming to church, and on Sunday, there were only two or three who are coming to church. The church should appoint a dedicated couple who loves to interact with young adults. The ministry should motivate young adults and organize programs such as Habitat for Humanity, Feed the Poor, Game Night, Bowling, and Youth Retreat. The youth group should meet at least once a month to talk about teen issues and activities.
The *Children's Ministry* – This ministry would be crucial to the church, and the children should know about the Christian faith. The church should appoint a group of volunteers to watch the children during church service. It was not appropriate to have children running around when the pastor was preaching. There should be activities for the children to do, such as childcare, coloring pictures, puzzles, singing, art and crafts, and Sunday school. Parents should encourage their children to stay in the classroom with volunteers.

The *Bible Study* - Members should encourage other members to attend Bible study. Most of the members did not know how to find a Bible verse, and they have been Christians for twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years. Christians should know how to find Bible passages in the Bible. Attending Bible study would give the members chance to ask questions about the Old Testaments (OT) and New Testaments (NT). It would benefit them to learn, memorize, and understand the Bible. The ones who attended were those who are more knowledgeable about the Bible.

The *Small Group Ministry* - This group would focus on their relationship with God, encourage one another through prayer and evangelism. The group would not limit the number of people, or it could be limited to the number of a similar age group that gathers and study the word of God together. They could meet at any location that they choose on a weekly or monthly basis.

The *Community Outreach Ministry* - The church should continue to provide for the need to reach out to the members and locals. It should appoint volunteers who have compassion for serving Christ because it would be a compassionate ministry. The older Hmong people or non-speaking Hmong would need people to care for them, and this ministry could help them with the help of providing meals to members of their church family who experienced the birth of a child,
undergone surgery, or lost a loved one. The church should continue to give two bags of rice to families who lost loved ones, whether they are Christians or non-Christians. It would be an excellent way to show that the church is helping the community.

Did Anything Emerge During the Study that Merits Future Research?

The researcher found that most of the participants still want to participate in animistic rituals with their families, relatives, and friends. It would merit future research on how the Gospel could be present effectively to the Hmong people so that they would become Christians. The study kept emerging, and the researcher would seek a way to encourage the participants to look deeper into the faith that their relatives still wanted to hold on. The study results revealed that the majority of the participants are active members of the church, but the life that they lived did not show their faith that they are Christians. They came to church on Sundays then forget about the church for the rest of the week. Issler wrote, "We want to do the right thing, but we don't. We know what the Bible says to do – we're willing to do it – but we often miss the mark." The Hmong people understood that family ties are significant, but they should also understand the faith that they believe as well. There would be times for family and times for God too, and they should be consistent in what they do. The participants should leave the animistic faith altogether when they decided to accept and trust God. They should learn about God's mandate worship. The church taught them about real hope and discipleship, and with this teaching, the Hmong should develop a strong faith that would enable them to keep their strong cultural identity.

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124 Klaus, Living Into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character, 14.
The participants knew that when they decided to accept the Christian faith, there was no turning back. The life that they used to live, they should let go of all of it. The first line and last stanza of a famous song, "I have decided to follow Jesus; The world behind me, the cross before me; Though none go with me, still I will follow; My cross I'll carry, till I see Jesus; Will you decide now to follow Jesus? No turning back, no turning back."125 The Hmong Mission Society hymnal has a similar tune and lyrics, "Kuv ntseeg Yexus lawm, kuv yuav ntseeg Yexus moog, Txawm kwvtij tsi ntseeg, Kuv yuav ntseeg Yexus moog, Yog muaj kev txomnyem, Kuv yuav ntseeg Yexus moog, Kuv noog Vaahtswv lug, kuv txhaj le muaj chaw vaam, Kuv yuav tsi thim, kuv yuav tsi thim – I believe in Jesus, I will believe in Jesus, Even though my family does not believe, I will believe in Jesus, If there is suffering, I will believe in Jesus, I will obey God, I will have hope, I will not give up, I will not give up."126 Christians who did not want to let go of the life that they used to live and wanted to continue to practice the animism would face more hardship than other Christians. The Hmong might be resistant to the Gospel, but there would come a time when they become receptive to the Gospel.127 Some Christians might be responsive to the Gospel for a long time, but resistance may follow, and they could fall from the faith. The desire of the heart would lead them to destruction because when they asked God and wanted something to be done, and it was not according to their wish, they would cease to believe. They did not have the


patience to wait. God blesses and answers prayers according to His will, and no one should demand anything from God.

The way that the Gospel could effectively be presented to the Hmong people so that they could become Christian was to share the Gospel in the Hmong context. It also required people who have the compassion to reach out to the Hmong. Earley and Wheeler wrote, "Effective personal evangelism can be one of the hardest yet most fulfilling challenges you can accept. Often it demands immense patience and perseverance." It is crucial to reach the Hmong with resources in the Hmong language to the elderly and older generations. Most of the elderly had a lack of education, and those who knew how to read and write and practiced the animism religion, would slowly fading away. The timing now would be an excellent opportunity to reach out to the Hmong because the younger generation has no interest in practicing a belief that has no meaning to them. They would not want to know how to prepare and practice the rites because of language barriers.

In the book "The Pursuit of God, A.W. Tozer said, "Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshipers [meeting] together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could be, were they to become 'unity' conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship." People would say that believing in the Christian faith was the same as believing in the ancestors as long as they did not commit any sins such as lying, cheating, stealing, or murder, then they are righteous people just

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like the Christians. Some “Christians” also said that they believed, and they knew who God is, but they did not have to go to church; they just remained righteous, and they would still get to go to heaven. They should understand that they are wrong because no one could be righteous except for Jesus Christ. Christians who did not give their time to worship and glorify God, would God know them when they meet Him at heaven's gate? God would probably say to them, "I do not know you!" (Luke 13:27). Christians should obey God's command and worship Him only so that God could also acknowledge them when they meet Him.

The moment that nonbelievers accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, their spiritual formation began. The church received them into God's family, and it was up to the individual with the help of the Holy Spirit to maintain his or her faith. Satan would use all kinds of tricks, temptations, and evil deeds of the world to tempt the person to commit sins and or worshiping other gods instead of the real God, Jesus Christ. The Christians are free from the devil once they believed in God (Ntseeg Vaajtsyw). They should never go back to the animism faith (Rov moog coj kevcai dlaab qhua), or they would face the consequences. Scripture gave an excellent example of the return of an unclean spirit:

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest but finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation." (Matthew 12:43-45).

The researcher advised the participants that they should know what is right and wrong and should not fall into the temptation of the world and the devil. They should know the meaning of worshiping idolatry objects such as "Tying the string – Khiteg." This practice would not help them. The "calling of the ancestors to intercession on their behalf – Hu nam hu txiv lug paab" would not give them the hope and peace they desperately need. They should understand that
when they lost all hope, Jesus would provide them with peace, but they should stand firm and believe. Jesus promised, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (John 14:1-3). Christians did not have to pray to their ancestors for peace because Jesus had overcome the world so that they would have peace. (John 16:33).

The Gospel should reach the Hmong people in a form that the people could understand and grasp quickly. The Christians are God's messengers; they should go and proclaim His salvation to the ones who wanted to hear. Jesus said, "As you have sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." (John 17:18). Christians could be witnesses to those who needed God's grace. Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts. 1:8). They could start the mission in their home first, began with the person closest to them, then in the church, right in their city and community. Christians were not only sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the Hmong people but also with all nations. The Christians should continue to encourage each other and let the Holy Spirit help them to remain firm to the belief, and to continue to be witnesses to others and share with them what God has done for them. The world is changing, but God's word would not change, and when they heard God's call, they should be like the prophet Samuel, "Speak, for your servant is listening." (1 Sam 3:11, NIV). God says, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." (Isa 6:8). There would be three simple steps to remain faithful to God and share the Gospel with the non-Christians.

One, Learn God's word so that they are prepared to share in and out of season. Two, Live the life
that is worthy of the Christian. Third, Share Jesus with the world and let them know that He is the way, the truth, and the life, and He is the Savior of the world for their salvation.
Bibliography


Yarger, Mark H. "Leading the Transition from a Traditional Attraction Based Ministry Model to a Missional of Ministry." DMin diss., Winebrenner Theological Seminary, 2013. In ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. https://search-proquest-
Appendix A

Research Consent Form

Title of the Project: The Hmong Spiritual Formation from Animism to Christianity
Principal Investigator: Lang Yang, Researcher, Liberty University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invitation to be Part of a Research Study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be eighteen or older, your ethnicity must be Hmong and you must have once practiced the faith of animism and now are a Christian. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.</td>
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Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the study about and why is it being done?</th>
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<tr>
<td>The purpose of the study is to research how a Hmong who was once a nonbeliever and practiced the animism faith &quot;the way of the spirit&quot; and now is converted to the Christian faith. The researcher will interview participants and record his findings of the impacts or consequences that they face after their spiritual formation.</td>
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<th>What will happen if you take part in this study?</th>
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<tr>
<td>If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:</td>
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<td>1. Complete a one-on-one interview. The interview will be recorded and will take approximately 1 hour to complete.</td>
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<td>2. You may be asked to complete a follow-up interview if the researcher finds that the data he collected is not clear. Clarification should only take less than thirty minutes.</td>
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<th>How could you or others benefit from this study?</th>
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<td>Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.</td>
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<th>What risks might you experience from being in this study?</th>
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<td>The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.</td>
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<th>How will personal information be protected?</th>
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<tr>
<td>The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.</td>
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</table>
• Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms/codes. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
• Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and maybe use in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
• Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Is study participation voluntary?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.</td>
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<th>What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.</td>
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<th>Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The researcher conducting this study is Lang Yang. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, <strong>you are encouraged</strong> to contact him at 989-239-4758 or email <a href="mailto:lyang1@liberty.edu">lyang1@liberty.edu</a>. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Jeff W. Brawner, at <a href="mailto:jwbrawner@liberty.edu">jwbrawner@liberty.edu</a>.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant?</th>
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<tr>
<td>If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, <strong>you are encouraged</strong> to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at <a href="mailto:irb@liberty.edu">irb@liberty.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<th>Your Consent</th>
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<tr>
<td>By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.
Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date
Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What is your full name?
2. How old are you?
3. How long have you been a Christian?
4. What brought you to become a Christian?
5. How has Christian faith impacted your daily life?
6. Has the animism faith ever affected your life?
7. Do you still participate in the ritual of the animism belief while you are a Christian?
8. Have any of your relatives, friends, and family ever influence you to go back and practice the animism belief?
9. What is the best religion? Animism or Christianity?
10. Describe the difference between the animism faith and the Christian faith?
11. Describe the importance and difference of the traditional Hmong and traditional Christian religious rituals and ceremonies in your life?
12. What hope do you have in your ancestors? Can they give you or anyone else the peace that you need?
13. As a Christian, do you think that you will lose your identity as being a Hmong since you accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior? Yes or No. If Yes, please explain.
14. Do you think that animism religion is overpowering the Hmong community in your area? State? And the World?
15. Do you believe that there is a God? The Devil?
16. What is your relationship with your family, friends, relatives, and clan since you become a Christian?
17. What are the impacts and consequences of someone who is a Christian but still has a family who practices the animism religion?
18. Are you involved in your denomination church?
19. What is your role/title/position in your church group?
20. What can your church do for you? What are your expectations of your church?
21. What can you do for your church?
22. Why do the Hmong people who believe in animism hold on to something that is not real or has no life?
23. How can we present the Gospel effectively to the Hmong people so that they, too, can become Christian?
24. Describe your life's journey as an animistic believer, before you become a Christian?
25. Is there anything else you would like to add? Questions?
Appendix C

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 18, 2020

Lang Yang
Jeff Brawner

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY19-20-260 The Hmong Spiritual Formation from Animism to Christianity

Dear Lang Yang, Jeff Brawner:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the date of the IRB meeting at which the protocol was approved: May 18, 2020. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make modifications in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update submission to the IRB. These submissions can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office