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JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

DISCOVERING, DEVELOPING, AND DEPLOYING  
EMERGING MINISTRY LEADERS  
IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by

Janet Kay Bruner Faggart

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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## ABSTRACT

Across America, the need exists to identify young, potential Christian leaders who sense a call to ministry, to grow these emerging leaders through spiritual parenting or mentoring, godly relationships, education, training, and ministry experience, and to send out the next generation of ministers to fulfill the Great Commission. The purpose of this mixed-method phenomenological study was to explore and better understand the nature of the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders who are credentialed ministers with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God and under 40 years of age at the time of the study. In this research, *a call to ministry* is generally defined as “a general call of some believers to ministry leadership” (Iorg, 2008, p. 19). The theory guiding this study was transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) as it finds meaning in the lived experiences of the research participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Empirical research of this phenomenon was guided by the theory of transcendental phenomenology. This study utilized qualitative and quantitative data gathered through a survey and qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. It employed a purposive sample approach. This study revealed a foundation for better vocational ministry leadership development and retention among emerging leaders.

*Keywords:* Ministry, Christian leadership development, emerging leaders, mentoring, spiritual parenting.

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**Dedication**

To Jonathan, beloved husband, encourager, co-laborer, and worshiper of God;

To Katrina and Jonathan Ryan, our treasured children;

To Blake and Katie, our cherished children-in-love;

To Abigail Elizabeth, Hannah Grace, and Elisheva Rose, our precious women of God;

To Darrell and Dorothy, my honored parents;

And most of all,

To the Most Holy God, who has brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves.

## **Acknowledgments**

The Lord God Almighty has kindly brought salvation through Jesus and given me purpose for life. The Holy Spirit has faithfully guided my every step, teaching me how to do the tasks before me. Were it not for the Lord, nothing of worth could be or would have been accomplished.

Wise instructors have diligently imparted their knowledge and expertise. Their support has cheered on the weary and redirected the hesitant. A special thanks goes to Dr. Gary Bredfeldt and Dr. Melody Smith for their invaluable guidance and encouragement.

Family has prayed; friends and colleagues have encouraged. My granddaughters continually have brought joy and laughter. My husband, who now lives in the presence of the Lord, was my chief cheerleader, always envisioning the greater and best in me.

How blessed I am. To God be all the glory!

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Assemblies of God (AG)

Assemblies of God United States Missions (AGUSM)

Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM)

Chi Alpha Campus Ministries (Chi Alpha or XA)

Christ for the Nations Institute (CFNI)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God (NTD)

Research Question (RQ)

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

Southwestern Assemblies of God University (SAGU)

## **CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN**

### **Introduction**

The pulpits of the United States are graying, due in part to “the lack of leadership development among Millennials and Gen X; and a lack of succession planning among Boomers” (Barna Group, 2017, p. 191). The shifting demographics within the United States (Fry & Parker, 2018) highlight the need to identify young, potential Christian leaders who sense a call to ministry (Jones, 2019, p. 120), to provide biblical leadership maturation through spiritual parenting, education, mentoring, godly relationships, coaching, and training (Baxter, 2011; Cincala, 2016; Davidson, 2017; Goldsberry, 2018; Hall, 2017; Hill, 2017; J. W. Kennedy, 2018; Langer, 2014; Martin, 2003; MacDonald, 2016; Muir, 2014; Norwood, 2018), and to send out the next generation of leaders looking to the Christian’s mission, promise, and reward as their incentive (Geiger & Peck, 2016; J. D. Kennedy, 2018).

The Assemblies of God (AG) faces the issues identified by Barna (2017). While the aging of the AG credentialed minister may be attributed to better health care or good genes, as the oldest ministers in 2020 were 103 years of age in the total minister category (Assemblies of God General Secretary’s Office, Statistics, 2021, March 15, p. 244), the concern still exists that among all active AG ministers the median age is steadily climbing, from 44 years of age in 1995 to 52 years of age in 2020 (Assemblies of God General Secretary’s Office, Statistics, 2021, February 9). To better understand this phenomenon, this study focused on the perceived and lived experiences of the AG credentialed minister who is under 40 years of age, seeking to understand how this population discovers, develops, and deploys their ministry calling. No phenomenological study examining the discovery, development, or deployment of the ministry

calling of the under 40 years of age AG minister exists. This study sought to narrow that literature gap.

Chapter One of the study introduces the research concern, giving background to the problem. A clear statement of the problem furthers the need of discovering, developing, and deploying young leaders and is followed by a purpose statement guiding the study's focus and intent. Research questions derived from the research problem guide the study's framework. Research assumptions, delimitations of the research design, and definitions of pertinent terms lead to a description of the study's significance and a summary of the research design.

### **Background to the Problem**

In the New Testament, *ministry* comprehensively indicates the work of the entire body of Christ (*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, 2015, 1 Corinthians 12;<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:11–12; Bond, 2003; Merkle, 2003), the whole church. However, *ministry* may also identify work by individuals called to ministry leadership, also known as clergy or vocational ministers (Bond, 2003; Iorg, 2008, p. 19; Jones, 2019, p. 5; Merkle, 2003).

### **The Ministry Leader**

Throughout Scripture, ministry leaders were selected according to the divine initiative of God and trained for service by godly discipleship. The Old Testament spiritual leader might be designated for ministry leadership by having their head anointed with oil, as with Aaron (Exodus 29:7), whom Moses trained in tabernacle worship (Exodus 29). In the New Testament, Jesus called out men to be his apostles (Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:13–19), then disciplined them (Matthew 10:5–42) into ministry leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the Bible are from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation* (2015).

Today, God still calls men and women (Romans 16) to fulfill ministry leadership roles (Merkle, 2003). The church needs trustworthy ministers who have been appointed to God's service (1 Timothy 1:1). The ability of each individual to recognize and follow the Holy Spirit's call to spiritual service may benefit from the educating of the teacher or the mentoring of the established leader (Jones, 2019).

### **The Assemblies of God**

The Assemblies of God exists as a Protestant, Trinitarian, Evangelical, Pentecostal fellowship of believers (Assemblies of God, 2020a). Founded in 1914 with 300 people, today the AG constitutes nearly 13,000 U.S. churches with over 3 million members and adherents, with more than 69 million AG members worldwide, making the Assemblies of God the world's largest Pentecostal denomination (Assemblies of God, 2020c).

The AG issues ministerial credentials at the level of ordained, licensed, and certified to qualified persons (The General Council, 2019, Bylaws, p. 120). Within the Assemblies of God, USA, the percentage of all ministers under the age of 40 years has declined from 26.2% in 2000 to 18.7% in 2020 (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2021, March 15). The reason for the decline cannot be attributed to the overall congregational age, as 53% of Assemblies of God, USA, attendees were under age 35 in 2019 (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 33), thus constituting a ready pool of potential leaders.

The Assemblies of God, USA, provides for the representation and development of the minister who is under 40 years of age at the national level. The 21-member Executive Presbytery, which serves as the Board of Directors of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, includes a seat for an under 40 ordained minister to serve as a nonresident executive

presbyter (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2019, p. 101). The larger General Presbytery, which serves as “the official policy-making body of the Assemblies of God when the General Council is not in session” (p. 102), provides for an under 40 ordained minister to “represent each geographic area, the Language Area—East Spanish, the Language Area—West Spanish, the Language Area—Other, and the Ethnic Fellowship area as general presbyters” (p. 102). The Assemblies of God Network of Women Ministers (n.d.) offers under 40 cohorts for “leadership development, networking opportunities, peer mentoring, [and] relationships with ministry colleagues” (Cohort).

### **The North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God**

The North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God (NTD) faces a similar scenario with 57.2% of adherents under age 35 (Assemblies of God General Secretary’s Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 19) and the median age of all ministers at 56 (Assemblies of God General Secretary’s Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 95). With 632 churches representing its wide cultural diversity (Assemblies of God General Secretary’s Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, pp. 65, 79) and a stated goal of “1,000 healthy churches by 2027 reaching every neighborhood in North Texas” (North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020c), the district must significantly increase the number of qualified ministers to effectively minister to the projected future churches. The NTD has established a Next Generation Cohort of under 40 ordained ministers who are mentored by executive leaders, in order “to prepare leaders by giving them a chair at the table and a voice in leadership” (North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020a, p. 7).

## **Developing the Emerging Adult**

In 2019, the youngest credentialed AG minister was 18 years of age (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 102). An under 40 credentialed AG minister might be classified as an emerging adult (Arnett, 2000, 2014). Arnett (2014) defines the age range of emerging adults from 18 to 29 years, which encompasses 31% of the under 40 ministers in the AG (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, January 23, p. 1). Parks (2011) views the age of emerging adults from 18 to 32 years, which includes 49% of the under 40 age group of AG ministers (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, January 23, p. 1).

Arnett et al. (2011) found emerging adults view themselves as between adolescence and adulthood (p.151). Arnett et al. stressed the developmental work emerging adults undertake in this stage, as they seek establishment in the adult world through an individualized identity grounded in ideas and values attained through their explorations (p. 152). Arnett (2014) identified five characteristics common to the emerging adult: identity exploration to answer the question "who am I," while attempting various possibilities; instability in residence, work, and love; self-focus in opposition to fulfilling obligations to others; feeling in-between or in transition, neither adult nor adolescent; and possibilities/optimism with growing hope and exceptional opportunities. Because of these characteristics, emerging adults can benefit from the temporary, interactive support of scaffolding (Bruner, 1978; see also Arnett et al., 2011, p.152).

## **Variables for Ministry Leadership Growth**

Certain variables may encourage or hinder the development of the credentialed minister who is under 40 years of age. Spiritual parenting and mentoring bring a level of accountability and tutoring, fostering growth (LeBlanc, 2017, February 28). The Apostle Paul used spiritual

parenting to address the need for individuals to grow in maturity (Ogden, 2016, Chapter 5). Mentoring the next generation has been shown to have value (MacDonald, 2016), develops leader identity (Muir, 2014), and can be researched through transcendental phenomenology (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Gender discrimination, educational deficiencies, and lack of ministerial positions may deter the development of a call to ministry (Pitt & Behnke, 2012).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The church must develop and retain young leaders, for the mission of the church to go forward. Even with national, district, and local incentives for development and mentoring, the number of AG ministers under 40 years of age has declined annually (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27). AG minister Gary Wayne Grogan, who mentors under 40 AG ministry leaders, observed, "Our young people are not going in the ministry, not staying in the ministry, or not staying in our tribes. We have to be more intentional about young men and women in leadership" (J. W. Kennedy, 2018).

Some recent research has addressed the aging ministerial ranks within the AG. For example, doctoral studies involving AG sample populations have explored mentoring relationships between seasoned ministers and students studying for ministry (Jones, 2019), emphasized Holy Spirit empowered missiological principles to connect young leaders (J. D. Kennedy, 2018), and looked at pastoral succession between a mentoring lead pastor and their mentee (Wolf, 2020). Adamson (2019) has presented compelling research indicating the beliefs, values, and variables of AG USA Millennial leaders. Jessup (2013) has researched the decreasing number of young adults seeking ministerial credentials with the AG, while Smith (2016) has studied intentional leadership succession in the AG. However, the initial literature review revealed a lack of research, concerning the lived experiences of the AG credentialed

minister who is under 40 years of age, regarding the discovery, development, and deployment of their ministerial call.

This research study desired to provide insight into vocational ministry leadership development and retention, through the lived experiences of AG credentialed ministers under 40 years of age. Empirical research of this phenomenon, guided by the theory of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) and utilizing qualitative and quantitative data, revealed foundational principles for better vocational ministry leadership development and retention among emerging ministry leaders.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this mixed-method phenomenological study was to explore and better understand the nature of the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders who are credentialed ministers with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God and under 40 years of age at the time of the study. *A call to ministry* was broadly defined as “a general call of some believers to ministry leadership” (Iorg, 2008, p. 19). The theory guiding the qualitative portion of this study was transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) as it finds meaning in the lived experiences of the research participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were designed to guide this mixed-method transcendental phenomenological study:

**RQ1.** What are the similarities and differences of significant demographic characteristics (age, gender, call to ministry, education and training, ministry experience, and spiritual parents or mentors) among emerging leaders who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age?

**RQ2.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the discovery of their call to ministry?

**RQ3.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the value of spiritual parenting or mentoring, education and training, and ministry experience in the development of their call to ministry?

**RQ4.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the current or future deployment of their call to ministry, especially in relation to the Assemblies of God?

**RQ5.** How do the variables of age, gender, call to ministry, education, ministry experience, and spiritual parents or mentors relate to the emerging leader's description of the discovery, development, and deployment of their call to ministry?

### **Assumptions and Delimitations**

#### **Research Assumptions**

Assumptions of the research were as follows:

1. This researcher holds the foundational assumption that absolute truth exists within the created world and is revealed in the Bible (Hiebert, 2008).
2. This research assumed that the emerging leader who has a call to ministry bears primary responsibility for their continued development.
3. It is also assumed that the church as a whole and the AG, in particular, accept their responsibility to grow vocational ministry leadership.
4. This research assumed that the credentialed AG minister has a call to ministry, as the evidence of a call to ministry is a requirement for obtaining credentials with the AG (The General Council, 2019, p. 129).
5. This research assumed that necessary access to the research population and significant participation by the research population, in order to provide credible and sufficient quantifiable and qualifiable data.

#### **Delimitations of the Research Design**

Delimitations of the research were as follows:

1. This research was delimited to examining credentialed ministers within the Assemblies of God who are under 40 years of age at the time of the study. This research did not examine credentialed ministers outside of the AG, nor credentialed AG ministers 40 years of age or older.

2. This research population sample was delimited to the database of credentialed ministers held by the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God (NTD) at the time of the study. The research population sample did not include AG credentialed ministers outside of the NTD.
3. This study was delimited to the topic of discovering, developing, and deploying the call to ministry among credentialed ministers who are under 40 years of age within the Assemblies of God. The study did not seek to examine issues outside of those described in the research questions.

### **Definition of Terms**

1. *Call to Ministry*: “A general call of some believers to ministry leadership” (Iorg, 2008, p. 19).
2. *Emerging Adult*: A developmental stage, where individuals neither view themselves as adolescents nor entirely as adults (Arnett et al., 2011, p. 8).
3. *Emerging Leaders*: “Individuals who are currently either in entry-level leadership positions or aspiring leaders who have demonstrated either by their activities or their learning plans an interest in leadership development” (Lugsdin, 2000, p. 3).
4. *Leader Development*: “The expansion of a person’s capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes” (van Velsor et al., 2010, p. 2).
5. *Leadership*: “A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2019, p. 5).
6. *Leadership Development*: “The process of preparing individuals and collectives to effectively engage in leading-following interactions” (DeRue & Myers, 2014, p. 835).
7. *Spiritual Parenting*: To “prophetically call out the greatness in young people with ministry gifts and then walk with them, resourcing and encouraging them as if they are the only hope for our future” (Davidson, 2017, July 12).
8. *Transcendental Phenomenology*: “A philosophical approach to qualitative research methodology seeking to understand human experience” (Sheehan, 2014, p. 10).
9. *Vocational Ministry*: Ministry, which requires ministerial credentials, such as a pastor, church staff member, chaplain, or missionary (Jones, 2019, p. 5).

### **Significance of the Study**

Across America, the need exists to identify young, potential Christian leaders who sense a call to ministry (Jones, 2019, p. 120), to grow these emerging leaders through spiritual

parenting, education, mentoring, godly relationships, coaching, and training (Baxter, 2011; Cincala, 2016; Davidson, 2017; Goldsberry, 2018; Hall, 2017; Hill, 2017; J. W. Kennedy, 2018; Langer, 2014; Martin, 2003; MacDonald, 2016; Muir, 2014; Norwood, 2018), and to send out the next generation of ministers to fulfill the Great Commission (Geiger & Peck, 2016; J. D. Kennedy, 2018). Ongoing research investigating generational norms and differences (Barna Group, 2017; Fry & Parker, 2018; Parker & Igielnik, 2020) continues to add dimension to the understanding of leadership development among ministry leaders. With an everchanging demographic, exploration of the mitigating factors influencing thought processes and actions of emerging leaders must be continual (Adamson, 2019).

This study sought to explain the lived experiences of the Assemblies of God credentialed minister who is under 40 years of age, identifying factors that help or hinder the furtherance of an individual's call to Christian ministry (Iorg, 2008, p. 19). This study endeavored to contribute insights into purposeful actions to motivate, equip, and encourage the discovery, development, and deployment of an individual's call to ministry within the universal church, with particular emphasis on the emerging AG ministry leader who is under 40 years of age. This research attempted to uncover any issues, which impede an individual's call to ministry or affect the retention of the vocational minister by their ministry organization.

### **Summary of the Design**

The research used a mixed-method transcendental phenomenological design, which collects qualitative and quantitative data through a survey and interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). With an intent to explore the lived experiences of the sample population, a transcendental phenomenological method (Moustakas, 1994; Sheehan, 2014) was employed in the research design.

## **Methodological Design**

The study first collected data through a qualitative survey (Fink, 2003; Jansen, 2010) of 28 closed and open-ended questions (Pinzer, 2017) (RQ1) regarding the discovery (RQ2), development (RQ3), and deployment (RQ4) of the participant's call to ministry. All credentialed NTD AG ministers under the age of 40 were invited to complete the qualitative online survey. The qualitative data gathered from the survey was coded and analyzed for common and shared themes using Qualtrics XM (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>). The quantitative survey data gathered from the survey was analyzed with analysis of variance and t-tests using Qualtrics XM software.

The researcher chose ten participants, who have completed the online qualitative survey and who reflect the demographics of the NTD under 40 AG ministers, to form a purposive sample for an in-depth exploration of the emerging leaders' lived experiences. The purposive sample of participants engaged in individual follow-up, semi-structured qualitative interviews (Bloor & Wood, 2006) with open-ended questions informed by the survey data through a transcendental phenomenological method (Moustakas, 1994; Sheehan, 2014) regarding the discovery (RQ1), development (RQ2), and deployment (RQ3) of their call to ministry. During the interviews, the researcher became part of the research instrument through prompting of conversation and spiraling analysis of data (Given, 2012, p. 767). The qualitative data gathered from the transcendental phenomenological interviews was coded and analyzed for common and shared themes using Qualtrics XM (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>), while aligning with Moustakas' (1994) "Modification of the Van Kamm Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data" (p. 120–121).

### **Transcendental Phenomenology**

Phenomenology, “exploring the lived experience of a phenomenon” (Padgett, 2008, p. 35), studies phenomena and their perception and experience by individuals in the phenomenological event (Lester, 1999). Developed largely by Husserl (1965), who advanced a descriptive phenomenology, his student Heidegger molded the methodology into a contextual phenomenology (Lavery, 2003; Wojnar, & Swanson, 2007). Moustakas (1994) further developed transcendental phenomenology, which is “a philosophical approach to qualitative research methodology seeking to understand human experience” (Sheehan, 2014, p. 10).

Transcendental phenomenology was chosen for this study, as it focuses more on the participant’s description of experiences, rather than on the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78). Research involving ministry leaders can be approached through transcendental phenomenology, as evidenced by Pinzer (2017, pp. 7–8), who utilized transcendental phenomenology to undertake research from a Christian worldview, and through Blum’s (2012) support of phenomenology for offering “an interpretation of religion or of religious experience and consciousness” (p. 1029).

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

A comprehensive literature review summarizes and synthesizes prior research, rendering a focused framework for continued study (Creswell, 2008, p. 89). Within this chapter a theological foundation and theoretical framework was established on the proposed topic. Pertinent literature provided context and revealed a gap in the literature, which was addressed by the study.

This mixed-method phenomenological study sought to explore and better understand the nature of the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders who are credentialed ministers. By focusing on ministers who are under 40 years of age within the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God, the researcher painted a collaborative picture of multiple experiences that have led or are leading individuals into ministry leadership. By examining a minister's *call to ministry*, broadly defined as "a general call of some believers to ministry leadership" (Iorg, 2008, p. 19), the study found meaning in the lived experiences of the research participants through the theory of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; see also Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

### Theological Framework for the Study

The discipline of theology "strives to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith, based primarily on the Scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to issues of life" (Erickson, 2013, p. 8). With the Bible as the principal source of a Christian worldview, a theological framework becomes necessary to discern, analyze, and communicate truth within the literature review. This section of

the literature review examines theological concepts concerning a call to ministry; discipling, mentoring, and spiritual parenting; and education and training.

### **Call to Ministry**

“The one call is to lay your life at the feet of Jesus and to do whatever he asks” (McManus, 2013, p. 315). This declaration leads the Christian from a general salvific call to specific missional responsibilities (Smith, 2011, p. 24). The purpose of a call centers around bringing value and well-being to both community and society through service (DeLange, 2020, p. 54; Dik & Duffy, 2009).

### ***The General Call of Every Believer***

God calls every Christian believer “to live a life worthy of his call” (2 Thessalonians 1:11). In this passage, Spirit-empowered followers of Christ honor the name of their Lord by accomplishing good things prompted by their faith (2 Thessalonians 1:11–12). *Call* translates from the Greek *kaleo* (Mounce, 2006, pp. 153–154), designating a divine call (Packer, 2017). This universal invitation to live as God’s people through salvation in Jesus Christ enjoins each member of the church to devote their entire life to God (Royall, 2003).

The Christian’s call to follow Jesus in discipleship can be seen as a call to ministry (Matthew 4:19). This daily call to service finds evidence in the doctrinal concept known as the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:5–6; Erickson, 2013). The universal church pictured as the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22–23; 1 Corinthians 12:27) further emphasizes the necessity of all believers living out their general call to ministry with a unified Christian faith. The diversity of gifts given to different members of the church stresses the interconnectedness of the body of Christ, as no one part has every gift, and all members are needed by the others (1 Corinthians 12; Erickson, 2013, p. 960).

### ***The General and Specific Call to Ministry Leadership***

Christ's gifts to the church include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11), as well as "those who do miracles...who have the gift of healing...who can help others...who have the gift of leadership...[or] who speak in unknown languages" (1 Corinthians 12:28). Within God's sovereign discretion, a general call to utilize these gifts in ministry leadership may be expressed (Iorg, 2008, pp. 21–23), as the ministry leader senses a drive and inspiration to influence others (Ayers, 2015). A more specific call to a particular location, church, or position usually follows the general call to ministry leadership (Iorg, 2008, pp. 23–24).

Ministry leadership begins with the leader's relationship with God, exemplified in their humility of seeking salvation, pursuing sanctification, and offering service. Seeking to fulfill the good works destined by God (Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 2:10; 2 Timothy 3:17) and relying upon the Lord's direction (Proverbs 3:4–5), the ministry leader must imitate Christ's model (Sloan, 2011, 19) of missional obedience of making disciples (Matthew 28:18–20) by leading, teaching, and serving faithfully through all of life. Being led by the Holy Spirit (John 15:26), the ministry leader can exhibit godly wisdom and knowledge in all situations (1 Chronicles 12:32; Acts 17:22–34).

Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20) instructs God's servants of their transformational ministry of evangelism and discipleship (2 Thessalonians 3:5). Considering the members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12) as ministry team members to be skillfully equipped for God's work (Ephesians 4:12), the ministry leader enables effective service to God, one another, and the community, while overcoming situational obstacles. Ministry leaders, compelled by Christ's love (2 Corinthians 5:14) to reach every gender, ethnicity, and culture

(Matthew 22:37–40; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14; 4:2–6), embrace Spirit-led endeavors (Acts 4:29–30; 13:1–4) to seek first and advance God’s kingdom (Matthew 6:33).

### ***Calls to Ministry in Scripture***

Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Hebrews 1; John 19:7; Matthew 26:63–64; 27:54), being a member of the triune Godhead (John 1:1–5; 33–34; 14:16, 24, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13–15, 28; 20:21–22; Erickson, 2013, pp. 291–313), typically might not be considered as having a call to ministry. However, Christ, the Lamb of God sacrificed before the world’s creation (Revelation 13:8), demonstrated his call to minister to humankind through his willingness to divest himself of his divine privileges to enter the human race (Philippians 2:5–11). Through Jesus’ incarnation (1 John 1:1; John 14:9; Erickson, 2013, pp. 156–157), God answered humankind’s need for salvation unto eternal life (John 3:16–17). Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist signaled Christ’s consecrated willingness to enter public ministry (Matthew 3:13–17). Subsequently, Jesus endured and overcame a wilderness testing of Satan’s temptation (Matthew 4:1–11), before deploying his ministry call (Matthew 4:12–17). The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 26–28) coupled with Christ’s future reign (Revelation 19–22) speak of the fulfillment of God’s power, love, justice, and ability to fully minister to humankind.

The Apostle Paul’s call to ministry exploded on a road to Damascus when the murderous Pharisee Saul was confronted by Jesus (Acts 9:1–6). Blinded by God’s light, Saul’s three days of fasting (Acts 9:8–9) and prayer (Acts 9:11) culminated in his conversion (Acts 9:17–18), when the Christian disciple Ananias followed the Lord’s direction and prayed for Saul (Acts 9:10–17). Ananias’ instruction from the Lord to “Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name’s sake” (Acts 9:15–16) was surely relayed to Saul, as a prophetic call to

ministry. Saul immediately attempted this call to Christian ministry (Acts 9:19–20) with mixed reception (Acts 9:21–25). When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, a wariness by believers of Saul’s intentions hindered his ministry (Acts 9:26). Barnabas then introduced Saul to the apostles (Acts 9:27–28), which brought about a recognition of Saul’s conversion and credible call to Christian ministry. Paul later wrote that he considered himself “a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News” (Romans 1:1). Paul believed his call to serve Jesus in ministry demonstrated God’s forgiveness and mercy (1 Timothy 1:12–14), especially as God himself placed Paul in ministry (Galatians 1:1; Menzies & Horton, 2012, pp. 184–185).

Timothy, the product of a culturally and religiously diverse household consisting of a Greek father, a Jewish Christian mother, and Christian grandmother (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5), was a traveling companion, fellow worker, and spiritual son of Paul (Fee, 2011, Introduction; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:22; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2). Timothy had hands laid upon him, commissioning him into his call to ministry (1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22). While in his thirties (Stott, 1998, p. 2), Timothy took up the task to restore order to the church at Ephesus (1 Timothy; Fee, 2011; Witherington, 2006, p. 65), after having ministered in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:1–10), Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:16–17; 16:10–11), and Philippi (Philippians 2:19–24).

Titus, a Gentile believer, was chosen by Paul to accompany him on his travels (Galatians 2:3) and was entrusted to grow the churches that Paul started (Stott, 1998, p. 2). As a coworker and partner of Paul (2 Corinthians 8:6, 16–17, 23), Titus seems to act as “a crisis-intervention specialist...an apostolic delegate” (Witherington, 2006, p. 90) in church difficulties in Corinth and Crete. Titus’ willing choice to journey to the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 8:17) with the same attitude of concern as Paul (2 Corinthians 8:16) hints at Titus’ personal call to ministry.

## **Education and Training**

All Christian ministers seek a level of education and training to fulfill their calling. Christian education must be founded upon “a distinctive approach to education...integrated with a theologically aligned worldview” (Estep et al., 2008, p. 23). Besides knowledge of Scripture, doctrine, and leadership practices, a minister must grow in spiritual formation, as “the ongoing process of the triune God transforming the believer’s life and character toward the life and character of Jesus Christ—accomplished by the ministry of the Spirit in the context of biblical community” (Pettit, 2008, p. 24).

With God as the ultimate teacher, “the educational mandate of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 [the Shema] requires passing on the commandments of God to the next generation” (Pazmino, 2008, p. 22). From the Shema, Jewish parents were given the responsibility to educate their children in the Torah and the wisdom of the past through multidimensional, interactive methods, raising them to be successful community members (Eisenberg, 2010, p. 121).

Knight (2006), speaking of the centrality of Jesus in Christian education, emphasizes the importance of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3) and Jesus’ first great commandment (Matthew 22:37) within the focus of curriculum (Knight, 2006, p. 244). The Shema and Christ’s summary of the commandments (Matthew 22:37–40) lay a matrix emphasizing the Christian believer’s horizontal relationship to God and vertical relationship to other people. This intersecting framework of commanded love offers a strong Christian foundation to structure and delineate instructional programs, objectives, and outcomes. In application, the commands to love God and love people should form, develop, and evaluate the core curriculum for Christian spiritual formation.

### ***Love God***

Rather than a list of rules or sacrifices, the all-encompassing love of God is the primary principle for a relationship with God, first voiced in Deuteronomy 6:5, repeated in Deuteronomy 11:13, and affirmed by Christ in Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, and Luke 10:27. The verb *love* (*'ahav*) in Deuteronomy 6:5 speaks of covenantal commitment shown through loyalty and respect more than emotional love (World Library Press, 1995, pp. 85-88). Israel's covenantal requirements from the Lord were "to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul (Deuteronomy 10:12).

Evaluating a believer's love of God, through ongoing observation and self-evaluation, can offer insight into their spiritual formation needs. Educating with the goal of developing a wholehearted love of God will tailor prescriptive formative activities to that end.

### ***Love Your Neighbor***

When Jesus stated the secondary commandment in Matthew 22:38, he knew the attitudes and actions shown through relationship to other people exhibit the extent of a person's love of God and of themselves. Without love of God, a person lives a self-centered, hollow life. Without proper love for themselves, as well as an attentive relationship with God and others, a person will not be able to interact with people in a godly, loving manner.

Evaluating a believer's love of their neighbor, through ongoing observation and self-evaluation, can offer insight into their spiritual formation needs. Instruction with the goal of developing a love of other people will tailor prescriptive formative activities to that outcome.

### ***Educational Settings in Scripture***

Taking place in a variety of places and times, godly formative education is found in group settings, such as the home, classroom, and worship services, as well as in one-on-one relationships, such as mentoring, coaching, and counseling.

**Group Educational Settings in Scripture.** Multiple instances of group instruction occur in Scripture. Moses imparting the Law initially and reiterating it before his death to the whole of Israel (Exodus 19–Leviticus 27); Solomon, king of Israel, teaching wisdom to people of many nations (1 Kings 4:34); and Ezra, the priest and scribe, reading the Mosaic Law to the inhabitants who had returned to the land of Israel (Nehemiah 8:1-12), with additional instruction from the Levites (Nehemiah 8:7), with follow-up teaching by the familial leaders (Nehemiah 8:13-18) exemplify group educational settings in the Old Testament. Jesus teaching the Beatitudes on the side of a mountain to a crowd (Matt. 5:1-12), reading from Isaiah in the synagogue (Luke 4:16-27), or teaching in the temple (Luke 19:47) are examples of New Testament group educational settings.

**One-on-One Educational Settings in Scripture.** Walking with fellow believers through life's circumstances, offering experience and wisdom, and modeling biblical virtues is a part of the Christian faith (Reese & Loane, 2012, pp. 178–179). Christ's command, "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19) eventually leads to Paul's instruction, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

The relationship between Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1–4) and between Jonathan and David (1 Samuel 18:1, 3) spurred mutual spiritual growth. Scripture records several relationships, which evoke mentorship, such as Elijah with Elisha (1 Kings 19:19, 21), and Barnabas mentoring Paul (Acts 9:27, 11:25-26, 12:25), which led to Paul acting as a father to Timothy

(Acts 16:3; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:2). Paul also instructs the older women to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3-5), while encouraging Titus to teach sound doctrine (Titus 2:1) and model integrity to all (Titus 2:7-8).

### **Discipling, Mentoring, and Spiritual Parenting Relationships in Scripture**

Mentoring finds application within the Christian context, as discipleship or spiritual parenting (Davidson, 2017, July 12; Witzel, 2014). Within Scripture, discipling, mentoring, or spiritual parenting relationships provide training, motivation, and insight into ministry leadership. Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and his disciples, and Barnabas, Paul, Timothy, and Titus all point to the value of personalized mentoring relationships for preparation of the next generation of leadership (Williams, 2005, pp. 181–186).

#### ***Moses and Joshua***

Joshua served as Moses' chief aide from his youth (Numbers 11:28). Joshua followed Moses in “close personal relationship” (Williams, 2005, pp. 183), whether in the Tent of Meeting before the LORD (Exodus 33:11), in daily leadership (Exodus 24:13), or in military battles (Exodus 17:8–13). Before his death, “Moses laid his hands on him [Joshua] and commissioned him to lead the people” (Numbers 27:23).

Due to their relationship, “as the Lord had commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua. And Joshua did as he was told, carefully obeying all the commands that the Lord had given to Moses” (Joshua 11:15). The Lord enabled Joshua to conquer the land God had promised to Israel (Joshua 11:23), for God was with Joshua, as he was with Moses (Joshua 1:5).

#### ***Elijah and Elisha***

Amid the throes of angst and weariness, the prophet Elijah heard the Lord's instruction to call Elisha to be his successor, which Elijah purposefully did (1 Kings 19). Elisha left his family

and responsibilities to travel with Elijah, as his assistant (1 Kings 19:19–21). This daily apprenticeship with Elijah may have sharpened Elisha’s understanding of the prophetic (House, 1995, p. 21r), until he was deemed worthy of receiving a double portion of his spiritual father’s anointing (2 Kings 2) and became the leader of the school of the prophets (Williams, 2005, p. 184).

### ***Jesus and his Disciples***

Jesus’ choice and training of his disciples laid a crucial foundation for the future spread of the gospel. While there were times that Christ taught his disciples daily in the Temple (Luke 21:37), Jesus’ mentoring of his disciples primarily came about in the daily morass of life (Harrison, 2017), with pertinent conversations and applications of Jesus’ teaching. Hands-on learning by the disciples in the company of Christ brought about team-based and one-on-one biblical discipleship (Eguizabal & Lawson, 2009, p. 256). When Jesus “gave them [the Twelve] power and authority to cast out all demons and to heal all diseases” (Luke 9:1), the disciples advanced a triumphant evangelistic, healing mission (Luke 9:2). Similarly, seventy(-two) disciples sent out in pairs to evangelize found great victory against demonic entities (Luke 10:1, 17). Christ’s method of mentoring, teaching, and training in close relationship with his team members built and supported a basis for biblical discipleship (Thomas, 2018), which eventually blossomed into the apostolic mission of Acts (Green, 1997, p. 358).

### ***Barnabas, Paul, Timothy, and Titus***

In the early church, Joseph, who had been given the nickname of Barnabas, meaning *son of encouragement* (Acts 4:36), intervened and championed Saul’s Damascus ministry to the believers in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27). After Saul was sent to his hometown of Tarsus for his safety (Acts 9:30), Barnabas lived up to his nickname, journeying to Tarsus and encouraging Saul to

return under Barnabas' covering to minister in the burgeoning church in Antioch (Acts 11:22–30). While most see Paul as a strong leader, Saul needed Barnabas' door-opening affirmation to establish his Christian ministry, as Paul (Parsons & Talbert, 2008, p. 134).

Paul later became a spiritual father to Timothy (1 Timothy 1:1–2; 2 Timothy 1:1–2) and Titus (Titus 1:1, 4–5). Paul confirmed the value of mentoring, spiritual parenting, and training, when he instructed Timothy, “You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others” (2 Timothy 2:2).

Witherington (2006) makes the case for Paul's letters of Titus and 1 Timothy following the “*mandatum principis* —a letter from a ruler or high official to one of his agents, delegates, ambassador, or governors helping him set up shop in his new post and get things in good order and under control” (p. 90). In this way, Paul instructed his pastors, Timothy and Titus, on how to intervene in crises and handle opponents (p. 50), through their modeling of right behavior and imitation of their superior (p. 91), offering guidance on ministerial roles and church order (p. 168).

## **Summary**

Scripture informs the Christian worldview of this researcher. As such, a theological framework supporting a biblical understanding of the call to ministry; discipling, mentoring, and spiritual parenting; and education and training has been provided. Theories foundational to this study's research questions are examined in the next section.

## **Theoretical Framework for the Study**

Theoretical framework, considered foundational to the research process (Grant & Osanloo, 2014), has been defined, as “a structure that guides research by relying on a formal

theory...constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships” (Eisenhart, 1991, October 16–19, p. 205). The theoretical framework of a research study “reflects important personal beliefs and understandings about the nature of knowledge, how it exists (in the metaphysical sense) in relation to the observer, and the possible roles to be adopted, and tools to be employed consequently, by the researcher” (Lysaght, 2011, p. 572).

Working from the purposed perspective of a Christian worldview, a theoretical framework must be laid within the literature review. This section of the literature review builds a theoretical underpinning to guide and strengthen the research, regarding Christian ministry leadership; discipling, mentoring, and spiritual parenting; and transcendental phenomenology.

### **Christian Ministry Leadership**

To research facets of Christian ministry leadership, a theoretical model must be defined (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). A theory to guide ministry leadership may be derived from an understanding of major leadership theories and their correlation to pertinent Scripture. An overview of primary leadership theories and their potential alignment with a biblical worldview follows.

#### ***Trait Leadership Theory***

Evolving from the great man leadership theory (Chemers, 2000; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991), trait leadership theory (Goldberg, 1990) seeks to systemize leader’s attributes (Mouton, 2019, p. 149). While providing leadership benchmarks (Northouse, 2019, p. 40) and behavioral predictors (Fleeson & Gallagher, 2009), trait leadership theory does not align with a biblical worldview. God’s ability to change raw, flawed people into leaders for specific times and events, such as Gideon (Judges 6–8), David (1 Samuel 16:12, 18; 17:45–51; 18), and Moses (Exodus 1–Deuteronomy 34), belies the static trait theory.

### ***Skills Leadership Theory***

Skills leadership theory focuses on a leader's ability to learn and develop "capabilities, knowledge, and skills" (Mumford et al., 2000, p. 12; see also Katz, 2009; Northouse, 2019, p. 43). Skills leadership theory aligns with a biblical worldview, as Scripture describes skilled individuals (1 Kings 7:14; 1 Chronicles 15:22; 22:15; Psalm 58:5), skill acquisition through learning and development (2 Chronicles 30:22; Song of Songs 3:8; 2 Timothy 3:15–17), and God's augmentation of leader's skills for his purpose (Exodus 28:3; 36:1; Ephesians 1:17).

### ***Behavioral Leadership Theory***

Behavioral leadership theory assesses and describes leader behavior components of "task and relationship dimensions" (Northouse, 2019, p. 92) without prescribing change (Northouse, 2019, pp. 73, 80). Scripture identifies godly actions and attitudes (Proverbs 31:31, Matthew 6:4; 10:49; 24:45–51; 1 Peter 1:9), prescribing means of correction (Exodus 18:13–26), redemption (John 3:16), and renewal (Romans 12:2); thus, behavioral leadership theory does not fully align with a biblical worldview. However, the Leadership Grid (Blake & McCanse, 1991; Blake & Mouton, 1985) now includes a leader/organization process to grow mutual trust, respect, and candor (Grid International, 2016), bringing greater alignment with a biblical worldview.

### ***Situational Leadership Theory***

Situational leadership theory adapts leadership style to the follower's ability and maturity (Northouse, 2019, p. 95–96), eliciting "the best in others" (Blanchard, 2010, Chap. 5, para. 3; see also Bredfeldt, 2018, July 29, 15:34, 15:47). Situational leadership theory aligns with a biblical worldview, fitting Christian discipleship's progressive development model (Bredfeldt & Davis, 2018, May 21, 6:00). When Jesus coached, directed, and delegated authority to his disciples (Matthew 4:18–22; 9:9–13; 10:1–42; Mark 6:12–13; Luke 10:1–24), they became leaders

themselves (Matthew 28:19–20; John 21:15–23; Acts 1:8; 2) through the spiraling process of situational leadership (Bredfeldt & Davis, 2018, May 21, 1:03–1:35).

### ***Path-Goal Theory***

Path-goal leadership theory (House, 1971; House & Mitchell, 1974) involves the leader clearing the follower's path to goal achievement, removing obstacles and providing rewards, and taking all responsibility for the follower's actions and achievement, which can produce dependent followers (Northouse, 2019, p. 126). Path-goal leadership theory does not fully align with a biblical worldview, as God has given individuals the free will to choose and work out their path (Joshua 24:15; Proverbs 3:6; Jeremiah 6:16; 18:15b; Matthew 7:13–14; Acts 17:27; Erickson, 2013, p. 394; Kreeft and Tacelli, 1994, pp. 132–133, 136–138, 142–143, 302).

### ***Leader-Member Exchange Theory***

Evolving beyond the Vertical Dyad Linkage (VDL) in-group and out-group model (Dansereau et al., 1975), leader-member exchange (LMX) leadership theory centered on leader/follower interactions (Northouse, 2019, pp. 148, 159) now incorporates both transactional and transformational leadership models (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995, pp. 238–239). Current LMX leadership theory aligns with a biblical worldview. Jesus developed dyadic relationships with his disciples (Matthew 4:18–22; 9:9–13; 10:1–42; 14:15–33; 17:1; Mark 13:3; 14:33; Luke 10:1–24; 22; John 1:37–51; 13; 18:1–27; 21), directing ministry leaders to relationship with the members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:23–26; Ephesians 4:12–16).

### ***Transformational and Pseudo-transformational Leadership Theories***

Transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985), a process of leader engagement and connection with followers, emphasizes intrinsic motivation and morality (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. xi; Northouse, 2019, p. 164). Pseudo-transformational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio,

2006, p. 5; Northouse, 2019, p. 165) denotes exploitive transformational leaders with power oriented, selfish, evil intentions (Bass & Riggio, 2006, pp. 5, 14; Christie et al., 2011).

Transformational leadership theory aligns with a biblical worldview, while pseudo-transformational leadership theory does not. Christ exhibited transformational leadership; the Pharisees embodied pseudo-transformational leadership (Matthew 23; Michel, 2014).

### ***Servant Leadership Theory***

Servant leadership theory, Greenleaf's (1970) lifestyle approach (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 49) of choosing "to serve first" (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 15), places the follower's good first, seeks to remove injustice and inequality, and builds strong community through empathic and ethical service (Northouse, 2019, p. 253). Servant leadership theory aligns with a biblical worldview, as Jesus taught (Matthew 20:25–26; 23:11–12) and modeled (Matthew 20:28; 26:39, 42, 44; John 14:31; 13:1–15) servant leadership.

### ***Ethical Leadership Theory***

Ethical leadership theory upholds the "values and morals an individual or a society finds desirable or appropriate" (Northouse, 2019, p. 336), especially in the areas of honesty, courage, fairness, fidelity, service, justice, community, care for others, respect, and seeking the common good (Northouse, 2019, p. 365). As ethical leadership theory does not provide a framework for determining ethical thought and behavior, it does not align with a biblical worldview, which prescribes a Christian's attitudes and actions (Erickson, 2013, pp. 6–7).

### ***Team Leadership Theory***

Team leadership theory creates synergy within interdependent, accountable team members, who are empowered to act for the good and purpose of the organization (Northouse, 2019; Harrod, 2019, July 16, Purpose and Use). Team leadership theory aligns with a biblical

worldview, as seen in Scripture (Numbers 1:53; 10:17; 18; 2 Samuel 23:8–39; 1 Chronicles 6:48; Nehemiah 2–3; 5–9; Matthew 10:1; Luke 9:1; 10:1–24).

### ***Gender and Culture Leadership Theories***

God created two genders, male and female (Genesis 1:27), to populate the earth. Following Noah's flood, multiple ethnicities derived from Noah's three sons (Genesis 9:19) developed specific cultures (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). Understanding biblical gender and culture without prejudice or ethnocentrism (Northouse, 2019, pp. 434–436, 469) can facilitate qualified individuals to serve and work together. Scripture is replete with examples of men and women of various ethnicities and cultures who led well in cross cultural situations (Judges 4–5; Esther; Romans 16).

### ***Towards a Christian Leadership Theory***

Various leadership theories have sought to be understood for possible alignment with a Christian worldview to fulfill the purpose of this research study. The synthesis of those leadership theories with Scriptural examples will serve as a model for the study of Christian ministerial leadership.

**Seek God's Kingdom.** Christ proclaimed, "Seek the kingdom of God above all else" (Matthew 6:33). In mutual relationship (John 14:9–11), Jesus obeyed Father God's will for the kingdom's benefit (John 5:19, 30; 8:28). Laying aside his divine privileges, humbling himself to death on the cross (Philippians 2:5–8), bringing about God's purpose and plan for creation (Ephesians 1:9–11), Jesus serves as a model for Christian leadership (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011).

In gospel ministry (Matthew 21:43; Luke 4:43; 9:2–60; 16:16) and in the future heavenly kingdom (Revelation 11:15; 12:10; 22:1–5), God's kingdom reflects the triune God. Desiring to

please God prioritizes God's kingdom. By placing God first, life's facets—family, self, ministry, church, community, leadership—achieve proper place and rhythm. Then, loving God and others (Matthew 22:37–39) and fulfilling God's plans and purposes (Matthew 28:18–20) can be realized, aligning with the theories of servant leadership and team leadership.

**Seek God's Righteousness.** Christ further calls the Christian to “live righteously” (Matthew 6:33), as God's kingdom is “righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (*New International Version*, 1978/2011, Romans 14:17). Rising above ethical leadership theory, biblical leadership reflects ethics birthed from being dead “to this life and...hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). By Christ's salvation (John 3:16) and relying upon the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence (Acts 1:8; Romans 8:9–11, 15–16; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 2:22, 5:18), ministry leaders must lead themselves and others (1 Timothy 4:12) with Christ mindedness (2 Corinthians 2:16) and the Holy Spirit's fruit (Galatians 5:22–23), which aligns with skills leadership theory and the Leadership Grid.

**Present Everyone Mature.** Remembering God's plan for humankind (John 3:16–17), yet seeing the distortion of the Creator's image in individuals, focuses leadership practice. Jesus' commission to make disciples (Matthew 28:18–20) emboldens perseverance in ministry leadership. With Christ as the message, the ministry leader will “preach to awaken hearts and bring every person into the full understanding of truth” (*The Passion Translation*, 2017, Colossians 1:28). This desire to see every person's sin nature thrown off (Ephesians 4:21–23) and relationship restored with God clarifies goals and actions, aligning with the theories of transformational, situational, LMX, gender, and cultural leadership.

## **Discipling, Mentoring, and Spiritual Parenting**

Within the church, a strong need exists to discover young Christians who sense a ministry call, to develop their leadership skills, and to deploy these next generation Christian leaders. The wisdom and experience, which resides in many older ministers, must not be lost, but transferred to a younger generation of church leaders (Barna Group, 2017, p. 191; Baumgartner, 2017; Smith, 2016). A conviction to intentionally develop ministerial leaders in a healthy culture (Bolsinger, 2015), looking to the Christian's mission, promise, and reward as incentive, must be implemented by the church (Geiger & Peck, 2016; J. D. Kennedy, 2018).

The next generation of rising Christian leaders, often seen as emerging adults, elicits certain identifying characteristics. Arnett (2000, 2014) defines the age range of emerging adults as ranging from 18 to 29 years, while Parks (2011) views the age of emerging adults as ranging from 18 to 32 years. Arnett et al. (2011) found emerging adults view themselves as between adolescence and adulthood (p.151). Arnett et al. stress the developmental work emerging adults undertake in this stage, as they seek establishment in the adult world through an individualized identity grounded in ideas and values attained through their explorations (p. 152). Arnett (2014) identified five characteristics common to the emerging adult: identity exploration to answer the question "who am I," while attempting various possibilities; instability in residence, work, and love; self-focus in opposition to fulfilling obligations to others; feeling in-between or in transition, neither adult nor adolescent; and possibilities/optimism with growing hope and exceptional opportunities. Because of these characteristics, emerging adults can benefit from the temporary, interactive support of scaffolding (Bruner, 1978; see also Arnett et al., 2011, p.152).

Parks (2011) views the emerging adult in continual pursuit for meaning, purpose, and faith (pp. 20–45), which can be guided by the support, challenges, and inspiration of mentors

(pp. 165–202). Muir (2014) found mentoring can develop the emerging leader’s identity. MacDonald (2016) encourages Christian leaders over the age of 35 to mentor the next generation, investing backwards (p. 23), intentionally equipping through teaching and discipleship (Langer, 2014, pp. 86). Davidson (2017) exhorts ministers to become spiritual fathers and mothers, raising up the next generation of ministers, while Martin (2003) calls for ministers to “be a Barnabas; pursue a Paul; train a Timothy” (Conclusion).

Williams (2005) found that mentoring for “pastoral formation and preparation” (p. 54) has been espoused by church leaders through the ages. The Archbishop of Constantinople in the fourth century, Gregory of Nazianzus (1974) emphasized four areas in which the minister must be formed: moral, spiritual, and personal formation; pastoral calling, images, and imagination; theological reflection and deliberation; and practical pastoral skills. In addition, mentoring interactions geared to specific ministry contexts serve to further develop effective ministry (Oney, 2010, p. 113; Williams, 2005).

Spiritual parenting by a more experienced spiritual leader to a less experienced spiritual leader has been modeled through mutual trust, love, and friendship (Copeland, 2017; Edgar, 2016) throughout Scripture (1 Kings 19:16; 2 Kings 2:18; John 15:15; Acts 19:22, 20:4; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2) and transfers readily into today’s culture. Spiritual parenting will “prophetically call out the greatness in young people with ministry gifts and then walk with them, resourcing and encouraging them as if they are the only hope for our future” (Davidson, 2017, July 12). The natural parent, who teaches and molds natural sons and daughters, reaps a legacy which reaches far beyond the parent’s lifetime. The spiritual parent, who invests time and energy in spiritual sons and daughters, leaves a spiritual legacy which reaches throughout eternity.

Examples of ministry leadership mentoring, discipling, and spiritual parenting abound in the contemporary church. Within modern church ministry leadership, well-known evangelist Billy Graham significantly shaped modern evangelicalism, becoming known as “America’s Pastor” (Shelley, 2018). Graham was influenced greatly by the ministry of Dwight Moody, whom Graham viewed as a mentor in the development of his evangelical worldview (Hamilton, 2018). Dr. John Minder, academic dean at Florida Bible Institute, opened the door for Graham to preach his first sermon at a small Baptist church, where the young Graham recited four sermons from a Moody Press publication (Winner, 2018). Years later, from his ministry leadership position of an internationally recognized evangelistic ministry, Graham recognized the ministry of Rick Warren, who was conducting multiple evangelistic youth rallies in California, which resulted in Graham mentoring Warren for over forty years (Warren, 2018, February 27).

### **Transcendental Phenomenology**

Phenomenology, “exploring the lived experience of a phenomenon” (Padgett, 2008, p. 35), studies phenomena and their perception and experience by individuals in the phenomenological event (Lester, 1999). *Phenomenon* derives from the Greek word *phaenesthai*, meaning to “flare up or appear,” while its construction from *phaino* means “to bring to light or to cause to appear” (Mounce, 2006). *Phenomenon* was defined in Greek philosophy as “the sensible things that constitute the world of experience” (American Psychological Association, n.d.). *Phenomena* was utilized by Kant “to refer to things as they appear to the senses and are interpreted by the categories of human understanding” (American Psychological Association, n.d.).

Phenomenology, as a philosophy and a research method, came about through the work of philosophers Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Merleau-Ponty, who posited the usage of life

experience as a means of thinking about the world (Earles, 2010; Usher & Jackson, 2014). Husserl (1965), who is generally recognized as the founder of phenomenology as a philosophy (Valentine et al., 2018, p. 464), developed descriptive (transcendental) phenomenology (Valentine et al., 2018, p. 465). This approach has an epistemological philosophy (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 168; Valentine et al., 2018, p. 465), focused on the subject's consciousness or *knowing*, without concern for the subject's context (Lavery, 2003; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007; Valentine et al, 2018). Moustakas (1994) and Giorgi (2009) utilized and refined Husserl's descriptive phenomenological method.

In contrast, Heidegger (2008), a student of Husserl, developed interpretive (hermeneutical) phenomenology (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 168–169; Valentine et al., 2018, p. 465). This approach has an ontological philosophy, focused on the subject's *being* or how things manifest in the world, with concern for the subject's context (Lavery, 2003; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007; Valentine et al, 2018). Merleau-Ponty (1996), Gadamer (1994), and van Manen (2016) built variations of Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology.

### ***Phenomenological Research***

Creswell and Creswell (2018) identify the five most popular qualitative research methods, as case study, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative, and phenomenology (pp. 12–13, 183). Narrative research and phenomenological research study individuals; case study and grounded theory examine processes, activities, and events; and ethnography immerses itself in the culture of groups or individuals (p. 183). While other qualitative research approaches may shed light on a phenomenon, the researcher in a transcendental phenomenological study will listen to the individual participant's voice in the interview conversation, without inflecting a specific cultural or contextual interpretation and without influencing or guiding the participant's

thoughts or ideas but seeking to let the participant's words speak for themselves (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, transcendental phenomenology fits the research questions best in the proposed study.

The purpose of phenomenological research is to understand how individuals construct reality (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 168). Phenomenology investigates the structures of consciousness from a first-person viewpoint (Smith, 2018). Through phenomenological study, the researcher seeks "to understand people's perceptions and perspectives relative to a particular situation" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 370). Creswell and Creswell (2018) define phenomenological research, as "a qualitative strategy in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants in a study" (p. 249). The researcher in a transcendental phenomenological study describes the participants' lived experiences, organizing their statements into themes until a central essence or core meaning culminates (p. 13).

While phenomenological researchers seek "embodied, experiential meanings aiming for a fresh, complex, rich description of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived" (Finlay, 2009, p. 6), transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology differ in key tenets (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 169). Hermeneutic design subscribes to "interpretation, textual meaning, dialogue, pre-understanding, and tradition" (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 169). Transcendental design follows the principles of "intentionality (consciousness is always intentional), eidetic reduction (researcher accesses the consciousness of the participant to get at the pure essence of some phenomenon, thus revealing the essential structure), and constitution of meaning (returning to the world from consciousness)" (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 169).

Researchers utilize phenomenology to study a person's experiences and how they derive meaning in life (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 169). The interactive relationship between a phenomenon and the individual's understanding of the event can also be examined through phenomenology. Research using phenomenology may uncover commonalities that flow across individuals. Transcendental phenomenology design works well in data collection to bring understanding of "the essence of the human experience" (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 169).

In utilizing phenomenology as a research design, the context of the setting coupled with the role of the researcher serve as components of the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181). The iterative process, also known as the constant comparative method, consists of a strategy of the researcher spiraling between data collection and data analysis repetitively (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, pp. 252, 367). The qualitative researcher's own involvement with the research setting during data collection brings a dependency which may lead to the researcher being viewed as the research instrument (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 80).

Moustakas (1994), in his *Phenomenological Research Methods*, outlined steps for proper procedures and data analysis within the transcendental phenomenology research design. The researcher begins by setting aside prejudgments, preconceived ideas, and biases in a process called *epoche*. Phenomenological reduction follows with bracketing the topic or question to provide focus. A literature review is conducted, then criteria for participant selection are developed. After topics are developed, the phenomenological interview will seek to obtain descriptions of the phenomenon through informal interviewing, open-ended questions, and a topical guided interview. In the analysis, horizontalization, which considers every statement by a participant to have equal value, will be considered, along with those horizons or meanings which have invariant, nonrepetitional qualities. The data is organized and analyzed for individual, then

composite textural and structural descriptions of the experience, from which a synthesis of meaning and essences of the experience is created. The entire study is summarized with study findings related back to the literature review. Future research and study are developed. The study is linked in relation to personal and professional outcomes, as well as social meanings and relevance.

### ***Transcendental Phenomenology and Christianity***

Transcendental phenomenology uses description, interview, and retelling of phenomenon to gain understanding (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 25–42), by focusing more on the participant's description of experiences, rather than on the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78). Various Bible passages speak of the credibility, veracity, and acceptance of eyewitness accounts, which gives credence to transcendental phenomenology's use of observation and reporting of those observations. Luke's investigation and compilation of earlier eyewitness reports of the life and ministry of Christ (Luke 1:1–4) becomes the “accurate account” (Luke 1:3) found in his gospel. John's vivid, firsthand testimony of the crucifixion and death of Jesus culminates in an impassioned description of the soldier piercing Christ's side (John 19:35), which reported the fulfillment of prophecy found in Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12, Psalm 34:20, and Zechariah 12:10. Peter's eyewitness narrative of Jesus' majesty (2 Peter 1:16–18) at his transfiguration on the mountain (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35) provides an awe-inspiring depiction of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. The examination of Christ's identity by the disciples of John the Baptist (Matthew 11:2–6) involved interviewing Jesus (Matthew 11:3), observing the phenomenon surrounding Christ (Matthew 11:5), and reporting their eyewitness accounts back to John the Baptist (Matthew 11:4).

Multiple papers have been produced arguing for the relationship between theology and phenomenology (Ciocan, 2008). Blum (2012) supports phenomenology for offering “an interpretation of religion or of religious experience and consciousness” (p. 1029) that “seeks to disclose the meaning encapsulated and expressed in the religious discourse, text, or experience under analysis” (p. 1030). Even with contemporary theological challenges, phenomenology can be utilized in the exploration of religious life and philosophy as it pertains to the sacred (Ciocan, 2008).

The intertwining of theology with transcendental phenomenology has exhibited “that God’s participation in experience finds conditions of possibility in several phenomenological locales” (Louchakova-Schwartz, 2018, p. 642). Research into a variety of topics has been approached through transcendental phenomenology utilizing a Christian worldview, with Beck (2020) studying institutional debt, Pinzer (2017) examining the development of executive level leadership in peer mentoring cohorts, and Whybrew (2020) bringing enlightenment to spiritual formation and school induced stress. Åkerlund (2017) conducted a descriptive phenomenological leadership study exploring the experiences of Pentecostal Norwegian pastors. These research studies show a measure of the compatibility of Christian worldview and epistemology (Knight, 2006) with phenomenology.

Much of Western Christian scholarship holds to a rational epistemology, while Pentecostals, the larger genus of the population group in this study, recognize and include “God-given supernatural experiences” (Railey & Aker, 1994, p. 59) in their epistemology. The Pentecostals’ interpretation of theology through the lens of God’s disclosure of himself includes recognizing the Scripture’s real historical setting, viewing biblical events as literal first before assuming the events are metaphorical, and expecting personal experience of regeneration and

spiritual gifts to be evident in their lives (Railey & Aker, 1994, p. 59). This perspective of theology, which couples mental analysis of the Bible with an experiential knowledge of the supernatural realm of God's kingdom, fits well with transcendental phenomenology's focus on personal experience.

### **Summary**

Theory functions as a supportive structure for research. Thus, a theoretical framework of recognized theories has been offered to reinforce the understanding of Christian ministry leadership; discipling, mentoring, and spiritual parenting; and transcendental phenomenology. Literature related to subtopics within this study's research focus will be explored in the following section.

### **Related Literature**

Within the study of any topic, contributing and divergent streams of sub-topics emerge. This section of the literature review provides a critical review of sub-topics pertinent to this research study. Related literature to be explored include the theory of calling, aspects of the Assemblies of God, and recent ministerial leadership research.

### **Theory of Calling**

When discussing the ministerial call, a broader application of theoretical underpinnings should be explored. The ministerial call most often includes some attribute of motivation, which brings the minister to fulfilling the work of the ministry. A review of general theoretical literature pertaining to work or vocation motivation will be explored for its relationship to discovering, developing, and deploying a ministerial call.

Theories of motivation or needs generally look at psychological reasons to explain why or how workers engage within an organizational framework. Malsow's (1943) need theory

observed that humans' needs must be met in a hierarchical order: physiological, safety/security, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow considered humans to be good or neutral, not evil, incapable of choosing a higher-level behavior, until their basic needs were satisfied. Herzberg's (1966) need theory examined the satisfaction or dissatisfaction a person found with their organization through two factors: intrinsic motivator factors affecting satisfaction and extrinsic maintenance factors effecting dissatisfaction.

McClelland's (1962) learned needs theory advanced the idea that culture influences the human need for achievement, affiliation, and power. According to McClelland, a strong need will dictate a person's behavior to meet that need, finding a means to cope, especially if their behavior is rewarded. Situational leadership theory, which is task oriented and relationally managed, can complement McClelland's learned needs theory. For the minister, the need to achieve a ministry goal, to belong or find affiliation, and to exercise power or authority in decision-making and leadership may align positively or negatively with a biblical worldview.

Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation focused on the external, while contemplating an individualized internal meaning. Vroom assumed a person voluntarily controlled their behavior in most situations, by holding a personalized view of the value and desirability of the outcome. Vroom's theory is foundational to the Path-Goal leadership model, which may provide guidance for a minister's motivations.

Gagné and Deci (2005) posit that self-determination theory, which incorporates both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators while delineating between amotivation and motivation, should be further explored for its applicability for recognizing motivations for desired organizational behavior.

From these theorists comes an understanding that motivation or lack of motivation can influence the minister's call to ministry. Whether actively responding to the ministerial call or rejecting the call, the minister should examine their own inner reasons, as well as environmental factors, to ascertain their actions from a Christian perspective.

### **Assemblies of God**

The population sample for this research study will be drawn from individuals holding ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God, USA. The following section undertakes a limited, general understanding of the Assemblies of God's history, beliefs, educational system, and governance. This overview seeks to illuminate the organization's current ministerial credentialing process and the doctrinal views of its credentialed ministers.

### ***History***

With a stated linkage to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the modern Pentecostal movement can also find expression in historical movements and leaders (Bruner, 1997; Anderson, 2013). Among significant influences from the seventeenth century through the nineteenth century are John Wesley's Methodism, revivalism, Charles Finney, and the holiness movement (Menzies, 1971). Pentecostalism is regarded by some, as an ecumenical movement with

roots in the black, oral tradition of the American slaves, in the catholic tradition of Wesley, in the evangelical tradition of the American Holiness movement (with its far-reaching political, social and ecumenical programmes), in the critical tradition of both the Holiness movement and the critical Western theology, in the ecumenical tradition of their beginnings. (Hollenweger, 1992, p. 8)

The 1901 revival in Topeka, Kansas, the 1904 Welsh revival, and the 1906 Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, California (Blumhofer, 1989; Hollenwegger, 1986; Anderson & Hollenweger, 1999; Rodgers, 2011) spread Pentecostalism globally (McGee et al., 2014).

The December 20, 1913, issue of *the Word and Witness* called for a “General Convention of Pentecostal Saints and Churches of God in Christ” with the purpose to

1. Promote unity among the churches
2. Conserve the work at home and abroad
3. Coordinate better missionary support
4. Charter with a legal name
5. Establish Bible school training for ministers (p. 1)

On April 2–12, 1914, over 300 interested individuals gathered in Hot Springs, Arkansas, to consider a fellowship of likeminded churches (McGee et al., 2014). Existing networks and organizations, including those led by Mack M. Pinson, Henry G. Rodgers, and Charles H. Mason, provided foundational support to the convention (McGee et al., 2014). The culmination of this meeting was the formation of the Assemblies of God (Menzies, 1971).

T. K. Leonard, the author of the preamble to the AG Constitution (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2019), sought an official name to sufficiently describe the idea of a church made up of individuals of every race, ethnicity, and economic class. With an emphasis on the church being “called out” from every walk of life, Leonard looked to *ekklesia*, “the called-out assembly” (Oberg, 2021, March 4, para. 7). As the holiness tradition utilized Hebrews 12:23 (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017) which includes “the general assembly and church of the firstborn” to promote Christian unity, the legal corporate name, *The General Council of the Assemblies of God*, seemed fitting and was chosen (McGee et al., 2014, pp. 34–35).

From its beginning of 300 people, today the AG constitutes nearly 13,000 U.S. churches with over 3 million members and adherents, with more than 69 million AG members worldwide,

making the Assemblies of God the world's largest Pentecostal denomination (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, n.d.–e).

### ***Beliefs***

The Assemblies of God exists as a Protestant, Trinitarian, Evangelical, Pentecostal fellowship of believers (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, n.d.–e). The Assemblies of God embraces a four-fold mission to evangelize the lost, worship God, disciple believers, and show compassion (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2019, p. 93). Core values of the cooperative fellowship are to

1. Passionately proclaim, at home and abroad, by word and deed Jesus as Savior, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, Healer, and Soon Coming King.
2. Strategically invest in the next generation.
3. Vigorously plant new churches and revitalize existing ones.
4. Skillfully resource our Fellowship.
5. Fervently pray for God's favor and help as we serve Him with pure hearts and noble purpose. (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, n.d.–d)

The Assemblies of God, USA holds membership in four international and national Christian organizations: National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA), Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF), and World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF) (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, n.d.–a).

**Evangelical.** Bebbington identifies four characteristics of evangelicalism: “emphasis on personal conversion, the Bible, the cross of Christ, and active Christian service” (Hindmarsh, 2017, p. 546). The Assemblies of God fully seeks to fulfill each of Bebbington's qualifications,

as found in its Constitution's Preamble and Statement of Fundamental Truths (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2019).

**Trinitarian.** The Assemblies of God began in 1914 without a formal, precise statement of faith, except to state the fellowship was based upon the Bible as “the all-sufficient rule for faith and practice” (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 1914). The churches and ministers within the fellowship expressed a belief in the doctrine of the Trinity. However, within two years of the AG's inception, the doctrine of Oneness, otherwise known as “Jesus Only,” spread from a Pentecostal camp meeting in Arroyo Seco, California to become a disruptive doctrine dividing congregations and ministers (Menzies, 1971). The 1916 General Council of the Assemblies of God saw the formation and adoption of a statement of fundamental truths (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2019), which among other things, rejected the Oneness doctrine and fully embraced the doctrine of the Trinity (Menzies, 1971).

**Pentecostal.** Pentecostalism professes to preach the full gospel (Dayton, 1980). Four doctrines are foundational to Pentecostalism: Jesus saves (John 3:16), baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4), heals (James 5:15–16), and is coming again to receive believers (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). This stance of Pentecostals developed and was taught after the Civil War in the holiness and revivalist traditions (Menzies, 1971).

**Statement of Fundamental Truths.** Formed at the 1916 General Council in reaction to the confusion from Oneness doctrine proponents, the Statement of Fundamental Truths is found in The General Council of the Assemblies of God (2019) Constitution, Article V. Stating “the Bible is our all-sufficient rule for faith and practice” (p. 93), sixteen tenets of faith are presented, not as a systematic doctrine, but as fundamental doctrines. (p. 93). The titles and a synopsis of the doctrines, as presented by McGee et al., (2014) are:

1. The Scriptures Inspired: The Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:15–17; 2 Peter 1:21).
2. The One True God: There is one true God, eternally self-existent, properly understood as one Being of three persons (John 14:16–17; Matthew 28:19).
3. The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God (Matthew 1:23; Philippians 2:9–11).
4. The Fall of Man: Humankind voluntarily fell out of relationship with God through sin (Genesis 1:26–27; Romans 5:12–19).
5. The Salvation of Man: Only the shed blood of Jesus can redeem individuals from sin and death (Luke 24:47; Romans 8:16).
6. The Ordinances of the Church: The ordinances of the church are water baptism and holy communion (Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 11:26).
7. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit: All believers are entitled to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, an experience distinct from and subsequent to the new birth and promised by the Father (Acts 1:4, 8; Luke 24:49).
8. The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:4–10, 28).
9. Sanctification: Sanctification is a life of separation from sin, realized by identifying with Christ's death and resurrection (1 Peter 1:15–16; Romans 12:1–2).
10. The Church and Its Mission: The church is Christ's body, the habitation of God, and exists for a fourfold purpose (Ephesians 1:22–23, 2:22; Hebrews 12:23).
11. The Ministry: The church is to be led by a divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry (Ephesians 4:11, 16; Mark 16:15–20).
12. Divine Healing: Divine healing is an integral part of the gospel (Isaiah 53:4–5; James 5:14–16).
13. The Blessed Hope: The resurrection of the righteous dead and the rapture of living believers is the Blessed Hope of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; 1 Corinthians 15:51–52).
14. The Millennial Reign of Christ: The second coming of Christ includes the visible return of Christ to reign for one thousand years (Revelation 19:11–14; Isaiah 11:6–9).

15. The Final Judgment: A final judgment awaits the wicked, both the dead and the living (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43–48).
16. The New Heavens and the New Earth: A new heavens and a new earth are promised in the Bible for the redeemed in Christ (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21, 22).

### ***Organizational Structure***

The Preamble to the Constitution of the General Council of the Assemblies of God (2019) states its membership consists of “Pentecostal, Spirit-baptized saints from local Pentecostal assemblies of like precious faith throughout the United States” (para. 7). Article II of the Constitution of the General Council of the Assemblies of God (2019) defines the relationship between the General Council and its membership as a voluntary cooperative fellowship. This agreement applies to all churches and credentialed ministers within the AG. By entering the fellowship as cooperative members, local churches and credentialed ministers mutually agree to submit to the principles, rules, purposes, and goals of the larger fellowship, while the larger fellowship prioritizes the local assembly of believers (McGee et al., 2014, pp. 215–216).

Local churches affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God operate under a hybrid Presbyterian and congregational structure. The General Council’s goal is for the local assembly to function with a sense of self-determination, owning and managing their own church property, appointing their own local pastors, while still having a voice in decision-making at the national level (McGee et al., 2014). The local church submits to the General Council’s stance in doctrinal unity and moral purity, while working together to accomplish common purposes, especially missions (McGee et al., 2014, p. 221).

Within the General Council of the Assemblies of God (2019), leaders elected by the membership work at the national, district, and sectional levels to bring oversight to the organization. These elected officials serve in legal capacity, as officers, presbyters, and board

members (McGee et al., 2014, p. 216). Districts and sections administrate in relationship to the local assemblies and credentialed ministers, while the General Council administers national and international interests and concerns (McGee et al., 2014).

### ***Ministerial Credentialing***

Prior to the birth of the Assemblies of God in 1914, ministerial credentials were issued by individual churches and networks (Menzie, 1971). The Church of God in Christ, led by Charles H. Mason, issued ministerial credentials to 361 Pentecostal ministers in loose-knit association with other networks under the name “Church of God in Christ and in unity with the Apostolic Faith Movement” (McGee et al., 2014).

The Assemblies of God issues ministerial credentials at the level of ordained, licensed, and certified to qualified persons (The General Council, 2019, Bylaws, p. 120). While a limited credential given by a local church to do ministry in the name of the local assembly is allowed in the Assemblies of God, this local credential will not be discussed in this study. Within each level of the ministerial credential can be found a comprehensive listing of qualifications, concerning call to ministry, morals, education, and experience (The General Council, 2019, Bylaws, p. 120).

Within the Assemblies of God, USA, the percentage of all ministers under the age of 40 years has declined from 26.2% in 2000 (Assemblies of God General Secretary’s Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 102) to 18.7% in 2020 (Assemblies of God General Secretary’s Office, Statistics, 2021, February 17). The reason for the decline cannot be attributed to the overall congregational age, as 53% of Assemblies of God, USA, attendees are under age 35 (Assemblies of God General Secretary’s Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 33), thus constituting a ready pool of potential leaders.

The North Texas District of the Assemblies of God (NTD) faces a similar scenario with 57.2% of adherents under age 35 (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 19) and the median age of all ministers at 56 (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 95). With 632 churches representing its wide cultural diversity (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, pp. 65, 79) and a stated goal of "1,000 healthy churches by 2027 reaching every neighborhood in North Texas" (North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020c), the district must significantly increase the number of qualified ministers to effectively minister to the projected future churches.

### ***Education and Training***

McGee et al., (2014) found in early years of the Assemblies of God, ministerial training was undertaken by individual churches. Between 1928 and 1947, non-accredited Bible institutes focused on practical ministry were prominent. During World War II, the need for increased academic standards within the AG schools, as ministers sought military chaplaincy appointments, eventually resulted in the establishment of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (AGTS). Following World War II, most AG Bible institutes became accredited colleges and universities. In 1947, the Berean School of the Bible, a nontraditional educational approach through correspondence courses designed to meet district requirements for ministerial credentialing, was established by the General Council.

Currently, the Assemblies of God endorses seventeen universities and colleges within the United States (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, n.d.–c). Extension campuses of several universities, including Evangel University, Southeastern University, and Southwestern Assemblies of God University, are offered at local churches. Most AG colleges and universities

have some form of online education offered for full or partial degree completion. Global University, while offering online undergraduate and graduate degrees, also offers ministerial courses at a non-degree, diploma level to satisfy the AG credential education requirements through the Berean School of the Bible (Global University, 2020).

### ***Mentoring***

Within the Assemblies of God, opportunities for mentoring exist, albeit more often informally than formally. At the national level, a successful mentoring cohort supports under 40 women ministers (Assemblies of God Network of Women Ministers, n.d.). The endorsed colleges and universities offer some version of embedded cohorts or intentional mentoring in their degree programs (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, n.d.–c).

Many districts offer informal mentoring relationships, such as pairing older ministers with younger ministers (Jones, 2019; J. W. Kennedy, 2018, June 5). The North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God (2020a) offers mentoring opportunities through cohorts for youth ministers, women ministers, rural pastors, and church planters. In addition, the NTD has established a Next Generation Cohort of under 40 ordained ministers who are mentored by executive leaders, in order “to prepare leaders by giving them a chair at the table and a voice in leadership” (North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020a, p. 7).

### **Recent Ministerial Leadership Research**

Recent research demonstrates the reality of the aging ministerial population within Christian organizations, particularly in pastoral leadership, and the need to identify and prepare emerging ministerial leaders now. Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group (2017), expressed a need for churches to engage in intergenerational leadership, encompassing representatives from a wide spectrum of ages (p. 191). As the senior pastor’s median age continues to rise across

ministerial organizations (p. 182), Kinnaman has called for “denominations, networks, and independent churches (to) determine how to best motivate, mobilize, resource, and deploy more young pastors” (p. 191).

Academic research of ministerial leadership in the American Protestant church has revealed specific needs and possibilities for minister development. Hill (2017) found a need for African American ministry organizations to proactively develop leadership transition plans and processes with identification and mentoring of potential ministerial leaders. Smith (2010), while studying megachurches in the Baptist General Conference, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Presbyterian Church (USA), underscored the necessity of training and preparing future ministry leaders, noting some megachurch senior pastors mentored other pastors as potential successors to their ministry position (p. 225). Reviewing churches in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), Douglas (2013) determined the associate minister below the age of 31 who was intentionally mentored by their older senior pastor grew in character and ministry competencies. When Coates (2019) examined the top 500 churches in the SBC, he discovered that ministerial staff who experienced various methods of employee development felt supported and part of a collaborative team. DeLange’s (2020) study of retired evangelical Protestant senior pastors uncovered their desire to continue to serve through “fulfilling temporary long and short-term leadership needs, giving spiritual direction, and offering guidance” (p. 137), offering a ready pool of mentors for the younger emerging ministry leader.

Recent academic research has addressed the aging ministerial ranks within the Assemblies of God. Doctoral studies involving AG sample populations have explored mentoring relationships between seasoned ministers and students studying for ministry (Jones, 2019), emphasized Holy Spirit empowered missiological principles to connect young leaders (J. D.

Kennedy, 2018), and looked at pastoral succession between a mentoring lead pastor and their mentee (Wolf, 2020). Adamson (2019) presented research indicating the beliefs, values, and variables of AG USA Millennial leaders and suggested further research by the AG to better understand the upcoming generation preparing for leadership (p. 353). Jessup's (2013) research concerning the decreasing number of young adults seeking ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God found a younger generation willing to be won over by the AG (pp. 152–154), with a need for further formal research to correlate a minister's effectiveness with their educational pathway (p. 159). Smith (2016) concluded his research on intentional leadership succession in the AG by stating:

There must be a safe place to talk about what's next. There must be a system in place to foster and train new leaders. There must be submission on the part of the current leader to promote and make room for the next leader of one's current assignment. Finally, there must be support...A commitment to this multigenerational approach to apprenticeship should be reflected at the highest levels of the movement, not only in isolated tokenism, but also in a pervasive commitment to shared authority. (pp. 145, 147)

### **Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature**

Within the Assemblies of God, identifying young, potential Christian leaders who sense a call to ministry (Jones, 2019, p. 120) is essential. Multiple voices mandate continual development of emerging ministry leaders through spiritual parenting, education, mentoring, godly relationships, coaching, and training (Baxter, 2011; Cincala, 2016; Davidson, 2017; Goldsberry, 2018; Hall, 2017; Hill, 2017; J. W. Kennedy, 2018; Langer, 2014; Martin, 2003; MacDonald, 2016; Muir, 2014; Norwood, 2018). Actively deploying these ministers to lead the church in making disciples has become a necessity (Matthew 28:18–20; Geiger & Peck, 2016; J. D. Kennedy, 2018). New and ongoing research concerning generational norms and differences (Barna Group, 2017; Fry & Parker, 2018; Parker & Igielnik, 2020), including factors influencing

thought processes and actions of emerging leaders (Adamson, 2019), has brought a greater understanding of leadership development among ministry leaders.

The Assemblies of God must develop and retain young emerging ministry leaders for the mission of the church to go forward. Even with national, district, and local incentives for development and mentoring of young leaders, the number of AG ministers under 40 years of age has declined annually, from 8,450 ministers in 2000 to 7,045 in 2019, representing a loss of 7.4% over nineteen years (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2021, March 15). Correspondingly, the percentage of AG adherents from the overall age range either maintained the same at 8.7% in both 2000 and 2020 for 18–24-year-old adherents or lost 1.4% of 25-34-year-old adherents during the same time span (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, June 30). With 53% of Assemblies of God attendees under age 35 in 2019 (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 33), a pool of potential ministry leaders exists waiting to be discovered, developed, and deployed into service.

Intentionally encouraging, mentoring, and educating young Assemblies of God leaders called to ministry must occur, with the hope of increasing the numbers of young people going into ministry, staying in ministry, and remaining in the AG (J. W. Kennedy, 2018). Academic research within the Assemblies of God has called for the AG to further study the upcoming generation preparing for leadership (Adamson, 2019, p. 353), connecting an AG minister's effectiveness to their educational process (Jessup, 2013, p. 159), and sourcing ways to recruit and train for ministerial leadership development and replacement (Smith, 2016, p. 147). While Adamson (2019) interviewed regional focus groups of Millennial AG ministers to discover underlying thoughts about AG beliefs and issues, no research of the young AG minister's lived experiences regarding their ministerial call has been formally conducted.

Overall, the initial literature review revealed a gap in the research, concerning the lived experiences of the Assemblies of God credentialed minister who is under 40 years of age, regarding the discovery, development, and deployment of their ministerial call. This researcher's transcendental phenomenological research study invited emerging ministerial leaders in the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God to respond to closed-ended and open-ended questions about their experiences, bringing further understanding to concerns voiced by Jessup (2013), Smith (2016), and Adamson (2019).

### **Profile of the Current Study**

Chapter One of this study outlines the research concern of the discovery, development, and deployment the ministry calling of the under 40 years of age Assemblies of God minister. Chapter Two provides a literature review of sources relevant to the field of study. Chapter Three examines the research methodology used. Chapter Four offers data analysis and findings from the research. Chapter Five presents the researcher's conclusions.

This study sought to explain the lived experiences of the Assemblies of God credentialed minister who is under 40 years of age, with the hope of identifying factors that help or hinder the furtherance of an individual's call to Christian ministry (Iorg, 2008, p. 19). This study may contribute insights into purposeful actions to motivate, equip, and encourage the discovery, development, and deployment of an individual's call to ministry within the universal church, with particular emphasis on the emerging AG ministry leader who is under 40 years of age. This research may uncover issues, which impede an individual's call to ministry or affect the retention of the vocational minister by their ministry organization.

### **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This mixed-method transcendental phenomenological study sought to explain the nature of the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders under 40 years of age who are credentialed ministers with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God. The study employed transcendental phenomenology to better understand and describe the lived experiences of the participants. This chapter presents a synopsis of the research design, setting, participants, researcher's role, ethical considerations, data collection methods and instruments, and data analysis.

#### **Research Design Synopsis**

##### **The Problem**

With “more full-time senior pastors ages 65 and older than under the age of 40” (Barna Group, 2017, p. 191), American clergy are graying. While the wisdom of the older leader is welcomed, 2017 saw only 15% of senior/lead pastors under 40 years of age (Barna Group, 2017). Pastors in the U.S. do not equally span the generations, creating an urgent need for the church to “motivate, resource, and deploy more young pastors” (Barna Group, 2017, p. 191), to offset a shortage of church leadership in the coming decades. The problem identified by Barna affects the Assemblies of God, USA cooperative fellowship of churches and ministers, with the ratio of under 40 credentialed ministers dropping annually from 26.2% of total ministers in 2000 to 18.7% in 2020 (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2021, February 17).

##### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this mixed-method phenomenological study was to explore and better understand the nature of the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders who are credentialed ministers with the North Texas District Council of the

Assemblies of God and under 40 years of age at the time of the study. *A call to ministry* was broadly defined as “a general call of some believers to ministry leadership” (Iorg, 2008, p. 19). The theory guiding this study was transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) as it finds meaning in the lived experiences of the research participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

### **Research Questions**

**RQ1.** What are the similarities and differences of significant demographic characteristics (age, gender, call to ministry, education and training, ministry experience, and spiritual parents or mentors) among emerging leaders who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age?

**RQ2.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the discovery of their call to ministry?

**RQ3.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the value of spiritual parenting or mentoring, education and training, and ministry experience in the development of their call to ministry?

**RQ4.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the current or future deployment of their call to ministry, especially in relation to the Assemblies of God?

**RQ5.** How do the variables of age, gender, call to ministry, education, ministry experience, and spiritual parents or mentors relate to the emerging leader’s description of the discovery, development, and deployment of their call to ministry?

### **Research Design and Methodology**

Researchers approach academic study, according to their philosophical assumptions and personal experiences, the problem being researched, the design of research procedures, and methods for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting research data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 3). One research approach, qualitative research, finds its foundation in phenomenology, uncovering the research participant’s experience from their perspective (Roberts, 2010, p. 143). Qualitative studies offer the ability to explore a topic or phenomenon; uncover complex, multilayered descriptions; verify claims, assumptions, or generalizations; develop theory;

identify problems; and evaluate practices and policies (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 252).

Qualitative research seeks “an in-depth examination of a complex phenomenon” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 370) through a process of “emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants’ setting; analyzing the data inductively, building from particulars to general themes; and making interpretations of the meaning of the data... [with a] final written report [that] has a flexible writing structure” (Creswell, 2014, pp. 246–247).

One type of qualitative research design is a phenomenological study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, pp. 253, 255), which is “the reflective study of prereflective or lived experience” (Adams & van Manen, 2012). The researcher utilizing a phenomenological method will try “to understand people’s perceptions and perspectives relative to a particular situation” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 370). Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenology is “a philosophical approach to qualitative research methodology seeking to understand human experience” (Sheehan, 2014, p. 10).

To better understand the Assemblies of God minister who is under 40 years of age, the research design for this study used the qualitative method of transcendental phenomenology, which explores the lived experiences of research participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016; Moustakas, 1994). The steps for research procedures and data analysis found in Moustakas’ *Phenomenological Research Methods* (1994) model were followed. Adhering to Moustakas’ outline, the researcher utilized *epoche* to set aside prejudgments, preconceived ideas, and biases. When conducting the interviews, the researcher organized and analyzed data, seeking phenomenological reduction through the development of themes within the participants’ responses.

The study first collected data through a qualitative survey (Fink, 2003; Jansen, 2010) of 28 closed and open-ended questions (Pinzer, 2017) (RQ1) regarding the discovery (RQ2), development (RQ3), and deployment (RQ4) of the participant's call to ministry. All credentialed NTD AG ministers under the age of 40 were invited to complete the qualitative online survey. The qualitative data gathered from the survey was coded and analyzed for common and shared themes using Qualtrics XM software (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>). The quantitative survey data gathered from the survey was analyzed with analysis of variance and t-tests using Qualtrics XM software.

The researcher chose ten participants, who completed the online qualitative survey and who reflect the demographics of the NTD under 40 AG ministers, to form a purposive sample for an in-depth exploration of the emerging leaders' lived experiences. The purposive sample of participants engaged in follow-up qualitative interviews (Bloor & Wood, 2006) with open-ended questions informed by the survey data through a transcendental phenomenological method (Moustakas, 1994; Sheehan, 2014) regarding the discovery (RQ2), development (RQ3), and deployment (RQ4) of their call to ministry. During the interviews, the researcher became part of the research instrument through prompting of conversation and spiraling analysis of data (Given, 2012, p. 767). The qualitative data gathered from the transcendental phenomenological interviews was coded and analyzed for common and shared themes using Qualtrics XM software (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>), following the stepwise structure laid out in Moustakas' (1994) "Modification of the Van Kamm Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data" (p. 120–121).

This mixed-method study desired to explore the lived experiences of the credentialed Assemblies of God minister who is under 40 years of age. As the theory of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) seeks to find meaning in the research participant's lived

experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016), this research method was deemed appropriate to search out an answer to the research problem.

### **Setting**

The general setting of the Assemblies of God, USA was chosen for this research, with the largest of their geographical districts, the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God (2020d), being pinpointed for the specific sample population. The percentage of all AG, USA ministers under 40 years of age has declined from 26.2% in 2000 (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 102) to 18.7% in 2020 (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2021, February 17). The reason for the decline cannot be attributed to the overall congregational age, as 53% of Assemblies of God, USA, attendees are under age 35 (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 33), thus constituting a ready pool of potential leaders. The North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God (NTD) faces a similar scenario with 57.2% of adherents under age 35 (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 19) and the median age of all ministers at 56 (Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics, 2020, February 27, p. 95). Thus, the Assemblies of God credentialed minister was chosen for study, because a gap exists within the AG fellowship between the average age of the church attendee and the average age of those called into vocational ministry.

### **Organizational Structure of the Assemblies of God**

The Assemblies of God (2020b) sees Christ as the head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). Within the local church, the pastor is elected by the congregation. A board of deacons elected by the local congregation assists the pastor and helps with church business (Ephesians 4:11, 12; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). The local church may be either General Council

affiliated, which means the church has full autonomy and is self-governing and self-supporting, or district affiliated, which means the church has not qualified for full autonomy.

Assemblies of God (2020b) churches operate under the leadership of both a district and a national organizational structure. Districts follow geographical boundaries or language groups, giving leadership to the local church and providing recommendation for ministerial credentials at the national level. The General Council of the Assemblies of God serves as the national church, providing a cooperative fellowship overseeing education, missions, ministerial credentialing, and national ministries.

### **The North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God**

The geographical area of the North Texas District Council (2020c) encompasses urban, suburban, and rural settings, comprising all local Assemblies of God within these official boundaries:

Beginning at the southwest corner of the State of Oklahoma (the northwest corner of Hardeman County), and running south on county lines to the southwest corner of Haskell County, thence due west to the northwest corner of Fisher County; thence due south to the southwest corner of Nolan County; thence due west to the northwest corner of Sterling County; thence due south on county lines as near as possible to the southwest corner of Sutton County; thence due east to Gillespie County; thence due south to the southwest corner of Gillespie County; thence due east to Blanco County; thence due east in such a manner as to include Blanco, Hays, Caldwell, Bastrop, Lee, Burleson, Brazos, Madison, Houston, Trinity, Polk, Angelina, San Augustine, and Sabine Counties (Article II)

Stretching from the Red River which is the northern border of Texas and heading south through the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex to the capital city of Austin and reaching from the eastern border touching Louisiana and Arkansas to the tumbleweed expanses of West Texas, the district is hardly homogenous, but diverse. Various ethnicities and language groups vie for the majority, while culture and preferences set each community, church, and minister apart from the other.

The study's participants work in large or small church settings, educational institutions, hospitals, prisons, police or fire departments, and marketplace ministry settings.

### **Participants**

Phenomenological research mandates a purposive sampling (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 164). The researcher must have a defined rationale for the selection of certain individuals. Choosing participants who have experienced a specific phenomenon may require a means to gather the needed demographic data, such as a survey or database. In addition, the literature shows that a researcher may determine a purposive sample from their knowledge of a particular population, such as family, friends, or former students (Stevick, 1971, p. 135). The characteristic sample size ranges from five to 25 participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 255). The purposive sampling of ten participants for this study strategically built a representation of the demographic spread within the under 40 age credentialed ministers in the North Texas District Council.

Participants in the study were drawn from the population of the Assemblies of God ministers in the USA. From that population, a sample of credentialed AG ministers who are above the age of 18 and under 40 years of age were studied. This purposive sample was comprised of ministers from the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God, the largest geographical district within the AG (2020d). The survey was sent to all under 40 years of age credentialed ministers within the North Texas District, which totaled 298 individuals (G. Moon, personal communication, September 30, 2021). Of those responding to the survey, ten participants were purposively chosen to reflect the demographics of the North Texas District Council.

The under 40 credentialed AG minister may be either male or female, working in full-time, part-time, or volunteer ministry. Some of the ministry roles undertaken by the AG

minister may be lead/senior pastor, youth pastor, worship pastor, children's pastor, missionary, chaplain, administrator, educator, or organizational leader.

As information about the Assemblies of God is readily available through the internet or literature review, no pseudonyms have been employed for The General Council of the Assemblies of God or the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God. However, the individual research participants found confidentiality in the use of pseudonyms throughout the study. The specific coding of individuals with pseudonyms is known only to the researcher.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Within qualitative research, the researcher serves as the “key instrument” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181) in the collection of data. While serving as the human instrument in the study, this researcher's daily responsibilities is deeply involved in the research setting. This researcher grew up attending and holding membership in an Assemblies of God church. Before high school graduation, the researcher taught Sunday School and participated in youth and worship groups. The researcher attended an Assemblies of God university, married a fellow student in an Assemblies of God church, and began serving as a pastor's wife and teacher in the local church. Through the years, the researcher became an ordained minister in the Assemblies of God. Today, the researcher serves as an executive presbyter and district presbyter, overseeing churches and ministers within the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God (2020c).

While personally experiencing a call to ministry as a young person, this researcher has sought to better understand the call to ministry in others' lives. Also, an innate desire to birth and nurture spiritual sons and daughters in the faith and into ministry service seeks to comprehend their perspectives and experiences, to better facilitate their ministerial journey. Both components

in the study—the ministerial call and spiritual parenting—have been a part of the researcher’s identity.

The researcher serves as a district official in her roles of executive presbyter and district presbyter within the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God. The participants, who are 18 years of age or older, were given full disclosure of the researcher’s roles in the district. The participants were assured of strict confidentiality and privacy, concerning their participation and responses in the study. The participants were free to not answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without affecting their relationships with The General Council of the Assemblies of God or the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God.

Some participants in the study were known to the researcher before the study. The researcher consciously strove to remove any bias or assumptions that might taint the study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Full compliance with Liberty University’s (2021) Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity’s Christian Leadership in Education doctoral program were undertaken in this study. The researcher consciously mitigated potential ethical concerns through full disclosure of the researcher’s position within the Assemblies of God and by providing proper informed consent (Appendix F) and permission letters (Appendices B and C). Abiding by the IRB’s requirements, informed consent was obtained from all participants

The researcher serves as an executive presbyter with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God, providing administrative oversight in a team setting to the district. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, the study was strictly confidential, with only the researcher knowing the participants and their responses. This disclosure was made so that the participant could decide if this relationship would affect their willingness to participate in this study. No

action was taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

### **Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

Transcendental phenomenology answers research questions through the recounting by individuals of their own lived experiences, thus shedding a unique light on the research problem. The study's problem of examining the emerging leader's unfolding call to ministry may be better understood by hearing the perspective of the representative emerging leader. As transcendental phenomenology seeks to build a detailed picture from the individual's perception of reality, the data collected may serve to better comprehend the attitudes, understanding, and emotions of the emerging ministry leader. The research used a qualitative phenomenological design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016) with an intent to explore the lived experiences of the sample population through the transcendental phenomenological method (Moustakas, 1994; see also Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017; Sheehan, 2014).

A survey instrument generating both qualitative and quantitative data and an open-ended interview instrument was developed for the study. Validation of the instruments was undertaken in a pilot study with four individuals, who evaluated the survey and interview questions and format for ease of use, applicability, and understandability. Revisions were made, based upon the pilot study group's suggestions.

### **Collection Methods**

Transcendental phenomenology collects data using description, interview, and retelling of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). While the transcendental phenomenological study is open-ended without specific requirements, it should have established methods and procedures for project integrity and research process. Moustakas (1994) outlined steps for proper procedures for

data collection within the transcendental phenomenology research design. Moustakas' steps and procedures are a systematic method for preparation, data collection, data organization, and data analysis. (p. 104). These include:

Discovering a topic and question rooted in autobiographical meanings and values, as well as involving social meanings and significance;

Conducting a comprehensive review of the professional and research literature;

Constructing a set of criteria to locate appropriate co-researchers;

Providing co-researchers with instructions on the nature and purpose of the investigation, and developing an agreement that includes obtaining informed consent, insuring [*sic*] confidentiality, and delineating the responsibilities of the primary researcher and research participant, consistent with ethical principles of research;

Developing a set of questions or topics to guide the interview process;

Conducting and recording a lengthy person-to-person interview that focuses on a bracketed topic and question. A follow-up interview may also be needed;

Organizing and analyzing the data to facilitate development of individual textural and structural descriptions, a composite textural description, a composite structural description, and a synthesis of textural and structural meanings and essences. (pp. 103–104)

Before a literature review is conducted or criteria for participant selection developed, the phenomenological researcher begins by setting aside their prejudgments, preconceived ideas, and biases in a process called *epoche* or bracketing (Van Manen, 2016, p. 27), “meaning to stay away from or abstain” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Phenomenological reduction follows with bracketing the topic or question to provide focus. The bracketing process is used

to conduct the study as far as possible free of preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience and professional studies-to be completely open, receptive, and naive in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22)

Bracketing is defined, as “a rigorous process that suspends internal and external suppositions, thereby allowing the focusing in on a specific phenomenon to understand or see it as it is”

(Given, 2012, p. 65). In the study, the researcher used bracketing to address the possibility of potential bias by the researcher in the interview process (Sorsa et al., 2015, p. 9).

After topics were developed, the phenomenological interview sought to obtain descriptions of the phenomenon through informal interviewing, open-ended questions, and a topical guided interview (Moustakas, 1994). A list of interview questions based upon the study's primary purpose and derived from the stated research questions sought to evoke a full account of the specific phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). The series of questions were generated from and grounded in the topical literature. The rationale for the interview questions was to answer the study's research questions. Since "spatiality, corporeality, temporality, relationality, and alterity are productive categories for the process of phenomenological questioning, reflecting, and writing" (Given, 2012, p. 619), the experiential material was appropriately gathered in the phenomenological interview through the exploration of lived space, body, time, and relationship. Beck's (2020) phenomenological approach to researching institutional debt in Christian schools and Pinzer's (2017) phenomenological study of developing executive level leadership in peer mentoring cohort models are similar studies to the proposed research.

As the interview set out to be an informal, interactive conversation, the preconceived questions developed by the researcher carried the possibility of being changed, truncated, or discarded, as the participant shared their experience (Moustakas, 1994). The open-ended interviews began with informal conversation to set the tone of the conversation. The researcher prompted the participant to recall the phenomenon and describe it. Additional comments or directive questions by the researcher assisted in keeping the interview on the topic of discovering (RQ2), developing (RQ3), and deploying (RQ4) an individual's call to ministry or in discovering new areas of the topic to explore.

As “all of research is a human endeavor” (Given, 2012, p. 767), the researcher carefully considered their role as an instrument in the study. The manner of collecting phenomenological data dictated that the researcher becomes part of the research instrument through prompting of conversation and spiraling analysis of data as it occurs in relating the participant’s lived experiences (Given, 2012, p. 767). By the researcher consciously restraining their personal opinions, presuppositions, and cultural beliefs through bracketing to avoid manipulation; recognizing their interactions and relationship with the participant as influential; and realizing their perception of data collection and analysis as colored by their professional skills, experience, and training (Given, 2012, p. 767), the researcher better heard the participant’s description of the phenomena.

Understanding the role of the researcher and participant in data collection in the phenomenological study, this researcher prepared to be part of the research instrument by bracketing their prejudices and biases. A full setting aside of assumptions and beliefs prescribed by the phenomenological research method was not to be attained by this researcher, as she ascribes to a Christian worldview. However, the biblical worldview supports an impartial judge, who will listen without preconceived ideas, prejudice, or bias, as demonstrated in Scripture by God (Romans 2:11–16) and the judges that Moses appointed (Exodus 18:13–26). As the demographics of a person, whether wealth, status, education, or prestige, are viewed by the biblical God with impartiality (Deuteronomy 10:17–20; Acts 10:34–35), this Christian researcher also maintained impartiality without prejudice, in alignment with God’s command (2 Chronicles 19:7; 1 Peter 1:15–17). The researcher reflected upon the phenomenon being studied without “theorizing, conceptualizing, abstracting, and objectifying” (van Manen, 2017, p. 819). This researcher sought to discover the reduction of the phenomenon through constant open-ended

questioning, inductively following the participant's story (van Manen, 2017, pp. 819–820).

Throughout the video-recorded interview, the researcher took written notes of themes and statements spoken by the participant for coding purposes.

### **Instruments and Protocols**

In this mixed-method phenomenological study, the researcher served as a key instrument (Given, 2012, p. 767; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 80). Additional instruments providing data were a survey and interviews.

#### ***Survey***

Data initially was gathered through a qualitative survey (Fink, 2003; Jansen, 2010), created by the researcher, utilizing 28 closed and open-ended questions (Pinzer, 2017) (RQ1) regarding the discovery (RQ2), development (RQ3), and deployment (RQ4) of the participant's call to ministry. The quantitative portion of the survey utilized closed-ended multiple-choice questions concerning the demographics of age, gender, call to ministry, education, ministry experience, and spiritual parents or mentors. The qualitative portion of the survey utilized open-ended questions to further explain the closed-ended questions. The qualitative data gathered from the surveys was coded and analyzed for common and shared themes using Qualtrics XM software (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>). The quantitative survey data gathered from the survey was analyzed with analysis of variance and t-tests using Qualtrics XM software.

Besides providing descriptive analysis, the survey served to delineate demographics, highlight a potential sample population, and inform the follow-up interview questions. Data obtained from the survey and interviews was further analyzed to seek how the variables of age, gender, call to ministry, education, ministry experience, and spiritual parents or mentors relate to

the emerging leader's description of the discovery, development, and deployment of their call to ministry (RQ5).

The online survey was developed to ascertain the required demographics to reveal a range of demographics, such as age, gender, education, ministerial experience, and discipleship through spiritual parenting or mentoring. The credentialed AG minister has criteria set forth by The General Council of the Assemblies of God (2019, Article VII) to qualify for consideration as a credentialed minister. These qualifications include the minister evidencing a divine call to ministry, completing prerequisite education, and actively engaging in practical ministry to proclaim the gospel. The licensed AG minister wishing to upgrade to an ordination status will describe ongoing mentorship relationships in their application (The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020, August 4), which translates to having a spiritual parent or mentor in their life. The survey gave the participants opportunity to answer open-ended questions to further clarify or explain the closed-ended questions.

The responses to the online survey helped determine the participant pool for the study. The survey echoed the demographical data generated annually by the Assemblies of God General Secretary's Office, Statistics (2020, February 27) minister's renewal form. The survey was sent to all North Texas District Council credentialed ministers who are under age 40 at the time of the study. The brief survey took ten minutes or less to complete. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix G.

### ***Interviews***

The mostly unstructured qualitative interview reigns as the primary data collection process in transcendental phenomenological studies (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). These phenomenological interviews tend to be 1 to 2 hours in length (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 255).

Individuals who have directly experienced the phenomenon to be examined are purposefully chosen for the phenomenological study. This research requires interview questions follow the format of phenomenological research, which utilizes continual inductive questioning “by subjecting the phenomenon to the eidetic method of “variation in imagination” (Is it like this? like that?) or by asking how the phenomenon gives itself in its self-givenness (How does it show itself?)” (van Maren, 2017, p. 819).

Because phenomenological research seeks meaning (Englander, 2012), in-depth qualitative transcendental phenomenological interviews (Bloor & Wood, 2006), informed by the previous survey data, were conducted. The interviews followed the protocol outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018, pp. 189–191). The semi-structured interview was 50-60 minutes in length and conducted online. The qualitative data collected from the interviews was coded and analyzed for common and shared themes using Qualtrics XM software (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>), following the structure of Moustakas’ (1994) “Modification of the Van Kamm Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data” (pp. 120–121).

Creswell and Creswell (2018) have developed a protocol to be used in interviews (pp. 189–191), which this researcher followed. The protocol includes basic information about the interview, an introduction of the researcher and the study’s purpose, an opening icebreaker question, content questions that include probes to ask for more information or explanation, and closing instructions. The interview protocol gave structure to the interview for consistency in recording and between participants, while granting freedom to the researcher to follow the lead of the participant.

Interviews require a list of the specific questions to be asked and a rationale for why those questions are included. Interview questions were generated from and grounded in the

topical literature. Interview questions were centered on answering RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4. Interview questions asked how the discovery of the call to ministry happened in the minister's life (RQ2). Factors that might have influenced the discovery of the call to ministry were explored, along with their possibility as motivation for ministry (RQ2). Interview questions considered if and how the factors of biblical discipleship as found in spiritual parenting or mentoring, education and training, and ministry experience helped or hindered the individual's call to ministry (RQ3). A description of the current or future deployment of the participant's call to ministry, especially in relation to the Assemblies of God, was explored (RQ4). Questions concerning hindrances and helps the emerging ministry leader encounters were asked (RQ4). In addition, a query into why the participant currently carries credentials in the AG was followed (RQ4). Interview questions were developed with the help of individuals in the pilot study and those who have oversight of the under 40 AG credentialed minister. Adamson's (2019) survey questions of AG Millennial leaders in 2017 also provided insight for the development of the instrument. Interview questions can be found in Appendix I.

Methods for validating the interview questions include triangulation of multiple data sources and member checking (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 86). The triangulation occurred when all participants were interviewed using the same questions. From this triangulation, either similar or divergent data emerged. Member checking of the conclusions and interpretations of the participant's interview data gave an opportunity to confirm, clarify, or offer further comment on the themes. The interview participant received an online summary of their interview, where they had the opportunity to confirm or further clarify their statements and add any additional comments.

The interviews were conducted through individual online Zoom (<https://zoom.us>) video calls. The interview was recorded through the Zoom functions. The interview was planned to take 50-60 minutes, although the longest call was an hour and a half in length.

## **Procedures**

Prior to conducting the data collection portion of this transcendental phenomenological study, a pre-interview survey was built to identify key demographical information and specific characteristics of each respondent. For the interview, open-ended questions were developed based on the study's research questions, following Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological methodology. Responses from under 40 AG credentialed minister focus groups conducted in 2021 by the North Texas District Council and The General Council of the Assemblies of God were perused for applicable themes and questions. The survey and the interview questions were reviewed and evaluated by four individuals in a pilot study. Of the four individuals, four had academic experience in data collection, two had earned doctorates, two had completed a doctoral program except for their doctoral dissertations, two had previous or current ongoing oversight or mentoring of groups like the study population, two were ordained AG ministers, and one was representative of the median age group.

Participants for the study were identified to take part in the study through the North Texas District Council's database of credentialed ministers. The participants were invited to complete a 10-minute online survey, to identify a potential sample through demographics and certain characteristics. The participants who completed the survey were asked to be available for a 50–60-minute recorded interview through Zoom (<https://zoom.us>). Informed by the pre-interview survey, the researcher formed a purposive sample of survey respondents with the intent of creating a sample that generally matches the overall demographics of the under 40

credentialed Assemblies of God minister population in the North Texas District Council. Those chosen for the interview from the sample were invited to take part in a recorded Zoom interview. The participants who completed the survey and the interview received an online summary of their interview, where they could confirm or further clarify what they said and add any additional comments.

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 are stored securely, and only the researcher has access to the records. Participant responses have been kept confidential using pseudonyms. Interviews were conducted in a location where others could not easily overhear the conversation. Data has been stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted. Interviews have been recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for five years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

The study underwent Liberty University's (2021) Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process. Because all research involving human subjects is regulated by the federal government through the Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Human Research Protections, this researcher has taken and passed the mandatory social and behavioral research training through CITI. Documents pertinent to the study and required by the IRB, such as the IRB approval letter (Appendix A), permission request letters (Appendix B, Appendix C), recruitment email (Appendix D), follow-up recruitment email (Appendix E), a consent form (Appendix F), and instruments with the survey questions (Appendix G) and interview questions (Appendix I), were approved and obtained prior to undertaking any research with any human participant.

## **Data Analysis**

In this section, the organization and analysis of the data obtained from the survey and interview are discussed. The study's methods for data analysis and trustworthiness are examined. Content analysis of the qualitative data through a coding system are established.

### **Analysis Methods**

Creswell's (2013) data spiral approach to content analysis informed the analysis of qualitative, non-numerical data generated from the interviews. Creswell prescribed that data will first be transcribed, then it will be organized through creating a database and breaking the large units of data into smaller units. The researcher will read, listen, and try to get an overall feel for the data, while notating any initial thoughts. The data will be grouped and classified into themes and categories, with an intent to find meaning in the data. The data will be validated through member checking of the participant's responses. The summarized data will find synthesis in propositions and be visualized through tables and figures. The researcher followed Creswell's recommended approach as described.

Potential codes to organize and analyze the qualitative data into general themes might involve "specific topics, characteristics and attributes, actions, processes, emotions, beliefs, values, and evaluations" (Leedy & Ormrod, p. 292). However, as transcendental phenomenology does not presuppose a deductive theoretical outcome (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011, p. 147), but facilitates an emerging essence through the participant's description of their lived experiences, the coding must be inductively driven by the data. Utilizing Creswell's (2013) data analysis spiral, the data was organized and broken down into smaller units, perused to get an overall sense of the data and its interpretations, classified into categories and themes, and then synthesized with an integration and summarization of the data into propositions,

hypotheses, or schemes (Leedy & Ormrod, p. 292). With this approach, codes became identifiable relationships and patterns (Leedy & Ormrod, p. 292) through repeated, spiraling analysis.

Moustakas (1994) outlined steps for proper procedures for data analysis within the transcendental phenomenology research design. He further explained that during analysis, *horizontalization*, which considers every statement by a participant to have equal value, is considered, along with those horizons or meanings which have invariant, nonrepetitional qualities. The data is organized and analyzed for individual, then composite textural and structural descriptions of the experience, from which a synthesis of meaning and essences of the experience is created. The entire study then is summarized with study findings related to the literature review. Future research and study are developed. The study is linked in relation to personal and professional outcomes, as well as social meanings and relevance.

Moustakas (1994) modified two analysis methods, offering researchers guidance and a choice for analyzing data (pp. 120–122). Moustakas’ “Modification of the Van Kamm Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data” (pp. 120—121) uses the complete transcription of the research participant’s interview in the following steps:

Listing and Preliminary Grouping:

List every expression relevant to the experience. (Horizontalization)

Reduction and Elimination:

To determine the Invariant Constituents: Test each expression for two requirements:

- a. Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?
- b. Is it possible to abstract and label it? If so, it is a horizon of the experience. Expressions not meeting the above requirements are eliminated. Overlapping, repetitive, and vague expressions are also eliminated or presented in more exact

descriptive terms. The horizons that remain are the invariant constituents of the experience.

#### Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents:

Cluster the invariant constituents of the experience that are related into a thematic label. The clustered and labeled constituents are the core themes of the experience.

#### Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application: Validation

Check the invariant constituents and their accompanying theme against the complete record of the research participant. (1) Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription? (2) Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed? (3) If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant to the co-researcher's experience and should be deleted.

Using the relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes, construct for each co-researcher an Individual Textural Description of the experience. Include verbatim examples from the transcribed interview.

Construct for each co-researcher an Individual Structural Description of the experience based on the Individual Textural Description and Imaginative Variation.

Construct for each research participant a Textural-Structural Description of the meanings and essences of the experience, incorporating the invariant constituents and themes.

From the Individual Textural-Structural Descriptions, develop a Composite Description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole. (pp. 120–121)

Moustakas' (1994) "Modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data" (p. 121—121) follows these steps:

Using a phenomenological approach, obtain a full description of your own experience of the phenomenon.

From the verbatim transcript of your experience complete the following steps:

- a. Consider each statement with respect to significance for description of the experience.
- b. Record all relevant statements.
- c. List each nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statement. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience.

- d. Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes.
- e. Synthesize the invariant meaning units and themes into a description of the textures of the experience. Include verbatim examples.
- f. Reflect on your own textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct a description of the structures of your experience.
- g. Construct a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of your experience.

From the verbatim transcript of the experience of each of the other co-researchers, complete the above steps, a through g.

From the individual textural-structural descriptions of all co-researchers' experiences, construct a composite textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience, integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole. (p. 121—121)

For the proposed study, Moustakas' (1994) "Modification of the Van Kamm Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data" (pp. 120—121) was used for data analysis of the interviews. Qualtrics XM (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>) was utilized to discover themes in the content analysis.

### **Trustworthiness**

While quantitative research uses the standards of validity and reliability to denote quality research, in qualitative research, trustworthiness is the standard (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Liberty University, n.d., p. 16). The trustworthiness of qualitative research is found in its credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

### ***Credibility***

Credibility refers to "the extent to which the findings accurately describe reality" (Liberty University, n.d., p. 15). Credibility establishes trustworthiness through linking research findings with reality, as a demonstration of the accuracy of the findings. Triangulation and member checking are two important research techniques utilized to establish credibility (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018, p. 208). Triangulation employs numerous data sources, methods, theories, or analysts and observers to gain a comprehensive, rich, well-developed understanding of the phenomenon being researched (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 86). Member checking shares major themes and conclusions from the study with participants, allowing each to confirm or clarify their intended statements, as well as possibly comment on the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). This study used triangulation through the gathering of data from multiple participants concerning the same questions. This study utilized member checking, also known as respondent validation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016), to verify certain themes and quotes, as well as gain more understanding through study participants' comments on the interpretations and conclusions. When conducting member checking, the participant received an online summary of their interview, with the ability to confirm or further clarify their statements and add any additional comments.

### ***Dependability***

The dependability of the study's research data was supported by details concerning the research context, processes, and procedures (Liberty University, n.d., p. 15). The research methodology in the study has been clearly outlined, step-by-step, to enable replication of the study by other researchers. Moustakas (1994) gives a pattern for the researcher in transcendental phenomenology to follow in the "Modification of the Van Kamm Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data" (pp. 120—121), which the study fully followed.

### ***Confirmability***

Confirmability refers to the ability to "track the processes and procedures used to collect and interpret the data" (Liberty University, n.d., p. 15). Several practices within the research design enhanced the confirmability of the data. The process of collecting the demographic survey

data and analyzing it has been presented within the research. The open-ended interview questions corresponding to each specific research question have been listed. The method and process of coding and thematic analysis through Qualtrics XM (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>), in conjunction with Moustakas' (1994) "Modification of the Van Kamm Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data" (pp. 120—121), have been described. The researcher transcribed the full interviews, which have been made available for other researchers upon request, with any information which might identify a participant redacted. Pertinent summarized responses from the transcribed interviews have been presented with the data analysis and findings in Chapter Four.

### ***Transferability***

Within qualitative research, generalizability is not possible; however, transferability of application from one context to another context is desirable (Liberty University, n.d., p. 16). This study has the potential to be applied in other settings. The insight gained concerning leadership development and retention could pertain to universal leadership issues among the age group studied. Hearing the participants describe their values and beliefs regarding various topics might confirm or cast doubt upon other research describing this demographic. Other Christian denominations or parachurch organizations may find a similar research format transferable and useful for identifying the felt needs and perspectives of a specific demographic group within their organization. The transfer of this study as a method of research is not considered applicable for those organizations seeking quantitative data.

## **Chapter Summary**

Transcendental phenomenology seeks to understand and explore the lived experiences of research participants without prejudice or prejudgments. Actively listening to a participant's experience, then relying upon their description to bring to light the core theme being expressed, offers the researcher a means for understanding the phenomenon better. When desiring to learn about the lived experiences of the Assemblies of God credentialed minister who is under 40 years of age, hearing their story in the clearest manner, without trying to explain away their concerns or to analyze the reasons for their feelings, was found to be a good research approach. Transcendental phenomenology offered the process to ask the questions and attain reliable and credible answers.

In Chapter One, a research concern of discovering, developing, and deploying emerging ministry leaders in the Assemblies of God was determined. In Chapter Two, pertinent literature regarding facets of the research concern was reviewed to reveal the rationale for the study and the gap in the literature. Chapter Three has discussed the study's qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design synopsis, setting, participants, the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, data collection and analysis. In addition, Chapter Three serves as a guide for proper formulation of the methodological design and the implementation of the research process from conception to analysis.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

This mixed-method phenomenological study sought to explore and better understand the nature of the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders who are credentialed ministers with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God and under 40 years of age at the time of the study. Chapters One through Three of this dissertation established the research concern of the study, uncovered the rationale and gap in the literature, and presented a research design based on transcendental phenomenology. Chapter Four presents the data findings and results of the data analysis. This chapter is organized into the following sections: Compilation Protocol and Measures, Demographic and Sample Data, Data Analysis and Findings, and Evaluation of the Research Design.

### **Compilation Protocol and Measures**

Transcendental phenomenology constituted the analysis method for the study for data obtained through a survey and interviews. Specific protocols guided the survey and interview portions of the study. Measures to build trustworthiness were implemented, which brought credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Creswell & Miller, 2000) to the study.

A letter (Appendix B) dated July 19, 2021, was mailed to Dr. Gaylan Claunch, Superintendent of the North Texas District Council, requesting permission to conduct research with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God. The letter explained the purpose of the research and gave an overview of the research design. The permission letter asked to use NTD's membership list of credentialed ministers under the age of 40 to recruit participants for the research. Dr. Claunch granted permission by mail on July 22, 2021 (Appendix C).

Looking for validity and reliability of the instruments, a pilot study comprised of four individuals reviewed the survey questions and interview questions. The individuals found the questions to be readily understandable, related well to the research questions, and broad enough to elicit the requested answers without manipulation. One reviewer suggested the topic of the interview's last question concerning credentials with the Assemblies of God, which the researcher added to the instrument (Appendix I).

The online software, Qualtrics XM (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>), was utilized to design, distribute, code, and analyze the survey instrument. Upon receiving the database of Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age from NTD, the researcher assigned randomized alphanumeric identifiers to the sample. Qualtrics further randomized and brought anonymity to the process by assigning a computer-generated alphanumeric Response ID for each survey respondent. The interview participants were further hidden with a different alphanumeric identifier.

The online qualitative survey was distributed with a link generated by the Qualtrics XM (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>) platform on August 26, 2021. The initial survey recruitment invitations (Appendix D) were emailed to 306 potential participants. A follow-up recruitment email was sent to the participants two weeks later (Appendix E). The study population of Assemblies of God ministers who were under 40 years of age in the North Texas District Council settled at 298, due to aging out of the group and to ministers moving out of the district which were not calculated in the initial database from the NTD. The first online survey response was recorded on August 27, 2021. The last online survey response was recorded on October 21, 2021. The survey expired on October 22, 2021.

The follow-up semi-structured interview segment began on October 6, 2021, and concluded on November 4, 2021. A total of ten interviews were conducted and recorded on Zoom (<https://zoom.us>) by the researcher. The interviewees (Table 1) were purposively sampled to represent the demographics of gender, race, age, credential, and ministry position found in the under 40 NTD ministers' database and the survey participants (Tables 3–7). The researcher developed and used an interview protocol (Appendix H), which followed Creswell and Creswell's interview protocol (2018, pp. 189–190). After transcribing, the interviews were coded, and themes were labeled, according to Moustakas' (1994) "Modification of the Van Kamm Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data" (pp. 120—121). The data in each interview confirmed the survey data's themes and further explained the interviewee's survey responses, validating the data. No new themes were identified in the interviews. Member checking (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200) of the interviewee's summarized statements of major themes and conclusions confirmed the findings, bringing credibility to the analysis.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of Interviewees*

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Race	Credential	Ministry position
A	36	Male	White	Ordained	Lead pastor
B	31	Female	White	Ordained	Associate pastor, worship pastor
C	34	Female	Hispanic	Certified	Staff pastor, Next Gen pastor
D	26	Male	White	Licensed	AGWM missionary
E	38	Male	Black	Ordained	Lead pastor, military chaplain
F	34	Male	Hispanic	Ordained	Staff pastor, finance and media pastor
G	31	Female	Native American	Licensed	Co-lead pastor

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Race	Credential	Ministry position
H	38	Female	Black	Ordained	Lead pastor, hospital chaplain
J	27	Male	White	Ordained	AGWM missionary
K	28	Male	Hispanic	Licensed	AGUSM missionary, church planter

*Note.*  $N = 10$ .

Moustakas' (1994) "Modification of the Van Kamm Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data" (pp. 120—121), used in conjunction with Qualtrics XM (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>) analysis, brought dependability to the guiding process of arriving at thematic findings. Every relevant expression by a respondent was listed and grouped, denoting horizontalization. Each expression was reduced or eliminated, then clustered into themes. The codes and themes were checked against the participant's full transcript of the survey and interview to validate the relevancy of the themes. Each manual step of coding by the researcher in Qualtrics matched Moustakas' steps. Qualtrics' (2021) statistical testing provided analysis through one-way ANOVA (Welch's F test) coupled with Games-Howell pairwise tests when examining "one categorical variable with three or more groups and one continuous or discrete variable" (ANOVA), Fisher's exact test or Pearson's chi-squared test when assessing the relationship of two categorical variables (Stats iQ Contingency Tables), and Welch's t-test (t-test for unequal variances) when relating "a binary variable to a continuous or discrete variable (Stats iQ T-Tests). Qualtrics generated word clouds, visual representations of numerical values produced by lemmatization of participants' responses, for open-ended text entry responses with the most repeated words appearing larger (Word Clouds) (Figures 3–7). Checking the Qualtrics' findings against Moustakas' steps further validated and brought reliability to the analysis.

Triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 86) was achieved through a compilation of survey, interview, and member checking analysis of the findings.

### **Demographic and Sample Data**

From the population of credentialed ministers who were under 40 years of age in the Assemblies of God (NTD) at the time of the study, a sample of those in the North Texas District Council was examined. All ministers in the sample were given the opportunity to participate in an online survey. From those who answered the survey, a purposive sample that reflected the demographics and characteristics of the NTD under 40 ministers was formed for the follow-up interview portion of the study.

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

The five research questions guiding the study were explored through compiling data gathered in the survey and interviews. This process produced findings that were analyzed for relevant themes and relationships. The themes produced by the survey were supported by the interview data, with no additional themes generated by the interviews. Since participants had the option to not answer any question other than Survey Question 1, the count of answers varies with each question. Analysis of data pertinent to answering the research questions follows.

#### **Research Question One**

**RQ1.** What are the similarities and differences of significant demographic characteristics (age, gender, call to ministry, education and training, ministry experience, and spiritual parents or mentors) among emerging leaders who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age?

The first research question sought to detect any similarities or differences in the sample's demographic characteristics. The participants were asked to self-identify their age and gender,

whether they had a call to ministry, the level of their education and training, the range of their ministry experiences, and whether they had a spiritual parent or mentor. The General Council of the Assemblies of God requires the AG minister to self-identify the variables of age, gender, race, level of ministerial credential, current ministry involvement, and present ministry position on their annual ministerial credential renewal form. The district is apprised of the variables and retains them in its ministerial database. The survey explained that the demographic questions were asked to verify that a balanced representation of the under 40 ministers in the North Texas District Council had been surveyed. The demographic results were also used to answer the fifth research question. The following statistics detail the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents (Tables 2–8; Figure 1).

**Table 2**

*Survey Question 23: Current Ministry Involvement*

SQ23: Are you currently involved in ministry?	Count	Percentage	Confidence interval
Yes, full-time	66	75.86%	68.7% to 81.8%
Yes, part-time	10	11.49%	7.4% to 17.3%
Yes, volunteer	8	9.20%	5.6% to 14.7%
No	3	3.45%	1.5% to 7.5%

*Note.*  $N = 87$ .

Survey Question 24 inquired about the participant's present ministry (Table 3, Figure 1). Members of a church staff, which included associate pastors, worship pastors, connections pastors, communications pastors, group/discipleship pastors, youth pastors, media pastors, children's pastors, young adult pastors, and administrators, accounted for 32.98% of the selected

choices. Missionaries working in the United States through AGUSM and in countries outside of the US through AGWM comprised 31.91% of the count. Senior/lead pastors made up 14.89% of the count. Those responding *Other* included a campus pastor of a multisite church, a parachurch organization director, SAGU educators and employees, and volunteers. The remaining count of choices indicated 3.19% were not currently involved in ministry, 2.13% were chaplains (one military and one hospital), and 1.06% was a district official. No one responded that their present ministry position was an evangelist. Some participants responded with more than one ministry position, such as lead pastor and chaplain.

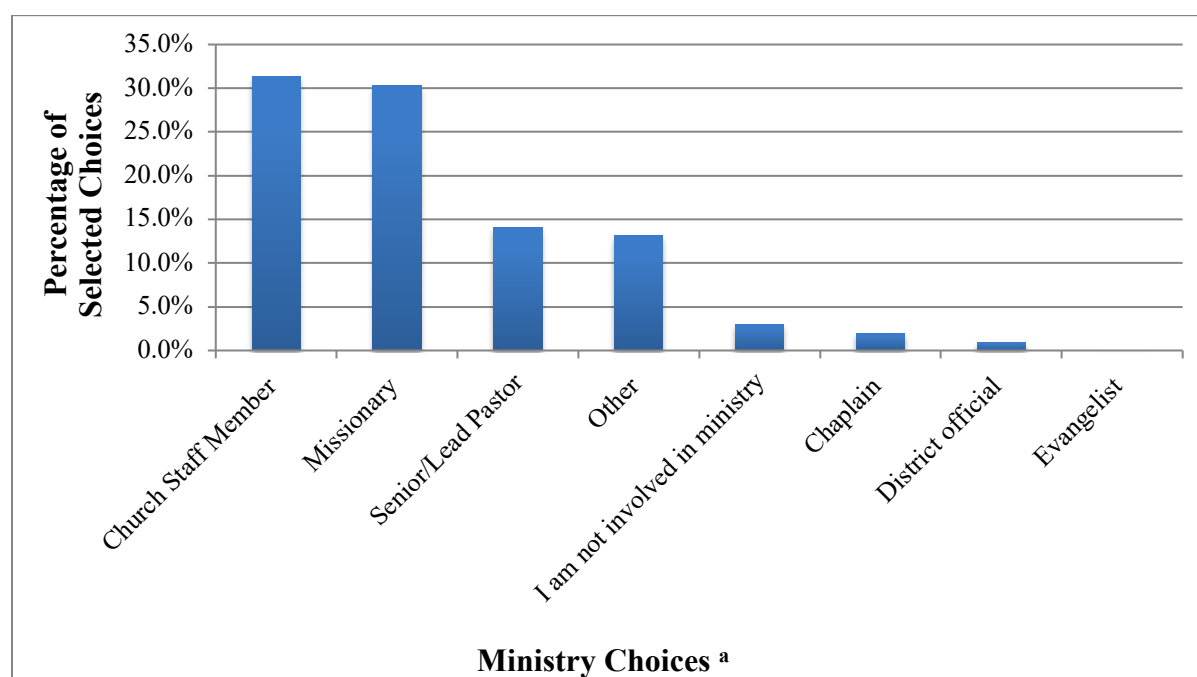
**Table 3**

*Survey Question 24: Present Ministry*

SQ24: What is your present ministry?	Count of choices	Percentage of data
Church Staff Member	31	32.98%
Missionary	30	31.91%
Senior/Lead Pastor	14	14.89%
Other <sup>a</sup>	13	13.83%
I am not involved in ministry	3	3.19%
Chaplain	2	2.13%
District official	1	1.06%
Evangelist	0	0.00%
Total	94	100%

*Note.*  $N = 87$ . Multiple choices were enabled.

<sup>a</sup> *Other* includes a campus pastor, parachurch organization director, SAGU educators and employees, and volunteers.

**Figure 1***Survey Question 24: Present Ministry*

Note.  $N = 87$ . Multiple choices were enabled.

<sup>a</sup> Other includes a campus pastor, parachurch organization director, SAGU educators and employees, and volunteers.

**Table 4***Survey Question 25: Ministerial Credential Level*

SQ25: What level of ministerial credential do you hold with the Assemblies of God?	Count	Percentage of data	Confidence interval (Percent of data)
Ordained	43	49.43%	41.8% to 57.1%
Licensed	36	41.38%	34.1% to 49.1%
Certified	8	9.20%	5.6% to 14.7%

Note.  $N = 87$ .

**Table 5***Survey Question 26: Gender*

Q26: What is your gender?	Count	Percentage of data	Confidence interval (Percent of data)
Male	57	65.52%	57.9% to 72.4%
Female	30	34.48%	27.6% to 42.1%

*Note. N = 87.***Table 6***Survey Question 27: Current Age*

SQ27: What is your age?	Count	Average	Median
Current age	87	31.51	31.0

*Note. N = 87.***Table 7***Survey Question 28: Race*

Q28: What is your race?	Count	Percentage of data	Confidence interval (Percent of data)
White	72	82.76%	76.2% to 87.8%
Hispanic	8	9.20%	5.6% to 14.7%
Black	5	5.75%	3.1% to 10.5%
Native American	1	1.15%	0.3% to 4.3%
Unknown	1	1.15%	0.3% to 4.3%

*Note. N = 87.*

**Table 8***Average Current Age Compared to Credential Level, Gender, and Race*

Credential level	Count	Average of current age								Total average of current age
		Male				Female				
		B	H	U	W	B	H	NA	W	
Ordained	43	35.5	32.0	0.0	33.4	38.0	0.0	0.0	32.4	33.3
Licensed	36	0.0	25.5	38.0	29.4	0.0	30.0	31.0	30.5	29.9
Certified	8	33.0	29.0	0.0	26.0	0.0	34.0	0.0	26.5	29.3
Total	87	34.3	28.8	38.0	31.6	38.0	31.3	31.0	30.9	31.5

*Note.*  $N = 87$ . Race is denoted by B = Black, H = Hispanic, NA = Native American, U = Unknown, W = White.

The ANOVA evaluating ministerial credential level and age showed a statistically significant relationship with a p-value of 0.00651 and large effect size (Cohen's  $f$ ) of 0.391. The ANOVA assessing race and age revealed a statistically significant relationship with a p-value of 0.0579 and medium effect size (Cohen's  $f$ ) of 0.260.

## Research Question Two

**RQ2.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the discovery of their call to ministry?

Iorg's (2008) definition of a call to ministry, as "a general call of some believers to ministry leadership" (p. 19), prefaced the survey questions concerning a ministry call. This broad definition was purposefully chosen to allow for a variety of responses. The definition may have been too broad for those who see a ministry call as a definite calling to a specific people group or ministry. One participant (23-year-old, white male) who responded, "I don't know," to whether

they had experienced a call to ministry mentioned “the non-specified direction” with their calling. This respondent stated,

I don’t recall a specific moment where I heard “the call”. At some point God planted the seed in my heart, and I just kind of “felt” that God wanted me to pursue ministry. I have never felt called to an age group, people group, or specific function of ministry or the church.

The explanation of this participant’s lack of specified call qualifies as experiencing a call to ministry, as it pinpoints a feeling to pursue ministry, which comprised 45 *Yes* responses to Question 3 of the survey (Table 11). Tables 9–10 and Figure 2 present data of the participant’s age when called to ministry.

Figure 3 provides visual representation of the repetition of actual words used by participants to describe their call to ministry, while Table 11 funnels the participants’ words into topics. The respondents’ descriptions fell into two major categories of *means* and *settings*. The means by which participants were called often included having an inner feeling or mental knowing, with the majority sensing God, especially through prayer. The settings included corporate services at camps or churches or private encounters while praying or reading Scripture. The importance of times and contexts conducive to focusing on and recognizing a call to ministry can be seen in the participants’ repeated verbiage describing their calls to ministry (Figure 3).

Interviewee A described his call to ministry as occurring in stages, first to children’s ministry at age 16, then to pulpit ministry during a youth camp altar call after graduating high school. Interviewee D was filled with the Holy Spirit and called to ministry at age 8 in a kid’s council, then to missions at age 12 in a missions-focused service. Interviewee J was saved, filled with the Holy Spirit, and called to ministry at age 8 at camp, with a further call to preach at age 13 and a call to missions in a specific country at age 16.

Interviewee C remembered her call to ministry as a “slow discovery,” with other ministry leaders pointing out the call to ministry and making “room for kids to exercise their spiritual gifts.” Interviewee G felt “God just revealed to me that were gifts that I could use for his church and for his glory.” While wanting to attend university to be an accountant, Interviewee E felt a strong call to preach and began preaching in his village, which solidified his call. Interviewees B and D did not immediately follow their respective calls to ministry but eventually surrendered to the conviction of the Lord during times of prayer. Interviewee J stated, “We recognize that calling doesn't come from an organization. That calling comes from God, and the job of the organization is to simply affirm that.”

**Table 9**

*Survey Question 1: Experienced a Call to Ministry*

SQL: Have you experienced a call to ministry?	Count	Percentage of data	Confidence interval (Percent of data)
Yes	97	97.98%	94.8% to 99.2%
No	0	0.00%	0.00%
I don't know	2	2.02%	0.8% to 5.2%

*Note.*  $N = 99$ .

**Table 10**

*Survey Question 2: Age When Called to Ministry*

SQL2: Age when called to ministry	Median	Average	Confidence interval of average	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Age	16.5	17.02	16.14 to 17.90	5.82	0.0	37.0

*Note.*  $N = 92$ .



**Table 11***Survey Question 3: Call to Ministry by Topic*

SQ3: If you have experienced a call to ministry, describe your experience.		
Topics named by respondents	Count of responses naming the topic	Percentage of data
God	59	26.94%
Inner feeling	45	20.55%
At camp	26	11.87%
In prayer	23	10.50%
Mental knowing	21	9.59%
In church service	12	5.48%
At college	8	3.65%
At convention/conference	8	3.65%
On a mission's trip	8	3.65%
Ministry leader's influence	7	3.20%
Reading Scripture	2	0.91%
Total	219	100%

*Note.*  $N = 90$ . Multiple choices were enabled.

### **Research Question Three**

**RQ3.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the value of spiritual parenting or mentoring, education and training, and ministry experience in the development of their call to ministry?

#### ***Value of Spiritual Parenting or Mentoring***

Spiritual parents or mentors were recognized as valuable assets for the minister, with 91.40% of respondents desiring a spiritual parent or mentor, while only 62.37% currently had

one (Tables 12–14). Interviewee F affirmed, “That whole idea of spiritual parents and spiritual children and the role that plays [is] so biblical.” Interviewee C declared that “without [spiritual parents and mentors], I wouldn’t be who I am today.” Interviewee H stated, “My whole ministry now literally has been shaped by having mentorship first [through] spiritual parents and my mother.”

Participants responded that spiritual parents or mentors spoke to them about the four areas listed by Gregory of Nazianzus (1974): moral, spiritual, and personal formation; pastoral or ministerial calling; theological reflection and deliberation; and practical pastoral or ministerial skills (Table 14). The best aspects cited by participants of their spiritual parent or mentor were godly character, relevant feedback, and support (Figure 4). A lack of available time to spend with the spiritual parent or mentor was the greatest problem cited by participants in forming a mentoring relationship (Figure 5). Most respondents desired a spiritual parent for encouragement and honest, wise advice in ministry and family life, especially in the areas of accountability and how to lead well in ministry (Figures 4, 6). Interviewee B acknowledged the mentor’s value, for “being able to lean on or look to someone who’s been there, walked through it, to ask the hard questions, and know that they’re coming from a place of experience and wisdom.” Interviewee E was specifically looking for three different types of mentors:

One, for God to lead me to somebody that can mentor me in the area of military chaplaincy. Two, I’m believing God to see a trustful open-minded person that can mentor me in the area of leadership in ministry cross culturally, especially here in the United States. Three, I’m also looking for somebody that my wife and I or a couple, in this case a couple that have demonstrated value to marriage, that my wife and I can submit to like mentors.

**Table 12***Survey Question 12: Spiritual Parent or Mentor Desired*

SQ12: Do you desire to have a spiritual parent or mentor to be in relationship with you?	Percentage	Count
Yes	91.40%	85
No	8.60%	8

*Note. N = 93.***Table 13***Survey Question 13: Have a Spiritual Parent or Mentor*

SQ13: Do you have a spiritual parent or mentor who is currently in relationship with you?	Percentage	Count
Yes	62.37%	58
No	37.63%	35

*Note. N = 93.*

**Figure 4**

*Survey Question 14: Best Aspects of Spiritual Parent/Mentor Relationship in Participants' Words*

**Figure 5**

*Survey Question 15: Least Favorite Aspects of Spiritual Parent/Mentor Relationship in Participants' Words*





### ***Value of Education and Training***

Participants valued their past education and training, while finding they needed more education at an affordable rate (Tables 15–17). Several respondents to Survey Question 11, as well as most interviewees, stated that an increased practical application in their educational programs would have enabled them to function better in their present ministry (Figure 7). Pastoral internships that include in-depth exposure to small or rural churches and traditional services, as well as larger churches with contemporary services, were listed as an educational need by participants. Budgeting, team building, volunteer engagement, conflict management, and church planting insight were areas the respondents desired more hands-on education and training.

In accessing the value of education and training, Interviewee J stated, “If you are looking at education to give you the key to success, you’re looking at the wrong place. It’s a tool, but it’s not the main thing. It’s what you make it.” Interviewee K remarked that “the partnering of formal teaching with the opportunity to practically apply it was extremely beneficial.” Interviewee E asserted,

I believe that both formal and informal form [*sic*] of education helped me, but now at my older stage and having been in ministry for quite some time now and experienced the things I have experienced, if I’m to advise somebody coming...after me, I will tell them that depending on the kind of call that God has called you into, while informal education is important, formal training is vital.

Interviewee C felt opportunities to shadow their lead pastor and to have mentors to assist with specific areas of ministry contributed the most to her education and training. Interviewee H wished the AG had more external continuing education programs for ministers and pastors. Interviewee F declared,

Even at SAGU, there was an underemphasis of the moves and workings of the Spirit and the flow and the sensitivity that is available to us...When it comes to the gifts of the

Spirit and the prophetic dynamic of who Holy Spirit is and what he can do, I think that was underemphasized in my formal education piece. It would have been neat to taste and experience more of that in a classroom setting.

Interviewee D found that

When I learned how to learn from the Holy Spirit, that is really when I learned how to minister. It hasn't necessarily been the content or the context of my education, but that I have learned to learn from the Holy Spirit. He is the best teacher.

**Figure 7**

*Survey Question 11: Education and Training in Participants' Words*



**Table 15***Survey Question 6: Non-Degree Education or Training*

Non-degree education or training	Percentage of data	Count of responses
Post-high school intern program (Master's Commission, etc.)	7.53%	11
Leadership training (Chi Alpha, CMN, John Maxwell, Scott Wilson, etc.)	21.92%	32
North Texas District Cohorts	8.90%	13
Global University Berean Ministry Training on your own	22.60%	33
Global University Berean Ministry Training through a District School of Ministry (DSOM)	10.27%	15
University or college without degree	8.90%	13
None	19.86%	29
Total	100%	146

*Note.*  $N = 99$ . Multiple choices were enabled.

**Table 16***Survey Questions 7 and 8: AG Degrees and Non-AG Degrees*

	AG degree		Non-AG degree	
	Percentage of data	Count of responses	Percentage of data	Count of responses
Associate degree	6.73%	7	6.32%	6
Bachelor's degree	41.35%	43	33.68%	32
Master's degree	8.65%	9	10.53%	10
Doctorate degree	0.96%	1	1.05%	1
No	42.31%	44	48.42%	46
Total	100%	104	100%	95

*Note.*  $N = 99$ . Multiple choices were enabled.

**Table 17***Survey Question 9: Places of Education Attended*

SQ9: List the universities, seminaries, colleges, DSOMs, or other places of education or training you have attended.	Percentage of data	Confidence interval	Count of responses
SAGU: Southwestern Assemblies of God University	50.5%	43.3% to 57.7%	50
Other <sup>a</sup>	27.3%	21.3% to 34.1%	27
Chi Alpha	25.3%	19.5% to 32.0%	25
GU: Global University	22.2%	16.8% to 28.8%	22
NTD DSOM: North Texas District School of Ministry	14.1%	9.8% to 19.9%	14
AGTS: Assemblies of God Theological Seminary	4.0%	2.0% to 8.0%	4
CFNI: Christ for the Nations	4.0%	2.0% to 8.0%	4
SUM: SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary	2.0%	0.8% to 5.2%	2
EU: Evangel University	2.0%	0.8% to 5.2%	2
CBC: Central Bible College	0.0%	0.0% to 2.1%	0

*Note.*  $N = 99$ . Multiple choices were enabled.

<sup>a</sup> American Military University, Asbury University, Community College of the Air Force, Dallas Baptist University, Emmanuel College, Fuller Theological Seminary, Heartland School of Ministry, Lamar Institute of Technology, Liberty University-Rawlings, Missouri State University, North Central University, Northwest University, Oaks College, Ohio DSOM, Ozark Bible Institute and College, Southeastern University, Southern Methodist University-Perkins, SoCal School of Ministry, South Texas DSOM, Texas State University, The King's University, Trinity Bible College, University of Phoenix, University of Texas, University of Valley Forge.

### *Value of Ministry Experience*

Most respondents found satisfaction in their current ministry experience and the deployment of their call to ministry (Tables 18–19; Figure 8). Difficult ministry experiences caused many participants to rely more on God, to be a better leader, and follow Christ better, although several considered leaving ministry or finding a less stressful ministry position (Table 20). Almost half of the respondents felt their ministry experiences in the NTD were *Very helpful* in fulfilling their call to ministry (Table 21; Figure 9).

Interviewee A conveyed that being on staff at a larger church with a Christian school gave him opportunities to minister in various ways that “taught me how to minister to the aspect of the whole church.” Interviewee B hoped for a district-sponsored group of worship pastors who would share resources, encouragement, ideas, concepts, and knowledge. A 33-year-old, white male missionary proposed having

a partnership of some sort between SAGU and the district where ministry students are given the chance to go and work for a summer at a local church that maybe is struggling or simply needing the resource of people. I think this could have a 2-fold benefit. SAGU students could see the value of ministry outside of the few mega church [*sic*] models as well as see the impact they can make on a rural community. The district would also benefit as young, new energy works for a couple of months in some of our district churches.

Interviewee A suffered the brunt of poor leadership while serving under a lead pastor who did not handle staff relationships well. Interviewee D almost quit his ministry assignment due to conflict with his lead pastor; however, he was directed to read *The Tale of Three Kings* by Gene Edwards by his mentor, realized he was being an Absalom, and reconciled the relationship with the pastor.

Interviewee B attested that difficult ministry experiences, especially while working with people, cause her to remember why ministers do ministry and God’s confirmation of her call,

which brings a shift into a higher level of ministry. Interviewee K realized, “I was not satisfied until I intentionally began taking steps to replicate or multiply what God had done in me.

Basically, making the transition between being a disciple and making disciples.” After remarking that he felt like quitting many times to pursue a secular job or go full-time in the Army,

Interviewee E reminisced,

The early years of pastoring the church in Dallas was [*sic*] extremely challenging. This is a completely different culture from where I come from. Even though the people I pastor are immigrants who come from the culture where I come from, but when they hit the society here, they start changing as well. I learned to understand cultural differences. I’ve grown more humble and submissive.

Interviewee G confessed,

If I were to look at my ministry experience just as a human and not as someone who follows Jesus, I would not do what I’m doing today at all. It has been so difficult dealing with people. But I think that looking at it through the lens of Jesus and his heart helps me to be recentered and think if this many people have these many issues, what needs to shift in me? And God, what are you going to do through me to help with those things? So, ministry experience has definitely been valuable. I think that’s the on-the-job training. I think it is what has caused me to continue in this call to ministry.

**Table 18***Survey Question 18: Current Ministry Satisfaction*

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance	Count
SQ18: How satisfied are you with your current ministry experience?	1.00	5.00	2.10	0.92	0.85	87

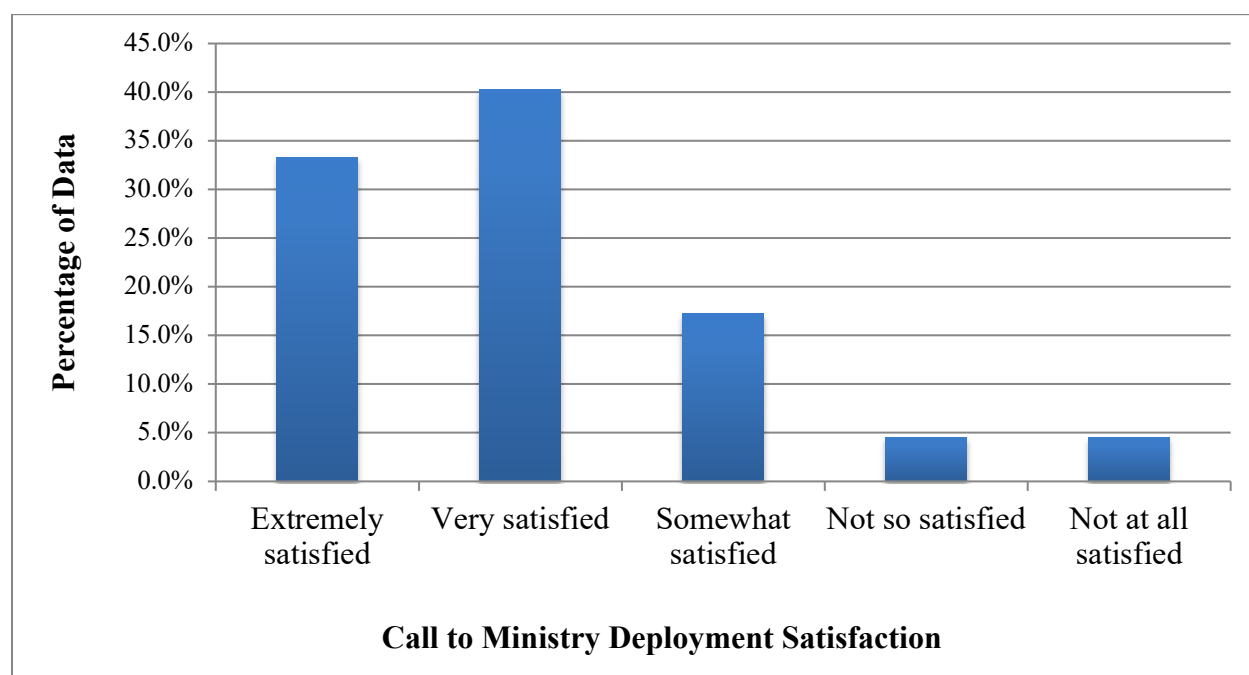
  

Answer	Percentage of data	Count
Extremely satisfied	26.44%	23
Very satisfied	45.98%	40
Somewhat satisfied	20.69%	18
Not so satisfied	4.60%	4
Not at all satisfied	2.30%	2
Total	100%	87

*Note. N = 87.*

**Table 19***Survey Question 19: Satisfaction With Call to Ministry Deployment*

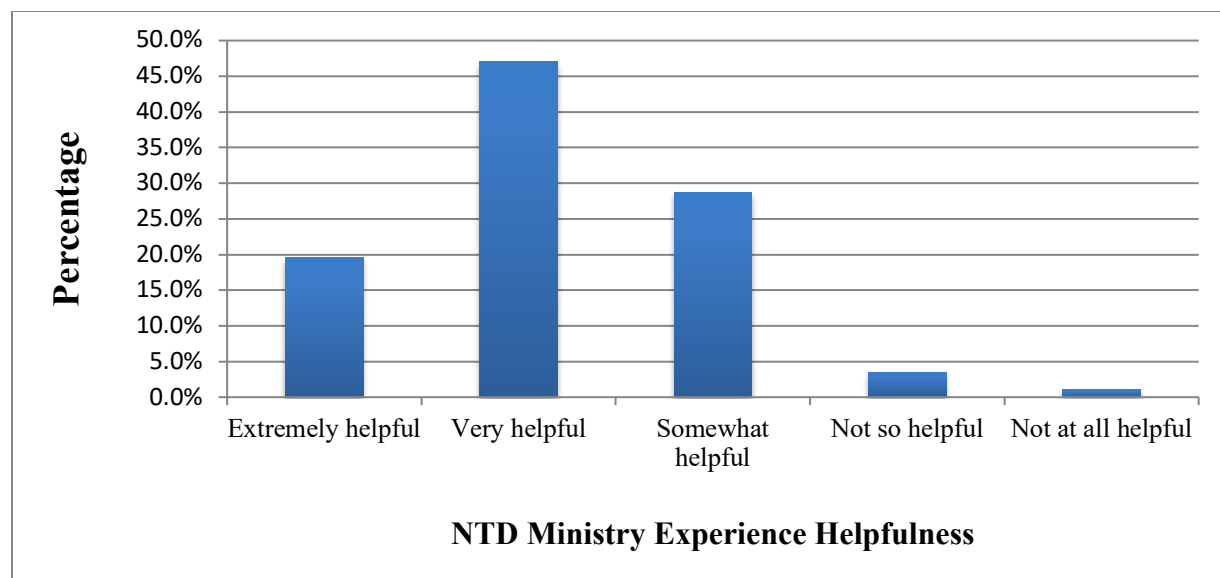
SQ19: How satisfied are you that your call to ministry is being deployed currently?	Count	Percentage of data	Confidence interval (Percent of data)
Extremely satisfied	29	33.33%	26.5% to 40.9%
Very satisfied	35	40.23%	33.0% to 47.9%
Somewhat satisfied	15	17.24%	12.2% to 23.8%
Not so satisfied	4	4.60%	2.3% to 9.0%
Not at all satisfied	4	4.60%	2.3% to 9.0%
Total	87	100%	

*Note. N = 87.***Figure 8***Survey Question 19: Satisfaction With Call to Ministry Deployment*

**Table 20***Survey Question 20: Shaping by Ministry Experiences*

SQ20: How have your ministry experiences shaped you?	Count of responses	Percentage of data
Made me rely on God more	78	20.58%
Made me a better leader	71	18.73%
Made me a better Christ-follower	68	17.94%
Made me more compassionate	60	15.83%
Made me resilient	60	15.83%
Broke me	16	4.22%
Made me hard	14	3.69%
Made me bitter	12	3.17%
Total	379	100%

*Note.*  $N = 87$ . Multiple choices were enabled.

**Figure 9***Survey Question 21: Fulfillment of NTD Ministry Experiences*

*Note.*  $N = 87$ .

**Table 21**

*Survey Question 21: Fulfillment of Ministry Experiences in the NTD*

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance	Count
SQ21: Have your ministry experiences in the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God helped fulfill your call to ministry?	1.00	5.00	2.20	0.83	0.69	87

Answer	Percentage	Count
Extremely helpful	19.54%	17
Very helpful	47.13%	41
Somewhat helpful	28.74%	25
Not so helpful	3.45%	3
Not at all helpful	1.15%	1
Total	100%	87

*Note. N = 87.*

#### **Research Question Four**

**RQ4.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the current or future deployment of their call to ministry, especially in relation to the Assemblies of God?

All ten participants in the interview segment affirmed they planned to remain in ministry and in the Assemblies of God. Three interviewees saw themselves in a different position of

ministry leadership in the future. Two of those were moving to higher ministry leadership positions within their current organizations. One was considering stepping down to a volunteer role in their church.

A statistically significant relationship was found between SQ21: Have your ministry experiences in the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God helped fulfill your call to ministry? and SQ2: Your age when called to ministry (Table 22; Figure 10). The replies of *Not so helpful* and *Not at all helpful* were chosen by respondents called to ministry at the ages of 12 and 16 years and the age of 14 years respectively.

A 26-year-old, white male, volunteer affirmed, “It’s a great fellowship to be a part of! I appreciate all the support from my leaders and opportunities for growth.” A 25-year-old, white male, missionary stated, “I serve under some of the godliest people I’ve ever met!” Interviewee K declared, “Having credentials with the AG is recognizing that I have a lot of very biblically founded and supportive voices...voices of authority and accountability... intentionally and deeply seeking after Jesus.” A 39-year-old, white female, missionary communicated, “We loved our time serving in the NTD. We were privileged to work with the Kids Department for several years. It was a great place to grow, help others grow and gain a community that has become like family.” Interviewee J declared,

I do love the Assemblies of God. I love its theology; I love its mission. I have no desire to ever belong to any other tribe. This is my people. We believe in this move of God. We see the fruit of it, and we see the accountability of it. That’s valuable to us as missionaries. And we have no intention of going anywhere else.

Interviewee A remarked,

I feel that our ELT and Presbytery have made a very welcome home for me and my family here. I get the sense that, as much engagement and advancement as I sought, they would support and cheer for me. That’s a good feeling.

**Table 22**

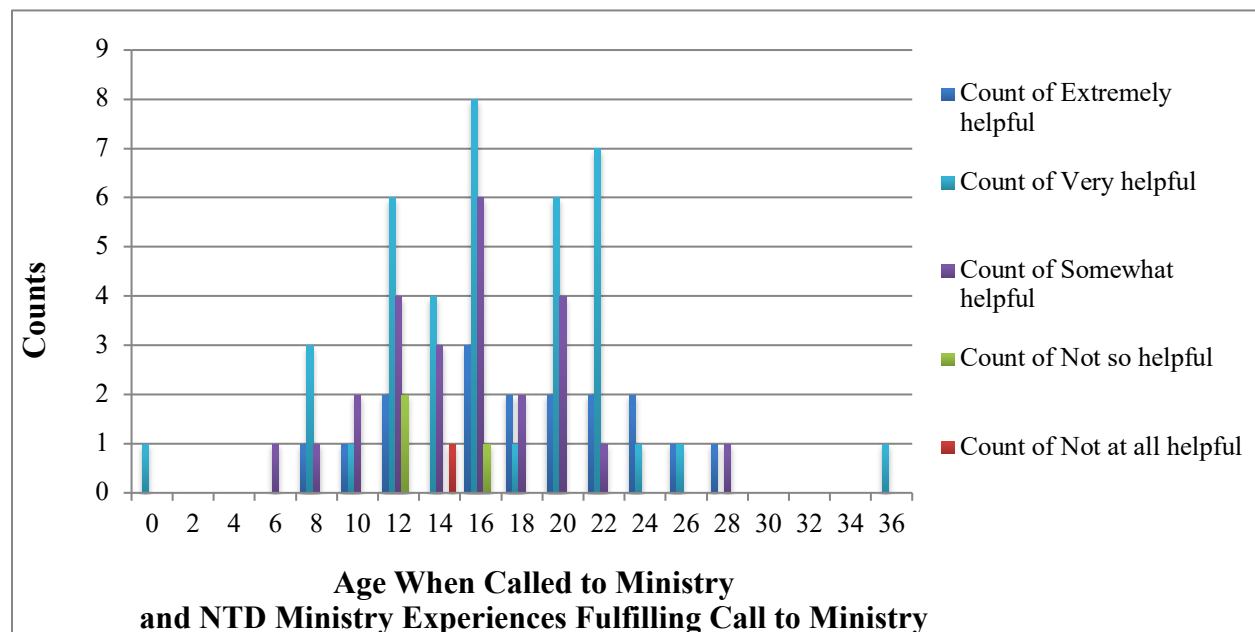
*Relationship of Survey Question 2: Age When Called to Ministry to Survey Question 21: NTD Ministry Experiences Fulfilling Call to Ministry*

NTD ministry experiences	Average age when called	Median age when called	Sample size	Confidence interval of average age when called
Extremely helpful	18.88	19.0	17	16.73 to 21.04
Very helpful	17.25	16.0	40	15.78 to 18.72
Somewhat helpful	15.92	16.0	25	14.50 to 17.34
Not so helpful	13.67	13.0	3	10.92 to 16.41
Not at all helpful	14.00	14.0	1	14.00 to 14.00

*Note.*  $N = 87$ . An ANOVA was performed, resulting in a p-value of 0.084 with an effect size (Cohen's  $f$ ) of 0.224.

**Figure 10**

*Survey Question 2: Age When Called to Ministry and Survey Question 21: NTD Ministry Experiences Fulfilling Call*



Survey Question 22, which dealt with comments or concerns about a minister's experience in the NTD, produced a variety of responses, primarily on building community through intentional relationships, better communication, mentoring opportunities, and diversity inclusiveness. Comments concerning district supportiveness, included desiring more connections with ministerial leadership (37-year-old, white male, lead pastor) and being "grateful for the individuals who serve in leadership over me. I'm thankful for their walk with God and the opportunities that I have to be challenged and serve them" (34-year-old, white male, missionary). A 26-year-old, white male, youth pastor proclaimed, "I love the NTD and AG. If anything, I wish there was [*sic*] more mentorship opportunities and learning from other ministers within the District." A 28-year-old, white male, lead pastor stated, "I just love the direction that we are headed in. I'm glad that there is a push for the under 40's [*sic*] to train, mentor, and guide." A 34-year-old, Hispanic male, staff pastor affirmed,

I like the direction it is going. I believe Dr. Claunch and the team are shepherding and equipping our ministry leaders. I see a new level of intentionality. I think this is huge in the midst of the pandemic that wants to create further isolation and disconnect. Forming community and mentorship is essential in this hour.

A 29-year-old, white male, missionary/staff pastor declared,

What I look for in my mentor, I also look for in the North Texas leadership. Inspiration. I know there is [*sic*] logistics and business to be ran [*sic*]. But when I think of DuBose and Claunch, I think of their walk with God first. I ask myself, are they leaders I would follow into war?

Two of the 30 female participants wrote of difficulty in fulfilling their call to ministry due to gender. One noted "just being a single, female can leave a feeling of being an outsider. But what relationships I have developed, I am extremely grateful for them" (36-year-old, white female, missionary). One identified a struggle "to connect with others as a minority woman minister" who did not grow up in the AG (30-year-old, Hispanic female, missionary). Another woman minister stated, "I love what the network of women ministers are [*sic*] doing with the

regional book studies/small groups. And I had a mentor through Chi Alpha” (30-year-old, white female, missionary). A female missionary affirmed being “grateful for a district that encourages and strengthens the call of God in your life by trusting you to minister (34-year-old, white female, staff pastor/missionary). Interviewee B asserted the Assemblies of God “do support women in ministry. I feel very well supported, very accountable. I love the relationships and opportunities that we get within the Assemblies with other people that have the same heart mentality.”

Comments on diversity and inclusiveness in the NTD included:

1. There is still a glass ceiling for women and minorities. (39-year-old, white female, educator).
2. I am grateful for the time and effort our district puts into equipping ministers, I wish there were more opportunities for ladies and minorities to be represented in public view. Their example is an encouragement to the rest of us. (27-year-old, white female, missionary)
3. I am concerned about the numbers and inclusiveness we are majoring on right now. I know the intent is well-meaning, but if our goal is quantity for sake of keeping the movement going then the quality will suffer and that could at a time down the road hurt quantity as well. Do we not believe that God will lead us ministers to get the right people voted on, regardless of gender or ethnicity? (39-year-old, white male, lead pastor)
4. I am concerned with U40 ministers that I have seen take leading roles. I have noticed an obsession with position, emotional immaturity, and lack of business mindedness [*sic*] that hinders the flow of anointing within local churches and causes one to poorly steward the long-term spiritual needs of God’s people. (30-year-old, Hispanic male, volunteer)
5. I wish there was more diversity. I’m tired of hearing from the same opinions. A lot that goes on seems to be catered to middle aged [*sic*] and older pastors. What about the young ministers who are figuring things out and may not be a [*sic*] in a pastoral position? (22-year-old, white male, sales)
6. This emphasis on U40 ministers. I could write multiple essays on the short-sightedness of this initiative and the seemingly [*sic*] lack of historical perspective. When pressed, NTD leadership on this initiative does not have the information necessary to judge whether or not this is a singular concern or an event that occurs with each generation. My suspicion is that the concern about "handing off the baton" has happened with every generation since the beginning of time. This focus on Millennials [*sic*] in particular is only going to recreate the problem by making Gen Z feel isolated and "unmarketed to" just as my

generation is saying. We are saying so because previously the church catered to Gen X, and before them Boomers, and on and on it goes. (38-year-old, unknown race, male, missionary)

7. I hope that we will see more gender and racial diversity at all levels of ministry and leadership in the NTD. Not simply for wokeness' sake, but to better reflect the body of Christ and more effectively advance the Kingdom of God in our district. There are ways that we operate and lead that are excluding those people, and I'd love to see that change over time. I think the first step in that direction is to invite those people in the room in the same ways the U40 has been invited. If they are invited in, we need to truly listen to them and begin to implement things they suggest. Our fellowship is at risk of being far less effective at reaching the next generation, if we don't do this. (36-year-old, white male, missionary)

### **Research Question Five**

**RQ5.** How do the variables of age, gender, call to ministry, education, ministry experience, and spiritual parents or mentors relate to the emerging leader's description of the discovery, development, and deployment of their call to ministry?

Emergent themes compiled from the survey and interview data (Table 23) revealed that no new or divergent themes arose from the interviews. Minor variations occurred in the details shared about the themes. The greatest difference between the surveys and interviews in thematic detail came in the variable of spiritual mentoring or parenting when all the interviewees had one or more spiritual parents or mentors speaking into their lives, while 38% of survey respondents could not name one.

The current age of the respondent had little effect on the participant's call to ministry fulfillment, although real or perceived issues concerning the call to ministry often were met with a wider pendulum swing of emotion and sense of injustice by those at a younger current age. Gender did not have any effect on the participant's call to ministry, with females and males both being called and identifying a comparable level of difficulties and fulfillment in their call to ministry in their comments. Age was blamed by some males for negative ministry experiences,

but not by females. Gender was blamed by some females for negative ministry experiences, but not by males.

The setting where an individual was called and how the participant was called did not adversely affect the fulfillment of their call to ministry. However, a statistically significant relationship between an individual's call to ministry being fulfilled and the age at which the individual was called was found (Table 24). Also, a statistically significant relationship between the individual's satisfaction with the current deployment of their call to ministry and the age at which they experienced the call to ministry was noted (Tables 25, 26). Dissatisfaction with ministry fulfillment or deployment was greatest among those who were younger when called to the ministry.

More education, training, and experience in practical ministry matters were identified by many individuals as necessary elements for the development and deployment of their call to ministry. Participants had varying opinions on how well their educational institutions equipped them to fulfill their call to ministry, with all institutions being noted as doing *Extremely well* or *Very well* (Table 27). Negative ministry experiences included difficult church situations and misunderstandings with senior ministry leaders who had "formed a leadership style that is unappeasable for a young minister with little experience or coaching" (30-year-old, white male, staff pastor). The majority expressed a desire to have greater "experience and a place to practice...a place where you can make mistakes and be trained" (30-year-old, Hispanic male, pastor).

Spiritual parenting was named as "probably one of the most important aspects of developing a call, but probably, maybe, not the most obtained" (Interviewee A). This pastor continued, "I would not be where I am, and I would not be pursuing what I'm pursuing, if it

hadn't been for the influence of someone who came in and acted as a spiritual parent in my life.” Counseling from a mentor or spiritual parent that brought a participant through difficult family circumstances, including the sickness and death of a family member, was mentioned by several. Encouragement and modeling of ministry leadership by spiritual parents and mentors figured into many comments, especially in dealing with criticism and in how to have hard conversations. The need for “a strong leader and voice in my life to help coach, direct, and guide me” (39-year-old, white female, staff pastor) was commonly voiced in various ways by participants.

In response to Survey Question 5 concerning what could make the fulfillment of their ministry call better, several participants cited more self-discipline, personal leadership growth, and intentional mentorship in ministry settings. Multiple respondents desired more evident fruit from their ministry efforts, especially in the evangelism of the lost and the discipleship of believers. More time and greater opportunities for practical experience in ministry were referenced as facets that could bring greater fulfillment to the minister's calling. Financial constrictions due to educational debt or low-paying ministerial positions were listed as obstacles for the respondent's call to ministry being fulfilled. One participant (34-year-old, white female, staff pastor) wrote,

“Anytime I feel it [the call to ministry] “not being fulfilled,” it's normally because I am thinking of myself and not God. If I turn my gaze back on Jesus and remember He is the one I am doing it for anyway, I find my fulfillment in Him. Not in my works.”

**Table 23***Emerging Themes in Surveys and Interviews*

Variables	Themes in Surveys	Themes in Interviews
Age	The majority did not consider age a problem.	The majority did not consider age a problem.
	A temporary hindrance in obtaining ministerial positions	A perceived obstacle to overcome in networking with older ministers
Gender	Males and most females did not see gender as a problem.	Males and three-quarter of females did not see gender as a problem.
	Being female perceived as limiting connections with other AG ministers	Cultural settings contributed to acceptance or rejection by non-AG.
Race	Not a problem for fulfilling ministerial calling	Not a problem for fulfilling ministerial calling
	Would like more diversity in AG	Would like continued growth in diversity in AG
Call to ministry	Hearing or knowing a calling from God	Hearing or knowing a calling from God
	In a service at camp or church	In a service at camp or church
	Intentional preaching on the call to ministry	Intentional preaching on the call to ministry
	A process	A lifelong process
	Being fulfilled	Being fulfilled

Variables	Themes in Surveys	Themes in Interviews
Education and training	<p>More practical training in staff relationships, volunteers, budgeting, and family issues</p> <p>Ministry internships in more varied settings</p> <p>Financial debt from education</p>	<p>More practical training in staff relationships, volunteers, budgeting, and family issues</p> <p>More practical application in institutional programs</p> <p>Need for ministers to attain more advanced education or ongoing continuing education</p>
Ministry experience	<p>All experienced positive and negative ministry experiences.</p> <p>Lack of ministerial experience hindering first-time hires</p> <p>Lack of ministerial experience hindering missionary fundraising</p> <p>Need for balance in ministry and family life</p>	<p>All experienced positive and negative ministry experiences.</p> <p>Lack of ministerial experience hindering missionary fundraising</p> <p>Need for balance in ministry and family life</p>
Spiritual parents or mentors	<p>The majority desire a spiritual parent or mentor.</p> <p>Only 62% have a spiritual parent or mentor.</p> <p>The overarching need for guidance, support, coaching, and direction from a strong, experienced leader</p>	<p>All desire a spiritual parent or mentor.</p> <p>All named at least one spiritual parent or mentor.</p> <p>The desire for spiritual parents or mentors for specific situations: ministerial, financial, marital, fundraising</p>

**Table 24**

*Survey Question 4: Call to Ministry Fulfillment and Survey Question 2: Age When Called to Ministry*

Fulfillment of call to ministry	Average age when called	Median age when called	Sample size	Confidence interval of average age when called	Standard deviation age when called
Extremely fulfilled	17.93	18.0	42	16.55 to 19.30	6.07
Very fulfilled	17.86	17.0	28	16.46 to 19.26	4.99
Somewhat fulfilled	15.05	15.0	19	13.41 to 16.70	4.77
Not at all fulfilled	18.00	18.0	1	18.00 to 18.00	NaN

*Note.*  $N = 90$ . An ANOVA was performed, resulting in a p-value of 0.098 with a medium effect size (Cohen's  $f$ ) of 0.217.

**Table 25**

*Survey Question 2: Age When Called to Ministry and Survey Question 19: Satisfaction of Current Ministry Deployment*

Group	Average	Median	Sum	Sample size	Confidence interval of average	Standard deviation
Extremely satisfied	18.96	19.0	531	28	17.42 to 20.51	5.51
Very satisfied	15.71	16.0	550	35	14.34 to 17.09	5.51
Somewhat satisfied	17.13	16.0	257	15	14.40 to 19.87	6.96
Not so satisfied	15.50	15.5	62	4	11.77 to 19.23	3.87
Not at all satisfied	16.00	16.5	64	4	12.23 to 19.77	3.92

*Note.*  $N = 86$ . An ANOVA was performed, resulting in a p-value of 0.303 with a medium effect size (Cohen's  $f$ ) of 0.261.

**Table 26**

*Survey Question 2: Age When Called to Ministry and Survey Question 19: Satisfaction of Current Ministry Deployment*

Group 1	Group 2	Difference in averages (1-2)	Confidence interval of difference	P-Value	Effect size (Cohen's d)
Extremely satisfied	Very satisfied	3.25	-0.01 to 6.51	0.15	0.60
Extremely satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	1.83	-3.16 to 6.82	0.90	0.31
Extremely satisfied	Not at all satisfied	2.96	-3.51 to 9.43	0.68	0.57
Extremely satisfied	Not so satisfied	3.46	-2.94 to 9.86	0.57	0.67
Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	1.42	-3.46 to 6.30	0.90	0.24
Not at all satisfied	Very satisfied	0.29	-6.18 to 6.76	0.90	0.05
Not so satisfied	Very satisfied	-0.21	-6.61 to 6.18	0.90	0.04
Not at all satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	-1.13	-8.07 to 5.81	0.90	0.18
Not so satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	-1.63	-8.52 to 5.25	0.90	0.26
Not at all satisfied	Not so satisfied	0.50	-7.17 to 8.17	0.90	0.15

*Note.*  $N = 86$ . A Games-Howell pairwise test was performed.

**Table 27**

*Survey Question 9: Schools Attended and Survey Question 10: How Well Schools Equipped Participant to Fulfill Call to Ministry*

SQ9: Universities, seminaries, colleges, DSOMs, and other education and training attended	SQ10: How well do you feel your education and training has equipped you to fulfill your call to ministry			
	Extremely well	Very well	Somewhat well	Not so well
AGTS: Assemblies of God Theological Seminary	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%
SAGU: Southwestern Assemblies of God University	26.0%	42.0%	26.0%	6.0%
CFNI: Christ for the Nations	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
SUM: SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%
EU: Evangel University	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
GU: Global University	22.7%	50.0%	22.7%	4.5%
NTD DSOM: North Texas District School of Ministry	35.7%	50.0%	7.1%	7.1%
XA: Chi Alpha	36.0%	44.0%	16.0%	4.0%
Other	18.5%	55.6%	25.9%	0.0%

*Note.*  $N = 93$ .

### **Evaluation of the Research Design**

The strengths of the research design include the ability to hear the unvarnished voices of under 40 emerging ministry leaders through Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology.

The use of full transcripts for coding, without the researcher or literature assigning some

contextualization or meaning first, allowed unbiased words and phrases to be evaluated. The study's interview segment brought a measure of understanding of each interviewee's life experiences, especially as they pertained to ministry. This method of research strongly matched the researcher's hope for the emerging ministry leaders' voices to be heard in a straightforward manner.

The similarity of topic questioning seemed to enable an easy flow of thought for the participants in both instruments. The choice to include text boxes, in what could have been a closed-ended survey, yielded a more detailed understanding of the whole sample's thoughts and experiences. The use of Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>) to guide the survey construction, distribute the surveys in an online browser and mobile-friendly platform, and analyze the data brought greater credibility and accessibility to the instrument.

The number of open-ended questions using text entry boxes in the survey presented a potential weakness in the research design. Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>) recommends less than three text boxes for the best completion of a survey. Three of this survey's text boxes fulfilled IRB requirements, leaving seven text boxes in the questions. Although the respondent was allowed to skip any question after signing the consent form (Appendix F) and answering the first question, some stopped at the first text box and did not proceed further.

Another potential weakness of the survey design was the predicted duration of 14.7 minutes for survey completion by Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>), which exceeded their goal of nine minutes. In test runs, the researcher found the survey completion to range from six to 10 minutes. The consent form for the survey gave the predicted duration as 10 minutes. The shortest 100% completion time by a participant was four minutes.

Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>) marked the first page of the survey instrument as difficult to read with complex words, necessitating too much effort for the participant. The problem cited was the required IRB consent form (Appendix F). Having a means to comply with IRB requirements without frightening off potential participants might bring more survey completions.

The survey could have been shortened by having fewer open-ended questions or fewer variables overall. Including a progress bar indicating the percentage of completion might have motivated participants to continue. Finding a means to convey necessary consent information without hindering the completion of the instrument could benefit future researchers. Utilizing more in-depth aspects of Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>) to build correlating survey questions might enable easier statistical testing of variables.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

### Overview

Chapters One through Four of this dissertation respectively explored the problem, the background, the literature and its gap, and the analysis of the research findings concerning the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders who are under 40 years of age and credentialed ministers with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God. Chapter Five contains the following sections: Research Purpose; Research Questions; Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications; Research Limitations; Further Research; and Summary. Chapter Five presents the researcher's recommendations drawn from the conclusions.

### Research Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-method phenomenological study was to explore and better understand the nature of the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders who are credentialed ministers with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God and under 40 years of age at the time of the study. *A call to ministry* was broadly defined as “a general call of some believers to ministry leadership” (Iorg, 2008, p. 19). The theory guiding the qualitative portion of this study was transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) as it finds meaning in the lived experiences of the research participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided this mixed-method transcendental phenomenological study:

**RQ1.** What are the similarities and differences of significant demographic characteristics (age, gender, call to ministry, education and training, ministry experience, and spiritual parents

or mentors) among emerging leaders who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age?

**RQ2.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the discovery of their call to ministry?

**RQ3.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the value of spiritual parenting or mentoring, education and training, and ministry experience in the development of their call to ministry?

**RQ4.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the current or future deployment of their call to ministry, especially in relation to the Assemblies of God?

**RQ5.** How do the variables of age, gender, call to ministry, education, ministry experience, and spiritual parents or mentors relate to the emerging leader's description of the discovery, development, and deployment of their call to ministry?

### **Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications**

A summary of the study findings regarding each research question concisely answers and presents conclusions to each of the study's research questions. The relationship of the study findings to Chapter Two's theological, theoretical, and empirical literature review is discussed. Implications and applications of the study's conclusions are given.

### **Research Conclusions**

**RQ1.** What are the similarities and differences of significant demographic characteristics (age, gender, call to ministry, education and training, ministry experience, and spiritual parents or mentors) among emerging leaders who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age?

The research findings showed some similarities and some differences in significant demographic characteristics among the study's participants. Respondents were similar in being over four-fifths white, almost two-thirds male, called to ministry, educated to the level of attaining an AG ministerial credential, with both positive and negative ministry experiences. Respondents were dissimilar when considering that 62.37% had a spiritual parent or mentor and

the other 37.63% did not, that half had an earned degree from a university or college, and that they spanned the twenties and thirties in age.

The results of age, gender, race, and education fit the historical narrative and general ministerial statistics of the Assemblies of God. The lack of a spiritual parent or mentor for 37.63% of the participants, while not surprising, was disturbing, as every minister is specifically encouraged through credentialing materials and interviews to have a mentor in ongoing practice.

**RQ2.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the discovery of their call to ministry?

The research findings demonstrated the significance of camp and church services in an individual's response to the call to ministry. Study participants identified sensing God, knowing or feeling a call to ministry, and being in prayer when called. While someone receiving the call to ministry leadership was noted at almost age, a majority of those called were teenagers, especially between the ages of 16 and 17 years.

**RQ3.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the value of spiritual parenting or mentoring, education and training, and ministry experience in the development of their call to ministry?

The research findings exposed an overwhelming desire by the AG emerging ministry leader to have a spiritual parent or mentor in their life, yet 38% of the respondents did not have that supportive relationship. Many participants recognized a personal need for more intentional education and training in practical ministry. Most ministry experiences caused the respondents to rely more on God, with some becoming better leaders and Christ-followers, while some respondents reported being hardened, bitter, or broken.

**RQ4.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the current or future deployment of their call to ministry, especially in relation to the Assemblies of God?

Almost three-quarters of the emerging ministry leaders responding to the survey were extremely or very satisfied with their current ministry experience and felt their call to ministry was being extremely or very fulfilled. The same number cited the NTD as being extremely or very helpful in the fulfillment of their ministry call. Many emerging ministry leaders hoped for more ministry opportunities, to obtain a full-time ministry position rather than part-time, to have more financial resources and stability, and to receive support and mentoring from more experienced ministers. Regarding the participant's experience in the NTD, a hope for intentional relationships, better communication, mentoring, and diversity inclusiveness were expressed.

**RQ5.** How do the variables of age, gender, call to ministry, education, ministry experience, and spiritual parents or mentors relate to the emerging leader's description of the discovery, development, and deployment of their call to ministry?

Younger participants reported more issues with the fulfillment of their call to ministry, although all ages reported their call to ministry being fulfilled. Whether male or female, participants were called to ministry and faced negative and positive ministry situations. Some women reported feeling like outsiders without the same ability to make connections with other ministers as they perceived in their male counterparts. Likewise, the setting and means of the participant's call to ministry did not influence the deployment or fulfillment of their call to ministry. The age at which a participant experienced a call to ministry was significant in whether they sensed their call being satisfactorily deployed and fulfilled. Respondents desired education, training, and ministry experience in practical matters, as well as spiritual parenting or mentoring.

## **Theological Implications**

The study began with a theological framework supporting a Christian worldview. Under this premise, a call to ministry; spiritual parenting, mentoring, and discipling; and education and training were aligned with theological concepts in Chapter Two. Each of these topics brought implications to the study of the lived experiences of the AG emerging ministry leader.

### ***Call to Ministry***

The study's findings emphasized the necessity for emerging ministry leaders to have a knowing sense of their call to ministry as a foundation stone. While not everyone needed a specific destination or people group to enact their call, the study showed that the more certain a person was of their call, the stronger they were in adversity and more determined they were to complete their ministry journey well. This implies that the emerging ministry leader should solidify their understanding and acknowledgment of their call to ministry through prayer and Scripture that continues throughout their lifetime.

### ***Education or Training***

Concerning education, the study affirms that the quest for knowledge and wisdom extends throughout a lifetime. The Teacher in Ecclesiastes searched for understanding and explored every aspect of life through wisdom (1:12), yet found his accumulated knowledge to be meaningless (1:2; 12:8). Some aspects of the emerging ministry leader's education and training were declared not sufficient for their real-world ministry setting. Practical training and multiple internships gained importance for the application of the minister's theological training. The study exhibited the need for educational institutions to teach theology and doctrine in great depth with applied leadership and administrative studies addressing common organizational issues.

### ***Spiritual Parenting, Mentoring, and Discipling***

Scripture gives examples of older, more experienced leaders training younger, less experienced leaders (Williams, 2005, pp. 181–186). The implications derived from this study parallel biblical examples. As Barnabas sought out Saul to encourage him into a fuller ministry (Acts 9:27–28), the spiritual parent should actively seek out a spiritual son or daughter to encourage in ministry leadership. Today’s emerging ministry leaders desire guidance and support as they step into areas of ministry and life that they have not yet encountered or have failed to master. While some study participants thought that the younger emerging leader should wait to be approached by the more experienced mentor, Joshua’s example of pursuing God (Exodus 33:11) and following Moses closely (Williams, 2005, pp. 183) teaches that both approaches have merit. The mentor should seek out and recognize the mentee, and the mentee should seek out and recognize the mentor. This understanding confirms the Scriptural basis for spiritual parenting and mentoring, while reinforcing its need today.

### ***Ministry Experience***

Jesus with his disciples modeled an apprenticeship style, hands-on mentoring. The experiences needed in ministry settings to grow an emerging leader’s call to ministry could and should mirror the same type of biblical discipleship. The study strongly implies the need for ingrained team-based and one-on-one ministry applications, as seen in Scripture. Rather than an internship that spends a few weeks in a model ministry setting, the AG emerging ministry leader should find themselves in a continuous practice of ministry in multiple, not-so-perfect settings.

### ***Theoretical Implications***

Chapter Two presented an understanding of the theoretical framework guiding the research. This study presented the value of defining a theory of Christian ministry leadership; of

actively mentoring, discipling, and providing spiritual parenting; and of utilizing the qualities of transcendental phenomenology in relationships.

### ***A Christian Leadership Theory***

The study found the outworking of the Christian leadership theory to be a solid model for the study of Christian ministerial leadership. Without a defined biblical worldview that encompassed the whole of the Bible and captured leadership theory that aligned with Scripture, the study could have faltered. The implementation of seeking God's kingdom and righteousness to present everyone mature in Christ should motivate and guide the emerging ministry leader and the more experienced spiritual parent or mentor.

### ***Spiritual Parenting, Mentoring, and Discipling***

Just as the emerging adult works through developmental phases seeking establishment in an adult world (Arnett et al., 2011, p.151), the study found emerging ministry leaders in various stages of transition and stability. Some were looking for identity; others were seeking a different job, as they grew into their calling, or their calling grew. The factors of school debt, family life, homeownership, childcare, and other first-time experiences made the life of the minister in their twenties less settled than the minister in their thirties. This implies that the church and educational organizations must remember the potential instability of the emerging adult, as they train up ministry leaders.

The Assemblies of God churches and educational institutions should consciously provide a framework for exploring ministry in various areas, revealing an integral foundation for serving and fulfilling obligations to others, as the individual examines "who am I" (Arnett, 2014). Providing spiritual parents or mentors to teach and train a particular skill, such as finances or conflict management, or to bring focused guidance to a cohort of emerging ministers could

solidify an emerging leader's ministry experience and wisdom. As one participant observed, the practical experience and training lacking in their formal education were met, when they worked under an experienced lead pastor who was willing to invest in the less experienced emerging minister (Interviewee D).

### **Empirical Implications**

Practical implications have been observed, which speak to important ways to influence, encourage, and train emerging ministry leaders.

#### ***Call to Ministry***

Learning about the call to ministry must go beyond passionate preaching in a church service to in-depth teaching. The study implies the need for individuals to have a solid framework of Christ-like ethics and purpose. Churches should teach on the call to minister in the general and specific sense, engendering a greater understanding of ministry in the body of Christ and to the body of Christ.

#### ***Education or Training***

Ministerial education and training for credentialing in the Assemblies of God has a structured path. Several respondents commented that education can be expensive, becoming a financial burden to the minister. Affordable education applicable for ministerial credentials has been provided through the Berean School of the Bible (Global University, 2020). Advising potential ministers of the cost and applicability of education or training is a part of the NTD's credentialing process. However, education choices leading to ministerial credentialing may need to be communicated earlier to students who indicate a response to a call to ministry, particularly at NTD camps and conferences.

### ***Spiritual Parenting, Mentoring, and Discipling***

Transcendental phenomenology espouses the active listening of another's story and opinions, allowing individuals to be heard without a forced preconception of their intent and meaning. Both physical children and spiritual children need the listening ear and teaching voice of a godly parent who leads them to God. This study revealed the need for a spiritual parent listening and encouraging the emerging ministry leader, which should cause ministry organizations like the Assemblies of God to implement stronger mentoring and discipleship for their ministers. One study respondent shared that, while he was thankful to have a mentor in his life, the mentor only wanted to tell stories of his former glory days in ministry, without taking the time to listen to the younger minister's own experiences and suggestions.

### ***Ministry Experience***

Due to encountering negative ministry experiences, emerging ministry leaders indicated in the research the need for practical training in conflict resolution, organizational management, budgeting and other financial strategies, and family/work balance. The participants also revealed a strong need for broader training in multiple church settings, such as rural, urban, suburban, traditional, and contemporary. Several participants advanced the premise that negative ministry experiences can be mitigated through proactive education and supportive colleagues.

Universities and colleges should evaluate whether they fail to provide the necessary practical hands-on training for their ministerial students. Only hosting educational ministry internships in a large church with multiple staff and deep finances sets the emerging minister up for failure, when they transition to a very different reality upon graduation.

## **Application**

The growth of emerging ministry leaders can be greatly helped by godly spiritual parenting or hindered by the lack thereof. The education and training received may equip the minister in theoretical and practical ways, start the search for more understanding, or contribute to ongoing difficulties. Experiences attached to ministry, whether positive, neutral, or negative in nature, contribute to the overall health and mindset of the emerging ministry leader.

### ***Recommendations for Emerging Ministry Leaders***

Emerging ministry leaders must proactively seek out missing components which hinder the development and deployment of their ministry call. The perceived or real need may not be readily recognized by others. Yet, a diligent pursuit by the emerging ministry leader to fulfill those absent factors may stimulate growth and purpose in ministry.

Scripture points to the reality of doing life with one another. The symbiotic relationship found in mutual mentoring through spiritual parenting can be the exponential boost needed to flourish in a call to ministry, as each “motivate(s) one another to acts of love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24). Expecting a spiritual parent or mentor to approach an emerging leader and offer their services may lead to an eternal wait. Intentionally seeking out and building relationships with those ministers the emerging leader wishes to emulate will more likely result in a mentoring or spiritual parenting relationship.

Every minister should continue growing in knowledge and wisdom through intentional study. While education and training may present a financial burden to the emerging ministry leader, the NTD and the AG offer multiple ways to learn. Through NTD cohorts, DSOM, conferences, and other AG resources for ministers and churches, every minister in the district can find affordable means to learn and grow with others. While many credentialed ministers have

earned degrees from universities and colleges, the AG does not require a degree to hold ministerial credentials but offers an inexpensive diploma path through Berean School of the Bible (Global University, 2020) for required ministerial education and training. When continuing education, the minister must fully understand the financial and time constraints of acquiring that education.

Ministry experiences vary by congregation and community. While a particular setting may define most of a minister's life, observing and understanding those of like-minded faith who serve in diverse communities has value. The minister can grow in grace and understanding, and hopefully avoid someone else's pitfall, by intentionally examining areas where personal ministry experience is lacking and educating themselves toward godly practice.

### ***Recommendations for Leading Emerging Ministry Leaders***

Authority figures leading emerging ministry leaders would be wise to study and adopt the open-ended questioning and listening paradigm of transcendental phenomenology, as it parallels the basic concepts of effective Christian counseling ministry (Foster, 2005). When emerging leaders complain that an older generation does not hear them correctly or will not listen, the design of Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology might give insight into how to learn the speaker's real meaning about a problem or situation, through being "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry" (James 1:19). Being willing and able to hear a person's story without attaching a preconceived meaning could lead to more open communication and favorable relationships between generations.

Emerging ministry leaders overwhelmingly cry out for the voice and guidance of a spiritual parent. This aspect of fathering and mothering a generation of leaders must not be lost, but consciously and intentionally pursued. The consequences of dropping the baton in this relay

race of ministry leadership will not only be catastrophic to organizational health in the church, but also to theological understanding, doctrinal purity, and practical, godly living. With almost every participant in this study desiring a spiritual mentor or parent, yet 38% of them without that supportive relationship, the challenge is upon the older minister to be intentionally parenting an emerging ministry leader. Adhering to the caution of imparting only foundational, biblical practice and core spiritual disciplines, rather than legalistic or liberal cultural expectations, will result in healthy spiritual children who imitate Jesus above the spiritual parent. A tribe of godly ministry leaders, raised by a wise father or mother in the Lord and brought forth through the power of the Holy Spirit, should be expected as good fruit bringing glory to God (John 15:8).

Just as a good natural parent would invest in their children, the spiritual parent should look for opportunities to invest in their spiritual children. Taking a younger minister along for hospital or prison visitation, wedding rehearsals and ceremonies, or meeting with families and conducting funeral services would give practical ministry experience. Walking with an emerging ministry leader through church conflict, family sickness, financial issues, and other stressors of ministerial experience will grow both the older and younger minister.

### **Research Limitations**

Every study encounters limitations to the research. These uncontrollable weaknesses may arise in the research design, the sample, or the analysis of the findings. Limitations become important threats to the internal and external validity of the research. This section discusses the limitations confronted in this study and their potential impact on the research.

This study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, which became a limitation of this study. The uncertainty and stress upon ministers during this time amplified their lack of preparation through education and training, pinpointed their need for a mentoring voice to guide,

and multiplied their felt perception of ministry experiences, whether positive or negative. This climate affected some of the participant's attitudes, mental health, and ministry experiences, which were reflected in some survey and interview comments. The increased amount of time ministers spent working online may have contributed to ministers being overwhelmed, resulting in apathy or neglect of responding to the online survey (G. Bredfeldt, personal communication, September 3, 2021).

### **Further Research**

Recommendations by this researcher for additional research seek to further increase knowledge and understanding concerning the discovery, development, and deployment of the call to ministry. Continued research into the factors of spiritual parenting and mentoring, education and training, and ministry experience across generations may multiple the effectiveness of an individual's call to ministry, bringing a greater corporate expression to Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20) and Great Commandments (Matthew 22:37–39). Further research recommendations are:

1. The current study used one geographical district, the North Texas District Council, out of the 66 geographical and language districts in the Assemblies of God, USA, resulting in a relatively small sample size. Further research could expand to include multiple districts or regions.
2. Replication of this study in the NTD or other districts could verify the significance of different variables and relationships of variables in a wider population.
3. Replication of this study with an older generation of AG ministers could extend the range of understanding the call of ministry and its' discovery, development, and deployment.
4. Pilot studies implementing constructive ideas and insights gained from the current study's participants could address the real or perceived lack in spiritual parenting or mentoring, education and training, and/or ministry experience.
5. This study did not explore all variables of the population regarding their discovery, development, and deployment of their ministry call. Research utilizing the variables of the minister's spiritual disciplines, family life versus work balance, perceived

stress, physical health, and mental health, as well as other factors, could bring a depth of understanding to the research.

### **Summary**

This transcendental phenomenological study explored the under 40-year-old emerging ministry leader holding Assemblies of God credentials in the North Texas District Council. The study participants' discovery, development, and deployment of their call to ministry were examined through a qualitative survey comprised of closed-ended and open-ended questions and transcendental phenomenological interviews. The study's variables of spiritual parenting or mentoring, education and training, and ministry experience were drawn from Scripture and the literature review as being integral to finding fulfillment of the call to ministry.

Defining what it means to be called to ministry must be thoughtfully and consistently presented to Christian believers. The NTD and its churches must provide intentional teaching on the general and specific call to ministry to help potential ministers realize their call. Ministers must solidify their understanding and acknowledgment of their call to ministry through prayer and Scripture throughout their life.

Ministers crave an ability to handle what life throws at them. The minister's mindset must not be captured by "empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world" (Colossians 2:8) for they produce murky judgments and conflicted lives. Rather, the ministry leader must find their completeness in Christ (Colossians 2:10). The onus rests upon each minister to intentionally pursue God, aligning with truth (John 4:24; 8:32; 14:6) through Christian spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, Bible study, and similar means of

Spiritual parenting and mentoring provides guidance and encouragement to engage and conquer the practical aspects of ministerial life, whether in the church, the marketplace, or the

home. Ministers must have a spiritual parent or mentor's voice at each stage of their life. The NTD must provide opportunities to build spiritual parenting and mentoring relationships for their ministers.

Education and training within Assemblies of God institutions must better prepare emerging leaders for ministry through the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical application. Ministers must pursue continuing education in deficit areas. The NTD must offer and encourage practical continuing education for its ministers.

Ministers must have support and encouragement as they experience the breadth of ministry and life situations. Assemblies of God districts and educational institutions can and must better convey to the emerging AG ministry leader how to anticipate and negotiate the ups and downs of negative and positive ministry experiences.

For the mission of the church to advance, emerging leaders who have been called to ministry must be intentionally developed, deployed, and retained. Spiritual fathers and mothers, arising in the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God, must "prophetically call out the greatness in young people with ministry gifts and then walk with them, resourcing and encouraging them as if they are the only hope for our future" (Davidson, 2017, July 12). Finally, emerging ministry leaders must not "let anyone think less of [them] because they are young, [but] be an example to all believers in what [they] say, in the way [they] live, in [their] love, [their] faith, and [their] purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 4, 2021

Janet Faggart  
Gary Bredfeldt

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-1064 Discovering, Developing, and Deploying Emerging Ministry Leaders in the Assemblies of God

Dear Janet Faggart, Gary Bredfeldt,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

**Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB.** Your stamped consent form(s) 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(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

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

## Appendix B: Research Permission Request

July 19, 2021

Dr. Gaylan Claunch  
 Superintendent  
 North Texas District Council  
 of the Assemblies of God  
 P.O. Box 838  
 Waxahachie, TX 75168

Dear Dr. Claunch,

As a graduate student in the Doctor of Education in Christian Leadership: Ministry Leadership Program of the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The proposed title of my research project is *Discovering, Developing, and Deploying Emerging Ministry Leaders in the Assemblies of God*. The purpose of my research is to explore and better understand the nature of the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders who are credentialed ministers with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God and under 40 years of age at the time of the study.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God and utilize NTD's membership list of credentialed ministers under the age of 40 to recruit participants for my research.

Participants will be asked to complete a brief online survey and be available for a recorded interview with me through Zoom. The participants who complete the interview will receive an online summary of their interview, to confirm or further clarify what they have said and add any additional comments. My formal research questions will be provided to them in advance of our first meeting. The data will be used to explore and understand the lived experiences of the under 40 credentialed minister in the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to [REDACTED] A permission letter is attached for your convenience.

Blessings!

Janet K. B. Faggart  
 Doctoral Candidate  
 Liberty University

### Appendix C: Permission Letter

July 22, 2021

Janet K. B. Faggart

Dear Janet:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled *Discovering, Developing, and Deploying the Next Generation of Ministerial Leadership in the Assemblies of God*, we have decided to grant you permission to access our membership list, contact the under 40 years of age credentialed ministers, and invite them to participate in your study.

I have checked the following boxes, as applicable:

☒ The requested data WILL NOT BE STRIPPED of identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.

☒ I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

  
Dr. Gaylan Claunch

Superintendent

North Texas District Council

of the Assemblies of God

## Appendix D: Recruitment Email

Dear NTD minister:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to explore and better understand the nature of the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders who are credentialed ministers with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God and under 40 years of age. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

Participants must be North Texas District Council credentialed ministers who are between 18 and 39 years of age. Participants, if willing, will be asked to:

1. Complete a brief online survey (10 minutes).
2. Be available (if selected) to take part in a recorded interview through Zoom (50-60 minutes).
3. Receive an online summary of your interview (if interviewed), where you can confirm or further clarify what you said and add any additional comments (10 minutes).

Names and other identifying demographic information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click: [U40 NTD Ministers Survey](#).

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please click the link to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Thank you for your time and for considering being a part of this study.

Blessings!

Janet Faggart  
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University  
[REDACTED]

## Appendix E: Recruitment Follow-Up Email

Dear NTD minister:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. Two weeks ago, an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to complete the survey, if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is [Date].

Participants, if willing, will be asked to:

1. Complete a brief online survey (10 minutes).
2. Be available (if selected) to take part in a recorded interview through Zoom (50-60 minutes).
3. Receive an online summary of your interview (if interviewed), where you can confirm or further clarify what you said and add any additional comments (10 minutes).

Names and other identifying demographic information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click: [U40 NTD Ministers Survey](#).

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please click the link to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Thank you for your time and for considering being a part of this study.

Blessings!

Janet Faggart  
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University



## Appendix F: Consent

**Title of the Project:** Discovering, Developing, and Deploying Emerging Ministry Leaders in the Assemblies of God

**Principal Investigator:** Janet Kay Bruner Faggart, B.M.E., M.A.; Liberty University, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, Doctor of Education in Christian Leadership: Ministry Leadership Program

### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a credentialed minister in the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God and under 40 years of age at the time of the study. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore and better understand the nature of the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders who are credentialed ministers with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God and under 40 years of age at the time of the study.

### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

4. Complete a brief online survey (10 minutes).
5. Be available (if selected) to take part in a recorded interview through Zoom (50-60 minutes).
6. Receive an online summary of your interview (if interviewed), where you can confirm or further clarify what you said and add any additional comments (10 minutes).

### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a greater understanding of factors that help or hinder the under 40 credentialed minister to discover, develop, and deploy their call to ministry.

### What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

### How will personal information be protected?

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.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Pseudonyms or codes to participant identities will be stored in a password-protected folder, accessible only to the researcher.
- 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 may be used in future presentations. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for five years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

#### **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

#### **Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?**

The researcher serves as an executive presbyter with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, the study will be strictly confidential, with only the researcher knowing the participants and their responses. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with The General Council of the Assemblies of God, the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God, or Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study while completing the online survey, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

If you choose to withdraw from the study following completion of the survey, 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.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Janet Faggart. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gary Bredfeldt, at [REDACTED].

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

**Your Consent**

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.

*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 or video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Subject Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature & Date

## **Appendix G: Survey Instrument**

This survey seeks to explore and better understand the nature of the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders who are credentialed ministers with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God and under 40 years of age.

### **Call to Ministry**

For this survey, a *call to ministry* is “a general call of some believers to ministry leadership” (Iorg, 2008, p. 19).

1. Have you experienced a call to ministry?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ I don't know
  
2. If you have experienced a call to ministry, how old were you?
  - ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If you have experienced a call to ministry, describe your experience (the setting, your actions or thoughts, hearing from God, etc.)
  - ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If you have experienced a call to ministry, is your call to ministry being fulfilled?
  - ☐ Extremely fulfilled
  - ☐ Very fulfilled
  - ☐ Somewhat fulfilled
  - ☐ Hardly fulfilled
  - ☐ Not at all fulfilled
  
5. What could make the fulfillment of your call to ministry better?
  - ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Education and Training**

Education and training may help to discern and fulfill a call to ministry.

6. Have you completed any non-degree education or training? (Choose all that apply.)
  - ☐ Post high school intern program (Master's Commission, etc.)
  - ☐ Leadership training (Chi Alpha, CMN, John Maxwell, Scott Wilson, etc.)
  - ☐ North Texas District Cohorts
  - ☐ Berean Ministry Training on your own
  - ☐ Berean Ministry Training through a District School of Ministry (DSOM)
  - ☐ University or college without degree
  - ☐ None

7. Have you completed a degree at an Assemblies of God university, seminary, or college? (Choose all that apply.)
  - ☐ Associate degree
  - ☐ Bachelor's degree
  - ☐ Master's degree
  - ☐ Doctorate degree
  - ☐ No
  
8. Have you completed a degree at a non-Assemblies of God university, seminary, or college? (Choose all that apply.)
  - ☐ Associate degree
  - ☐ Bachelor's degree
  - ☐ Master's degree
  - ☐ Doctorate degree
  - ☐ No
  
9. List the universities, seminaries, colleges, DSOMs, or other places of education or training you have attended.
  - ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
  
10. How well do you feel your education and training has equipped you to fulfill your call to ministry?
  - ☐ Extremely well
  - ☐ Very well
  - ☐ Somewhat well
  - ☐ Not so well
  - ☐ Not well at all
  
11. What is lacking in your education or training that you believe could help you fulfill your call to ministry?
  - ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Spiritual Parenting and Mentoring**

A mentoring or spiritual parenting relationship may help fulfill a call to ministry. Mentoring can develop the minister personally and professionally (Williams, 2005). A spiritual parent will prophetically call out the greatness of someone with ministry gifts, walk with them, resourcing and encouraging them (Davidson, 2017).

12. Do you desire to have a spiritual parent or mentor to be in relationship with you?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  
13. Do you have a spiritual parent or mentor who is currently in relationship with you?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

14. If you currently have a mentor or spiritual parent, what are the best aspects of your relationship?
  - \_\_\_\_\_
15. If you currently have a mentor or spiritual parent, what are the least favorite aspects of your relationship?
  - \_\_\_\_\_
16. If you currently have a mentor or spiritual parent, what areas do they speak to you about? (Choose all that apply.)
  - Moral, spiritual, and personal formation
  - Pastoral or ministerial calling
  - Theological reflection and deliberation
  - Practical pastoral or ministerial skills
  - None of the above
17. What do you wish a mentor or spiritual parent would speak to you about?
  - \_\_\_\_\_

### **Ministry Experience**

Ministry experiences can help or hinder the fulfillment of a call to ministry.

18. How satisfied are you with your current ministry experience?
  - Extremely satisfied
  - Very satisfied
  - Somewhat satisfied
  - Not so satisfied
  - Not at all satisfied
19. How satisfied are you that your call to ministry is being deployed currently?
  - Extremely satisfied
  - Very satisfied
  - Somewhat satisfied
  - Not so satisfied
  - Not at all satisfied
20. How have your ministry experiences shaped you? (Choose all that apply.)
  - Made me a better Christ-follower
  - Made me a better leader
  - Made me more compassionate
  - Made me rely on God more
  - Made me resilient
  - Made me hard
  - Made me bitter
  - Broke me

21. Have your ministry experiences in the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God helped fulfill your call to ministry?
- ☐ Extremely helpful
  - ☐ Very helpful
  - ☐ Somewhat helpful
  - ☐ Not so helpful
  - ☐ Not at all helpful
22. Do you have any comments or concerns about your ministry experience in the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God?
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Demographics**

The following questions help the researcher verify that a balanced representation of the under 40 ministers in the North Texas District Council have been surveyed.

23. Are you currently involved in ministry?
- ☐ Yes, fulltime
  - ☐ Yes, parttime
  - ☐ Yes, volunteer
  - ☐ No
24. What is your present ministry?
- ☐ Senior/Lead Pastor
  - ☐ Church Staff Member (specify area) \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Chaplain (specify area) \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Evangelist (specify area) \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Missionary (specify area) \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ District official (specify area) \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Other (specify area) \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ I am not involved in ministry
25. What level of ministerial credential do you hold with the Assemblies of God?
- ☐ Ordained
  - ☐ Licensed
  - ☐ Certified
  - ☐ None
26. What is your gender?
- ☐ Female
  - ☐ Male
27. What is your age?
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

28. What is your race?
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
  - ☐ Black
  - ☐ Hispanic
  - ☐ Native American
  - ☐ White
  - ☐ Other/Mixed
  - ☐ Unknown

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix H: Interview Protocol**

1. Basic information about the interview
  - a. Zoom instructions and recording permission
  - b. Time expectation
  - c. Tell about your ministry experiences.
  - d. There are no right or wrong answers.
2. Introduction of the researcher and the study's purpose
  - a. Researcher
    - i. Doctoral student at Liberty University
    - ii. Executive Presbyter with North Texas District Council
  - b. Study's purpose
    - i. To explore and better understand the nature of the discovery, development, and deployment of a call to ministry for emerging leaders who are credentialed ministers with the North Texas District Council of the Assemblies of God and under 40 years of age at the time of the study.
    - ii. A call to ministry is generally defined as “a general call of some believers to ministry leadership” (Iorg, 2008, p. 19).
3. Opening icebreaker questions
  - a. Could you briefly tell me about your background?
  - b. How do you describe your current ministry?
4. Content questions that include probes to ask for more information or explanation
5. Closing instructions

- a. An online summary of your interview will be emailed to you, to confirm or further clarify what you have said and add any additional comments. Please email your approval of the summary back to the researcher.
- b. Thank you for your time and assistance in completing this study.

## **Appendix I: Interview Instrument**

**RQ2.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the discovery of their call to ministry?

2-1. How do you describe your call to ministry?

**RQ3.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the value of spiritual parenting or mentoring, education and training, and ministry experience in the development of their call to ministry?

3-1. How do you describe the value of spiritual parenting or mentoring in the development of your call to ministry?

3-2. Please share about a past or current spiritual parenting or mentoring relationship in your life.

3-3. How do you describe the value of education and training in the development of your call to ministry?

3-4. What education or training has helped you the most to develop your call to ministry?

3-5. How do you describe the value of ministry experience in the development of your call to ministry?

3-6. Please share about your ministry experiences.

**RQ4.** How do emerging leaders, who are Assemblies of God credentialed ministers under 40 years of age, describe the current or future deployment of their call to ministry, especially in relation to the Assemblies of God?

4-1. How do you describe the current or future deployment of your call to ministry, especially in relation to the Assemblies of God?

4-2. Share the hindrances and the helps you encounter in fulfilling your call to ministry.

4-3. What areas of your current ministry could be helped by spiritual parenting or mentoring?

4-4. What areas of your current ministry could be helped by additional education or training?

4-5. What areas of your current ministry could be helped by additional experience?

4-6. Why do you currently carry credentials with the Assemblies of God?