

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**Intercultural, Intergenerational, and Hybrid Discipleship
at Kingdom Life Community Church**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

John H. Littlejohn

Lynchburg, Virginia

May 2023

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

Seth A. Bible, PhD
Faculty Mentor

William D. Aleshire, DMin
Faculty Reader

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

John H. Littlejohn

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, May 2023

Mentor: Dr. Seth A. Bible

This action research project aimed to facilitate the development of a discipleship curriculum through which the diverse members of Kingdom Life Community Church (KLCC) would spiritually mature. The proposed curriculum was developed considering the church's intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid realities. During a ten-week trial period, a curriculum was designed and implemented in KLCC's weekly small groups, called Kingdom Life Communities (KLCs), using a diverse sample group of 18 participants. Data was collected from the sample group and analyzed using statistical tests for quantitative data, and the unitizing, coding, and categorizing of qualitative data. The intervention yielded positive results, with each sample group participant who completed the trial period displaying and self-reporting spiritual growth within the trial period.

Key words: discipleship, hybrid, intercultural, intergenerational, spiritual maturity

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Ministry Context | 2 |
| Leadership | 4 |
| Gatherings, Congregational Participation, and Discipleship | 6 |
| Problem Presented | 8 |
| Purpose Statement | 9 |
| Basic Assumptions | 10 |
| Definitions | 10 |
| Limitations | 14 |
| Delimitations | 15 |
| Thesis Statement | 16 |
| CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK | 17 |
| Literature Review | 17 |
| Defining Discipleship | 18 |
| <i>Bounded and Centered Set Theory</i> | 18 |
| <i>Discipleship Defined by Internal and External Factors</i> | 19 |
| The Role of Contextualization | 21 |
| Intercultural Discipleship | 22 |
| Intergenerational Discipleship | 27 |
| Hybrid Discipleship | 28 |
| <i>Discipling on Digital Platforms</i> | 29 |
| <i>Hybrid Discipleship</i> | 32 |
| Discipleship Curricula and Materials | 32 |
| Theological Foundations | 35 |
| Jesus' Teaching on Discipleship | 36 |
| Intercultural Discipleship in 1 Corinthians 1 | 41 |
| Intergenerational Discipleship in 1 Timothy 4:11-12 | 45 |
| Eternal Diversity in Revelation 7:9 | 47 |
| Theoretical Foundations | 48 |
| Hybrid Discipleship Approaches | 49 |
| Intergenerational Discipleship | 52 |
| Intercultural Discipleship | 54 |
| Conclusion | 58 |
| CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY | 60 |
| Intervention Design | 60 |
| Recruitment | 60 |
| Curriculum Design | 63 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Curriculum Implementation | 64 |
| Trial Period | 66 |
| Data Collection and Analysis | 66 |
| <i>Quantitative Data Analysis and Interpretation</i> | 70 |
| <i>Qualitative Data Analysis and Interpretation</i> | 71 |
| Reporting | 72 |
| Implementation of the Intervention Design | 73 |
| Recruitment | 73 |
| <i>The Researcher's Roles</i> | 75 |
| Curriculum Design and Implementation | 76 |
| Data Collection and Analysis | 77 |
| CHAPTER 4: RESULTS | 80 |
| Did the Project Participants Grow Spiritually? | 80 |
| Entrance Interviews | 81 |
| Spiritual Development | 83 |
| <i>Statistical Data</i> | 83 |
| <i>Exit Interviews</i> | 85 |
| <i>Mark No. 1 and Mark No. 7</i> | 86 |
| <i>Karl's Journey: Shifting from Bounded Set to Centered Set Thinking</i> | 88 |
| Intercultural Discipleship | 89 |
| Entrance Interviews | 90 |
| Traces of Colonial Discipleship at KLCC | 91 |
| Intercultural Development | 93 |
| Intergenerational Discipleship | 95 |
| Entrance Interviews | 95 |
| Intergenerational Development | 96 |
| Hybrid Discipleship | 98 |
| Two Additional Approaches: Accessibility and Convenience | 99 |
| <i>The Accessibility Approach</i> | 99 |
| <i>The Convenience Approach</i> | 100 |
| Emic and Etic Understandings of Online Ministry | 101 |
| Self-Focus vs. Neighbor-Focus | 103 |
| Conclusion | 104 |
| CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION | 105 |
| Research Implications | 105 |
| Flexible Curriculum | 106 |
| Significance for KLCC | 106 |
| Centered Set Discipleship Approach | 107 |
| Intergenerational Engagement and Elderly Discipleship | 108 |
| Hybrid Discipleship | 109 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Default Culture Awareness | 111 |
| Research Applications | 112 |
| Action Statement Framework | 112 |
| An Approach for Addressing Problems within Christian Communities | 115 |
| Research Limitations | 116 |
| Further Research | 117 |
| | |
| Bibliography | 119 |
| Appendix A | 126 |
| Appendix B | 128 |
| Appendix C | 131 |
| Appendix D | 133 |
| Appendix E | 138 |
| Appendix F | 143 |
| Appendix G | 148 |
| Appendix H | 150 |
| Appendix I | 151 |
| IRB Approval Letter / Waiver Page | 152 |

Tables

| | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| 1. | Weekly Participant Action Plan | 64 |
| 2. | Sample Meeting Schedule | 65 |
| 3. | Discipleship Questionnaire Sample..... | 69 |
| 4. | Project Participants and Demographic Data | 74 |
| 5. | Bible Study Passages | 76 |
| 6. | Discipleship Assessment Comparison..... | 84 |
| 7. | Statements about Continued Growth from Elderly Participants' Exit Interviews | 97 |
| 8. | Five Approaches to Hybrid Ministry..... | 101 |
| 9. | Etic and Emic Values, and Emic Actions..... | 102 |
| 10. | List of Core Cultural Values..... | 118 |

Illustrations

Figures

| | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 1. | Triangulation | 67 |
| 2. | Quantitative Data Analysis and Interpretation Process | 70 |
| 3. | Qualitative Data Analysis and Interpretation Process | 72 |
| 4. | Qualities of Mature Christians | 82 |
| 5. | Action Statement Framework | 113 |
| 6. | Step-by-Step Problem Intervention Plan | 115 |

Abbreviations

| | |
|------|--|
| DMIN | <i>Doctor of Ministry</i> |
| CDT | <i>Curriculum Design Team</i> |
| CWC | <i>Calvary Worship Centre</i> |
| IIHD | <i>Intercultural Intergenerational Hybrid Discipleship</i> |
| IRB | <i>Institutional Review Board</i> |
| KLC | <i>Kingdom Life Community</i> |
| KLCC | <i>Kingdom Life Community Church</i> |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The “nondenominational” church classification is often vague and accompanied by assumptions of those within and outside churches who describe themselves as such. One assumption is that nondenominational churches are mega-churches beholden to a prosperity message, based on the statistic that 75% of mega-churches classify themselves as “nondenominational.”¹ This can lead to the idea that nondenominational churches are trendy or celebrity-focused.² Some nondenominational church leaders assume that the non-affiliation with a denomination means that the church is led directly by God without human interference.³ This space for assumption is left open by a tendency of nondenominational churches to offer scarce details on their church polity, inter-church networks, and leadership accountability.⁴ While the assumptions mentioned above bear some truth, many churches exist outside of them. Kingdom Life Community Church (KLCC) is an example of a nondenominational church that does not teach a prosperity message, is not a mega-church, and is transparent about its polity, networks, and leadership accountability.

While the KLCC leadership has built a solid organizational foundation, they are challenged in discipling their intercultural, intergenerational congregation, which is

¹ Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 183.

² “A Study Finds Nondenominational Churches Continuing Their Growth Trajectory Even as They Now Outpace Denominational Evangelical Congregations on Such Key Measures as Attendance, Youthfulness, Diversity, and Outreach,” *Religion Watch* 6, no. 12 (December 2021): NA.

³ Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel*, 3.

⁴ Buster G. Smith, Christopher P. Scheitle, and Christopher D. Bader, “The Ties That Bind: Network Overlap among Independent Congregations,” *Social Science* 30, no. 3 (2012): 259.

simultaneously meeting online and in person. This chapter presents a detailed description of KLCC's ministry context, which provides the foundation for understanding the problem being addressed in this thesis. In addition, the purpose statement, basic assumptions, definitions, limitations, delimitations, and thesis statement will be presented. Through this thesis project, readers will gain a greater perspective of the inner workings of a mid-sized, diverse, nondenominational congregation.

Ministry Context

Canada is less religious than the U.S.A., although Christianity is still a major religion in Canada.⁵ When asked where people find meaning in life, 15% of U.S. Americans listed “faith,” as opposed to 3% of Canadians.⁶ Both statistics signify that churches in the U.S.A. and Canada are ministering in what Charles Taylor describes as a “secular₃ society,” wherein “religious belief or belief in God is understood to be one option among others, and thus contestable.”⁷

Kingdom Life Community Church (KLCC) is a nondenominational church in Langley, British Columbia, Canada. The mid-sized congregation of approximately 120 active members is intercultural and intergenerational. Concerning race and ethnicity, there is no clear majority. Regular attendees originate from Asia, South America, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and North America, with several families who are first-generation immigrants to Canada. It is common to hear songs in diverse languages during worship services. The leadership also mirrors the

⁵ Statistics Canada, “Ethnocultural and Religious Diversity – 2021 Census,” last modified October 26, 2022, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/census/census-engagement/community-supporter/ethnocultural-and-religious-diversity>.

⁶ Pew Research Center, “Where People Around the World Find Meaning in Life,” *Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project*, November 18, 2021, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/interactives/meaning-in-life/>.

⁷ James K.A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 21.

congregation's diversity. The church's ethnic diversity reflects the larger trend of Canadian residents born outside of Canada showing higher church participation numbers than those born in Canada, with one distinction:⁸ KLCC is an intercultural church wherein members regularly engage in mixed-ethnicity groups. This is countercultural, as Christians in British Columbia still primarily gather in mono-cultural groups. The congregation is also comprised of several young families attending alongside elderly congregants, many of whom are retired. Since March 2020, KLCC has embraced the intergenerational nature of the congregation by including ministry to children directly into the worship services. Amid such diversity, the teaching style is primarily exegetical. Teachers regularly encourage congregants to extract lessons from biblical texts without adding default cultural assumptions to the original contexts in which the texts were written.

To fully understand the ministry context of KLCC, a brief history of the church must be presented. KLCC was founded in 2017 after existing for five years as a branch (i.e., "Calvary Langley") of a larger church called Calvary Worship Centre (CWC). KLCC's split from CWC resulted from a core group of leaders gathering for a period of "prayer, vision, discussion, and prophecy,"⁹ prompted by allegations of misconduct on the part of a few of CWC's central leaders. An ultimatum was given to Calvary Langley to either adhere to the current church organizational structure or launch as an independent congregation. In a "Statement of Intent," written by the Calvary Langley leadership team and given to the elders of CWC, the authors wrote: "We believe that the time has come for us to apply to become an incorporated registered

⁸ Statistics Canada, "Religiosity in Canada and Its Evolution from 1985 to 2019," last modified October 28, 2021, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/211028/dq211028b-eng.htm>.

⁹ Josh D. Buys et al., "Statement of Intent" (Calvary Langley, January 25, 2017), 2.

charity and for us to move forward as independent adult children.”¹⁰ The CWC Board of Elders eventually granted the request for independence, and KLCC was launched shortly thereafter. As a result of the quick transition, KLCC initially retained the congregational culture of CWC while also endeavoring to create a new polity structure.

CWC is a multicultural ministry whose lead pastor and many other core leaders come from a few African worship contexts, although CWC does not present itself as an African church. The church’s multiculturalism is best evidenced through the faces of its congregants and the music used for worship. Although the lead pastor of KLCC, Josh Buys, is a White U.S. American man from Denver, CO, the leadership team, congregation, and culture of KLCC still reflect the multicultural nature of CWC. The greatest difference between the two churches is the accountability structure.

Leadership

Like most nondenominational churches, KLCC and CWC do not claim a traditional polity (i.e., episcopal, presbyterian, congregational).¹¹ At the time of the congregational split, CWC’s polity could be described as episcopal with an advisory presbyter. The KLCC leadership felt that CWC’s polity was insufficient in holding leaders accountable and elected to form a different structure. Currently, KLCC is led by a tri-board structure called the “Membership,” which consists of a Board of Deacons, a Board of Directors, and a Board of Elders. Budgets and new employees, including pastors, are approved by a vote from the Membership. The lead pastor is responsible for discerning and shepherding toward God’s vision for the church. The

¹⁰ Buys et al., “Statement of Intent,” 2.

¹¹ L.L. Morris, “Church Government,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 256.

leadership, in general, is accountable to the congregation (i.e., “Covenant Partners”).¹² In summary, KLCC has a non-traditional polity that consists of a presbyterian accountability structure, episcopal spiritual leadership, and congregational accountability; all of which is ratified through the church’s “Constitution and Bylaws.” To provide further accountability, in 2020, KLCC joined Fellowship Pacific, an association of over 100 predominately Baptist churches in western Canada conjoined to leverage their collective strength and resources “to produce a God-honoring impact.”¹³

Regarding discipleship, KLCC’s Board of Elders, which includes pastors, is responsible for designing, assessing, and implementing discipleship programs. The church currently has three pastors: (1) a Lead Pastor, (2) a Pastor of Arts, Operations, and Implementation, and (3) a Pastor Emerita. The eldership is also responsible for teaching congregationally (e.g., sermons, small group leadership, prayer meetings) and individually (e.g., individual mentorship, marriage counseling, individual counseling).

The author of this thesis, John Littlejohn, currently serves as the Pastor of Arts, Operations, and Implementation. His primary pastoral function is to keep the congregation on vision and mission by ensuring that all ministries and departments communicate and work together in concert with God’s direction for the church; this requires managing volunteers, analyzing KLCC’s existing ministries and departments, and when required, operating in the directorship of, or within new ministries on an interim basis. He also serves as the church’s artistic director, overseeing the music and audio-visual ministries and planning events. The Lead Pastor’s primary function is to point and lead the congregation toward God’s vision and mission

¹² Kingdom Life Community Church, “Kingdom Life Community Church: Constitution and Bylaws,” July 8, 2017, 1–11.

¹³ Fellowship Pacific, “Fellowship Pacific,” accessed August 28, 2022, <https://fellowshippacific.ca>.

for the church. Their responsibilities include overseeing all church ministries, initiatives, pastors, lay leaders, Covenant Partners, community care, outreach, and mission. They serve as the chair of the Board of Elders and the primary preacher. They are also responsible for determining the teaching curriculum and appointing additional teachers and preachers. The Pastor Emerita, formerly the Pastor of Community Care, serves in an advisory capacity and as a liaison between KLCC and the community and missions organizations with whom the church partners.

Gatherings, Congregational Participation, and Discipleship

KLCC's congregation gathers in three ways: Sunday Gatherings, Kingdom Life Communities, and Wednesday Morning Prayer. Worship within the church is categorized into five "rhythms of worship:" (1) proclaiming the gospel, (2) learning and teaching, (3) praying, (4) gathering, and (5) sacrificial giving.¹⁴ Proclaiming the gospel includes personal evangelism, corporate evangelism, and participation in missions and outreach. Twenty percent of KLCC's budget is set aside to support the church's outreach and missions initiatives and to give to missions organizations and local Christian ministries. By giving regularly to KLCC, congregants give directly to missions and outreach. Missions and outreach activities are organized by a committee called the Missions Initiative Team. Learning and teaching happen in the context of sermons and Bible studies during the Sunday Gatherings and mid-week small groups. Corporate prayer is woven into each gathering with one gathering, Wednesday Morning Prayer, dedicated to leading some in prayer while teaching others to lead. The fourth rhythm, gathering, requires a personal commitment from each congregant to prioritize gathering with other church members. The fifth and final rhythm, sacrificial giving, is used to encourage congregants to sacrifice their

¹⁴ Kingdom Life Community Church, "What We Believe," accessed August 28, 2022, <https://www.thekingdomlife.ca/what-we-believe>.

resources (e.g., time, talents, money) for the benefit of others. The KLCC leadership's goal is to eventually reflect these five rhythms in each gathering.

The Sunday Gathering is the most robust ministry event, with an average attendance of 100 congregants (60% in person, 40% online). Before the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, the average Sunday attendance was approximately 150 in-person attendees, but since March 2020, that number has decreased significantly. Most of the loss of attendees happened throughout 2020, with attendance leveling off by mid-2021. Typical Sunday Gatherings include worship through diverse music, prayer, giving, children's ministry, and teaching. Communion is observed hybridly (i.e., online and in person) on the first Sunday of each month. The church meets in an elementary school gym, which requires setting up for each service. Each Sunday Gathering requires a team of volunteers to handle the aesthetic and technical set-up, first impressions (i.e., greeting and ushering), rotating presentation roles (e.g., weekly announcements, children's presentations, opening prayer), and music ministry.

The primary context of discipleship is within the church's small groups, called "Kingdom Life Communities" (KLCs). The diverse nature of the congregation is one reason for this discipleship structure. According to the church website, they "believe that disciples are best called and equipped in the context of diverse community day to day, not just Sunday to Sunday."¹⁵ KLCs meet in homes and online. The curriculum is determined by the Board of Elders, who also serve as the leaders of each group. The current KLC leaders (i.e., elders) aim to encourage and equip additional leaders from within the congregation to serve. These groups are intergenerational, with children studying the Bible alongside adults, including senior congregants. As of June 2022, approximately 25% of the congregation regularly engaged in

¹⁵ Kingdom Life Community Church, "What We Believe."

KLCs, meaning that nearly 75% of members were not known to be involved in active discipleship. In addition to KLCs, a small, dedicated group of 7-10 congregants meet on Wednesday mornings to pray together. This meeting happens online. Due to KLCC's hybrid nature, consistent communication has been vital to the interconnectivity of the congregation. Weekly announcements during the Sunday Gathering and weekly emails are the primary means of communication.

Problem Presented

Before the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, KLCC primarily met in person, providing recorded sermons for asynchronous streaming on YouTube after the live service ended. The church offered numerous options for discipleship groups (i.e., KLCs, affinity groups, children's ministry, and youth ministry) and individual counseling for couples and individuals, providing another space for spiritual formation. Like many churches in Canada, every in-person program was interrupted by the governmental ban on in-person religious gatherings in 2020.¹⁶ KLCC quickly pivoted to gathering online via Zoom, Facebook Live, and eventually YouTube. As the pandemic progressed, the building in which KLCC gathered was sold, leaving the church without an in-person meeting space and with a necessity to continue meeting solely online. In September 2021, KLCC eventually began to offer in-person gatherings again, in addition to continuing to livestream to Zoom and Facebook.

Through each congregational transition, an entrenched spiritual immaturity began to show itself in the congregation and leadership of the church. Arguments around gathering styles, conspiracy theories, personal preferences, and politics began to supersede the church's mission

¹⁶ Amy Judd, "Coronavirus: All In-Person Services in B.C. Places of Worship Suspended," *Global News*, last modified November 20, 2020, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/7473312/in-person-services-bc-places-worship-suspended-coronavirus/>.

of making disciples of Jesus Christ in the context in which it was placed. Although most attendees engaged in a way conducive to effective community worship, a few attendees took every opportunity to post political and pandemic conspiracy videos in the virtual chat; this resulted in the leadership deciding to block a couple of members from engaging on virtual forums. Instead of discussing matters as Christian brothers and sisters, a few congregants began to harass others with constant text messages and emails. Many of those members have left the church, leaving a congregation of consistent attendees trying to recover from the personal and corporate losses suffered over the past few years.

Within KLCC's new hybrid reality, the leadership has yet to design and implement a sustainable discipleship structure that meets the congregation's needs. The problem is that adult members of KLCC are not maturing spiritually due to the lack of a progressive discipleship structure.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to develop congruent discipleship initiatives through which members grow spiritually in virtual and in-person spaces. Jesus' command for His disciples to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19) is a call for Christians to disciple in diverse contexts.¹⁷ A discipleship structure at KLCC needs to account for the congregation's intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid nature. Accomplishing this purpose requires deep research, including a literature review of recent texts, interviews, and assessments. Focused conversations, development sessions, and prayer with the leadership of KLCC will also be required. Following the development of a curriculum or structure, a hybrid sample group of

¹⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are from the *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020).

adult congregants of diverse ethnicities and ages will be launched to assess the impact of the curriculum on the spiritual maturity of each participant.

Basic Assumptions

The primary focus of this thesis project is discipleship. As a result, the first assumption is that all project participants will self-identify as Christians, as disciples are identified by their desire to follow and pattern their lives after that of Jesus Christ. This assumption is held with an understanding of the subjective classification of “Christian” within Western church populations. With that understanding, the participants in this project will be chosen from among those who identify as Christians. The second assumption is that the participants will respond honestly to survey and interview questions. The qualitative data collected throughout this project will rely on interviews and surveys taken by the project participants. Finally, it is assumed that this small sample of KLCC’s congregation will lead to results that change and improve the spiritual state of the church’s attendees. Through the consistent discipleship engagement of the sample group participants, the researcher assumes they will be able to identify spiritual growth that will encourage the elders to implement a more extensive discipleship curriculum into the body of Christ at KLCC.

Definitions

This project is undertaken within the context of KLCC. Therefore, the language used throughout this thesis paper concerns the discussion of discipleship within a diverse context. This section will define the following words: contextualization, decolonized discipleship, default culture, disciple (noun and verb), discipleship, hybrid, intercultural, intergenerational, progressive, spiritual maturity, and virtual.

Contextualization. Using locally sourced cultural materials to tailor a message in a way that is understood by the target audience. To avoid the conflation with syncretism and what Jay W. Moon calls “split-level Christianity,” *Christian contextualization* requires adherence to the core doctrines of Christianity while displaying cultural flexibility.¹⁸

Decolonized discipleship. To design a discipleship curriculum appropriate for an intercultural church, it is necessary to acknowledge the impact of Western colonization and systemic racism on biblical Christianity. *Decolonized discipleship*, or *decolonizing discipleship*, refers to the process and result of disentangling the Christian faith from the assumptions of White, Eurocentric-normative depictions of biblical culture and characters.¹⁹ The process of *decolonizing discipleship* requires a measuring of the distance between the cultures of the 1st-century church and that of the White, Eurocentric Western world. The term *colonized* will be used in relation to the elements of Christian contexts that indicate traces of colonialism.

Default culture. Using Sherwood G. Lingenfelter’s definition, *default culture* is “the culture people learn from their parents and peers from birth, with all the inherent strengths and weaknesses of their society.”²⁰ Throughout this thesis project, *default culture* will be used in reference to the various cultures within the KLCC congregation and discipleship groups. It will also be used interchangeably with the word *culture*.

Disciple (noun). A follower of Jesus who is identified by their actions toward making disciples (Matt 28:19), following and remaining with Jesus (Mark 1:17; 8:34; Luke 14:27; John

¹⁸ Jay W. Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship (Encountering Mission): Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 114.

¹⁹ Ekemini Uwan, Michelle Higgins, and Christina Edmondson, *Truth’s Table: Black Women’s Musings on Life, Love, and Liberation* (New York, NY: Convergent Books, 2022), 56.

²⁰ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 70.

8:31), prioritizing Jesus (Luke 14:26), carrying their crosses (Luke 14:27; Mark 8:34), resembling Jesus (John 13:34-35), walking freely in the truth (John 8:31-32), and understanding that all their possessions belong to God (Luke 14:33). Although a disciple of Jesus is sometimes defined within a bounded set framework, for this project, the term is defined within a centered set framework (i.e., based on one's movement in the direction of Christ's likeness).²¹

Disciple (verb). To be primarily and actively involved in making disciples of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, *mathéteuó* (Gk.) is used intransitively and transitively to express the act of being formed into a disciple by following (i.e., intransitive) or teaching others to follow (i.e., transitive) Jesus' teachings.²²

Discipleship. A journey towards Jesus Christ's likeness that begins with personal repentance and continues in individual and communal relationships with Jesus.²³ According to Ermias G. Mamo, from whom this definition is adapted, *discipleship* "is an internal, personal and holistic change in words and actions that spills out to the wider community to reflect Christ to the unreached world."²⁴

Hybrid. Synchronous and asynchronous church activities that occur in virtual and in-person spaces.²⁵ Regarding discipleship at KLCC, *hybrid* refers to discipleship groups using the same curriculum with participants meeting virtually (i.e., face-to-face) and in person. *Hybrid* will

²¹ Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 49.

²² Thayer's *Greek Lexicon*, s.v. "mathéteuó," accessed September 4, 2022, BibleHub.

²³ Ermias G. Mamo, *The Maturing Church: An Integrated Approach to Contextualization, Discipleship and Mission* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Creative Projects, 2017), 31.

²⁴ Mamo, *The Maturing Church*, 31.

²⁵ Barna Group, *Six Questions About the Future of the Hybrid Church Experience*, State of the Digital Church Series (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2020), 5.

also be used to describe how KLCC currently meets for gatherings, committee meetings, and counseling. Finally, *hybrid* will be used interchangeably with the term *multi-platform*.

Intercultural. Often used in educational contexts, *intercultural* refers to the interaction between distinctly different cultures, not to be confused with *multicultural*, which merely refers to the adjacent existence of multiple cultures.²⁶ Due to the interaction between the multiple default cultures within the KLCC congregation, the term *intercultural* will be used throughout the thesis project. The term *intercultural discipleship* will also be used in reference to discipleship in communal contexts wherein multiple cultures are interacting.²⁷

Intergenerational. The interaction between different generations. For this project, the following generations will be referred to: Millennials (born 1981-1996), Generation X (born 1966-1980), Baby Boomers (born 1946-1965),²⁸ and the Silent Generation (born before 1946).²⁹ The term *intergenerational discipleship* will be used in reference to communal discipleship interaction between different generations.

Progressive. Forward or onward movement.³⁰ In terms of discipleship, a *progressive curriculum* is one through which disciples are continuously transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29).

²⁶ Carlos A. Grant and Agostino Portera, *Intercultural and Multicultural Education: Enhancing Global Interconnectedness* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 20.

²⁷ Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 33.

²⁸ Statistics Canada, “A Generational Portrait of Canada’s Aging Population from the 2021 Census,” *Catalogue* 98-200–X, no. 2021003 (April 2022).

²⁹ Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace, *Generation Z: A Century in the Making* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 4.

³⁰ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “progressive,” accessed May 8, 2023, Merriam-Webster.com.

Spiritual maturity. One's spiritual state approximated within a spectrum that begins with repentance/conversion and ends with complete spiritual transformation into Christ's likeness.³¹

Virtual. Refers to digital, online spaces of interaction. In terms of virtual meetings and discipleship, the term refers to activities (e.g., discipleship meetings, church gatherings) that take place on virtual platforms (e.g., Zoom, Facebook, Facetime, Google Meets).³² Throughout this thesis project, the terms "discipleship in virtual spaces," "digital discipleship," and "online discipleship" will be used interchangeably.

Limitations

This DMIN thesis project will likely encounter limitations beyond the researcher's control. This project will require a finite group of participants willing to commit through the duration of the set time parameter (i.e., ten weeks). Within that timeframe, consistent participation and attendance from all participants will be requested but not guaranteed. Also, there is no guarantee that all participants will commit through the end of the project. The diverse nature of the participant group will depend upon the availability of potential participants.

The research methodology includes the use of questionnaires, journals, a focus group discussion, interviews, and a weekly discipleship group. Therefore, the results of the project will be limited to the willingness and ability of the participants to honestly assess their spiritual condition at the beginning and throughout the project. Concerning weekly discipleship group attendance, consistent attendance on one platform (i.e., virtual or in-person) cannot be ensured due to the fluidity of the gathering habits of many of KLCC's congregants. In addition, some

³¹ Thomas E. Bergler, "Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity," *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 1 (2020): 77.

³² Jacob Dunlow, "Digital Discipleship: A Study of How Churches in New York Used Technology for Adult Discipleship During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Christian Education Journal* 18, no. 3 (2021): 460.

participants who attend consistently may switch between meeting platforms due to travel schedules, health concerns, and other personal matters, which may limit the researcher's ability to observe the inter-group dynamics on each platform.

Due to KLCC's current gathering schedule, which includes elder-led Sunday Gatherings, midweek prayer, and KLCs (i.e., small groups), full participation from the entire Board of Elders may not be possible. If that is the case, the researcher will need to partner with at least one other elder to form the curriculum, updating the Board of Elders throughout the process. At the time of this writing, KLCC's in-person gatherings occur in an elementary school gym on Sundays and in congregants' homes during the week. The location and time of the in-person discipleship meetings will be determined by the willingness and availability of those willing to open their homes, as the gym is unavailable Monday through Saturday. Finally, the number of eligible adult participants has decreased over the past year, which may affect the possibility of recruiting the desired number of project participants (i.e., 15).

Delimitations

Although the current small group structure of KLCC includes participants of all ages (i.e., children and adults), this project will be limited to adult participants. For communication and assessment purposes, the platforms the church currently utilizes (i.e., Google Drive, Gmail, MailChimp, Clearstream) will continue to be used as they are familiar to most participants. Likewise, virtual meetings will be limited to Zoom for group and individual meetings and Facetime for individual interviews for which Zoom is unavailable. A diverse group of participants is needed for this thesis project. The participants recruited need to represent the church's intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid realities. Therefore, an effort will be made to recruit diverse participants.

Thesis Statement

Recent statistics show that the awareness of the need for discipleship far exceeds the availability of discipleship communities. For example, a 2021 poll of over 2,500 U.S. Christian adults showed that less than half were involved in active discipleship, while 82% agreed that Christians should be growing in community.³³ A similar trend exists in Canada, with recent data showing that most Canadian Christians understand the need for the cultivation of healthy discipleship environments in which they can grow spiritually.³⁴ The spiritual maturity issue at KLCC, exposed by the challenges presented during the COVID-19 pandemic, is directly related to the lack of a comprehensive, contextualized discipleship structure. If the KLCC leadership develops a progressive discipleship curriculum that considers the congregation's intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid realities, then members who commit to consistent participation will mature as disciples of Jesus Christ.

³³ Barna Group, "56% of Christians Feel Their Spiritual Life Is Entirely Private," accessed July 31, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/discipleship-friendship/>.

³⁴ Arch C.K. Wong, Joel Thiessen, and Keith Walker, "Discipleship from Catholic, Mainline and Conservative Protestant Congregant Perspectives in Canada," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* ahead of print (2021): 1.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To produce a Doctor of Ministry thesis project that contributes to the body of knowledge concerning discipleship in intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid contexts, it is necessary to study and review a diverse selection of recent and historical literature written on the subject. The literature studied in this section assisted in discovering and exploring consistent themes of research, as well as gaps in the literature. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this thesis project is heavily informed by discoveries from the literature review. In addition, the theological foundation of this project has been derived from biblical exegesis and theological exploration.

Literature Review

To address the problem of spiritual arrested development among the adult congregants of KLCC due to the lack of a progressive discipleship structure, literature on discipleship in general and discipleship in intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid (i.e., virtual and in-person) contexts has been surveyed and reviewed. In addition, literature on discipleship curricula will also be reviewed.

There are many resources on discipleship, and within those exists a subset of writings on discipleship in intercultural contexts written from diverse perspectives. However, research gaps exist in the areas of intergenerational and hybrid discipleship. Concerning discipleship in hybrid contexts, literature is emerging around digital discipleship in response to the need for virtual gathering options created at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. A few researchers have written about the social and theological implications of ministry in virtual spaces. However, a significant gap in research exists around the effectiveness and methodology

of churches with congregations simultaneously active in virtual and in-person spaces (i.e., hybrid congregations), which is the reality for the congregation of KLCC.

Defining Discipleship

Numerous approaches to defining *discipleship* have been studied with the goal of deriving a definition that can be used within the framework of KLCC's curriculum and structure. Most authors defined discipleship through a combination of external and internal disciple characteristics. Two authors, Charles A. Davis and Jay W. Moon, present a preceding step to determining discipleship identity by examining *bounded* and *centered* set theories. The following sections will summarize, compare, and contrast the approaches to defining discipleship.

Bounded and Centered Set Theory

Within the literature, definitions of discipleship differ around the identifying criteria and the disciple's internal and external attributes. Paul Hiebert is credited with using *set theory*, often associated with mathematics, to help missionaries define what makes one a Christian.¹ Davis and Moon both use the concept of *bounded* and *centered set theory* as a framework for deciding the criteria of discipleship, which anthropologists commonly use.² In *bounded set theory* there is a clear line of demarcation defining who is inside or outside of the set. *Centered set theory*, on the other hand, defines inclusion based on one's direction of movement.³ In terms of discipleship, both authors prefer a centered set approach because of the attention placed on the continued direction toward Christ's likeness, as opposed to the bounded set approach which pays little

¹ Michael L. Yoder et al., "Understanding Christian Identity in Terms of Bounded and Centered Set Theory in the Writings of Paul G. Hiebert," *Trinity Journal* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 178.

² Charles A. Davis, *Making Disciples Across Cultures: Missional Principles for a Diverse World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 31.

³ Jay W. Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 46-47.

attention to the activities of people once they are considered to be disciples.⁴ Bounded sets are easily defined and are more appropriate for groups with clear boundaries of membership (e.g., sports team, immediate family, music group).⁵ Davis acknowledges the frustrating nature of centered set theory. However, it is his preferred approach. He writes: “Depending on our cultural background, we may be very frustrated by centered set definitions. Centered set reasoning provides direction and growth but does not provide much material for the measurable objectives.”⁶

Discipleship Defined by Internal and External Factors

Many of the authors surveyed provided definitions of discipleship, focusing solely on external factors, internal factors, or both. Stephen Garner, Christopher Wright, Jacob Dunlow, Charles Davis, and Jodi G. Hunt defined discipleship based on the actions of a disciple (i.e., the external attributes). According to Garner, discipleship is embodied in a disciple’s answer to Christ’s call, following Christ, and carrying out Christ’s commands given in the Great Commission.⁷ Wright’s,⁸ Davis’,⁹ and Dunlow’s definitions are similar to Garner’s, with Dunlow including the contemporary settings in which discipleship occurs.¹⁰ Likewise, Hunt defines discipleship within a contemporary hybrid environment, writing that discipleship is “the practice

⁴ Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 47.

⁵ Yoder et al., “Understanding Christian Identity in Terms of Bounded and Centered Set Theory in the Writings of Paul G. Hiebert,” 180.

⁶ Davis, *Making Disciples Across Cultures*, 32.

⁷ Stephen Garner, “Imaging Christ in Digital Worlds: Continuity and Discontinuity in Discipleship,” *Communication Research Trends* 38, no. 4 (2019): 22.

⁸ Christopher J.H. Wright, *Here Are Your Gods: Faithful Discipleship in Idolatrous Times* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 124.

⁹ Davis, *Making Disciples Across Cultures*, 32.

¹⁰ Jacob Dunlow, “Digital Discipleship: A Study of How Churches in New York Used Technology for Adult Discipleship During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Christian Education Journal* 18, no. 3 (2021): 460.

of modeling one's spiritual life and actions after the life of Christ within both physical and digital realities."¹¹

In an article about adult discipleship in an urban Anglican church, Yau Man Siew defines discipleship solely in terms of the transformation of the disciples (i.e., internal attributes). Quoting Alison Morgan, Siew defines discipleship as an apprenticeship "undertaken in community" in which the focus emphasizes spiritual formation over theological instruction.¹² Siew's definition is closely aligned with those of Jay W. Moon and J.T. English, who define discipleship in terms of the internal and external attributes of disciples. According to Moon, the goal of discipleship is to supersede changes in behavior, focusing on the worldview transformation of the disciple and the context in which they exist.¹³ English also feels that discipleship is about more than a program and highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in the disciple's transformation and missional activities.¹⁴

Arch C.K. Wong et al. provide a strong definition for discipleship by mentioning the presence of internal and external discipleship attributes in recently reviewed literature within a Canadian context, which is the national context of KLCC. According to Wong et al., disciples are followers of Jesus who are progressively maturing spiritually and transforming. In their literature review, they discovered two central themes: the recommendation of (1) the spiritual

¹¹ Jodi G. Hunt, "The Digital Way: Re-Imagining Digital Discipleship in the Age of Social Media," *Journal of Youth and Theology* 18, no. 1 (2019): 96–97.

¹² Yau Man Siew, "A Case Study in Adult Discipleship: Stories of Apprenticeship to Jesus at an Urban Anglican (Episcopal) Church," *Christian Education Journal* 18, no. 2 (2020): 191.

¹³ Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 32.

¹⁴ JT English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2020), 3b.

practices that facilitate growth and (2) the processes that lead to transformation.¹⁵ Regarding KLCC's specific context, Ermias G. Mamo provides an applicable definition that refers to internal and external attributes while considering discipleship in a diverse context flowing naturally into a diverse mission field. His definition contains a balance of individual and communal transformation into Christ's likeness.¹⁶

The Role of Contextualization

Before exploring the specific contextualized themes presented in the literature (i.e., intercultural, intergeneration, and digital discipleship), it is necessary to explore the role of contextualization in discipleship. According to Moon, contextualization principles and techniques must be explored to avoid syncretism and split-level Christianity.¹⁷ Like Moon, Wright also highlights the importance of avoiding syncretism when contextualizing Christianity "in contexts where other named gods are explicitly worshiped."¹⁸ To avoid syncretism and other issues that can arise from poor contextualization, Mamo notes that every context and culture possesses culture-specific threats to discipleship that must be identified.¹⁹ Once identified, he suggests the development of a biblical discipleship strategy that is designed with the culture-specific threats in mind.²⁰

Garner presents the need for contextualization in digital discipleship. He writes that the intersection of the digital and physical world raises critical theological questions that must be

¹⁵ Arch C.K. Wong, Joel Thiessen, and Keith Walker, "Discipleship from Catholic, Mainline and Conservative Protestant Congregant Perspectives in Canada," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* ahead of print (2021): 3.

¹⁶ Ermias G. Mamo, *The Maturing Church* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Creative Projects, 2017), 31.

¹⁷ Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 114.

¹⁸ Christopher J.H. Wright, *Here Are Your Gods* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 59.

¹⁹ Mamo, *The Maturing Church*, 15.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

addressed to contextualize biblical teachings in digital environments effectively.²¹ In a book that presents a denominational approach to discipleship, the Assemblies of God consider contextualization from a different angle. They suggest that in addition to considering the group's diversity,²² leaders should create curricula that consider the various learning styles of those present.²³ Mamo, writing from an Ethiopian context, makes a similar point. He also advocates for a discipleship approach that considers the intellectual context, recommending that those working within the African Christian education system consider the issues of orality, practicality, power dynamics, and community learning.²⁴

Intercultural Discipleship

KLCC's congregation contains many members born outside of North America. Worldviews from Asia, Africa, South America, Europe, and North America intersect regularly within the congregation. A successful discipleship initiative must account for the intercultural nature of the congregation. In *Intercultural Discipleship*, Moon defines intercultural discipleship as "the process of worldview transformation whereby Jesus' followers center their lives on the kingdom of God and obey Christ's commands in culture, utilizing culturally available genres."²⁵

Ryan A. Brandt and John Frederick write about the importance of intercultural engagement in *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church*. According to Brandt and Frederick, it is essential to distinguish between working *side-by-side* or *together with* community members

²¹ Garner, "Imaging Christ in Digital Worlds," 22.

²² Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, *How to Disciple Well: A Discipleship Guide for the Everyday Leader* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2021), 72.

²³ Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, *How to Disciple Well*, 72.

²⁴ Mamo, *The Maturing Church*, 149–150.

²⁵ Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 33.

from diverse backgrounds, with the idea that effective cross-cultural ministry requires cross-disciplinary engagement.²⁶ Likewise, Davis believes that when churches undertake the *together with* approach to intercultural engagement, “their potential to bring about cultural transformation multiplies . . . they can actually change the face of society.”²⁷ Brian M. Howell and Jenell Paris suggest viewing culture as a conversation, avoiding metaphors that present culture as a fixed entity.²⁸ According to Howell and Paris, two ineffective metaphors are the *ethnic fair view* and the *eyeglass metaphor*. The ethnic fair view presents cultures primarily through visible, external expressions like attire, cuisine, and art forms. The problem with this view is that it defines a culture from an external perspective and implies that individuals belong primarily to one culture.²⁹ Howell and Paris also encourage avoiding eyeglass metaphors which present culture as one’s worldview that they see through a lens. The problem with eyeglass metaphors is that they “assume that culture is a kind of stable thing that an individual has, either inside her head or in front of her eyes, before interacting with the material and social world.”³⁰

In a diverse North American church, it is necessary to be aware of the residual influence of historic colonization and systemic racism on the presentations of Jesus and Christianity. Failure to locate the effects of colonization and systemic racism may create unnecessary barriers in discipleship and evangelistic efforts. Vince L. Bantu attributes the growing anti-Christian sentiments of the Western world to a failure to address and acknowledge “historical atrocities

²⁶ Ryan A. Brandt and John Frederick, *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church: A Multi-Denominational, Multi-Ethnic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 190.

²⁷ Davis, *Making Disciples Across Cultures*, 160.

²⁸ Brian M. Howell and Jenell Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 44.

²⁹ Howell and Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology*, 29.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

committed by Western Christians” (e.g., trans-Atlantic slave trade, Native American genocide, colonization of non-Western nations).³¹ He also mentions the common non-Western perception of Christianity as a White, Eurocentric religion led by a White God (i.e., White European depictions of Jesus). According to Bantu, this view of Christianity conflated conversion to Christianity with becoming White and Westernized, thereby creating a stumbling block for non-Whites interested in embracing Christianity.³² As a solution, Bantu offers two interrelated tasks of the 21st-century global church: “(1) the deconstruction of the Western, White cultural captivity of the Christian tradition, and (2) the elevation of non-Western expressions of Christianity.” These two suggestions provide a framework for presenting additional literature on this subject.

Ekemini Uwan equates the need to deconstruct the conflation of White-Western tradition and Christianity with the need to decolonize discipleship. According to Uwan, *decolonized discipleship* refers to the need “to hold on to and contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered to us from the apostles and our ancestors by continuing the long-held Black tradition of disentangling the faith from white supremacy.”³³ Decolonized discipleship, like Bantu’s deconstruction, requires presenting Christianity’s Middle-Eastern and African foundations, confronting ideas of White-Western biblical authorship, evaluating the biblical iconography displayed in churches and other Christian settings, and adopting a missional view of Christianity through which God’s love causes one to pursue holiness and radical love for one’s neighbor.³⁴ Jerome Gay Jr. adds the need for the development of “urban apologetics” as a response to what

³¹ Vince L. Bantu, *A Multitude of All Peoples: Engaging Ancient Christianity’s Global Identity (Missiological Engagements)* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 5.

³² Ibid., 6.

³³ Ekemini Uwan, Michelle Higgins, and Christina Edmondson, *Truth’s Table* (New York, NY: Convergent Books, 2022), 56.

³⁴ Uwan et al., *Truth’s Table*, 56.

he calls “the whitewashing of Christianity.”³⁵ According to Gay, an *urban apologetic* considers the experiences of non-White U.S. Americans from urban environments to engage “them with the gospel and accurate history.”³⁶ The term *urban apologetic* was coined by Eric Mason, who adds that urban apologetics “dispels and addresses the multitude of urban legends, historical myths, theological fallacies, exegetical improprieties, scientific misnomers, sociological revisionism, spiritual synchronism, and reductionist views of Christianity that exist in the Black community.”³⁷

In addition to deconstructing notions of White-Western norms for global Christianity, Bantu suggests the elevation of non-Western Christian expressions.³⁸ To this point, James Cone and Esau McCaulley both add a point of clarity, although neither author refer directly to Bantu. According to Cone and McCaulley, there are North American Christian traditions that can help the global church find its way toward unity and balance. For example, McCaulley highlights the documented resistance of enslaved Americans to the false exegesis of the enslavers, providing an example of how to resist and protest harmful biblical interpretations.³⁹ Similarly, Cone offers that the suffering and deliverance of Black Americans serve as a bridge to understanding the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. According to Cone:

A symbol of death and defeat, God turned it into a sign of liberation and new life. The Cross is the most empowering symbol of God's loving solidarity with the “least of these,” the unwanted in society who suffer daily from great injustices. Christians must face the

³⁵ Jerome Gay Jr., *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future* (Chicago, IL: 13th & Joan, 2020), 181.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Eric Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with The Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 66.

³⁸ Bantu, *A Multitude of All Peoples: Engaging Ancient Christianity's Global Identity (Missiological Engagements)*, 5.

³⁹ Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 17.

Cross as the terrible tragedy it was and discover in it, through faith and repentance, the liberating joy of eternal salvation.⁴⁰

In the conclusion of *The Whitewashing of Christianity*, Gay offers helpful suggestions for churches that genuinely wish to walk in unity with the diverse body of Christ. His suggestions include having honest conversations and replacing notions of color blindness with “color engagement.”⁴¹ Honest intercultural conversations may require the discussion of painful subjects (e.g., oppression, genocide, inequity) to build bridges between disciples from vastly different default cultures. In *Be the Bridge*, Latasha Morrison suggests beginning challenging intercultural conversations from a posture of humility.⁴² Acknowledging the oppression present in Canadian and U.S. American history will require conversations about the historical treatments of Whites and non-Whites. Morrison suggests that Whites enter bridge-building conversations humbly by being ready to listen, confess and repent of ways they may have contributed to the oppression of others, acknowledge ways they may have benefited from systems of oppression, and open their minds to “the hard truths of history without trying to explain them away.”⁴³ Similarly, she suggests that non-Whites also enter humbly by preparing themselves to listen to the stories of everyone present, acknowledge ways they may have perpetuated or benefited from the oppression of others, patiently correct and instruct when necessary, and “confess internalized

⁴⁰ James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 156.

⁴¹ Gay Jr., *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future*, 205–207.

⁴² Latasha Morrison, *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God’s Heart for Racial Reconciliation* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2019), 7–8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8.

racism and colorism.”⁴⁴ According to Morrison, “If we come together in the posture of humility, we can start to bridge the racial divide.”⁴⁵

Intergenerational Discipleship

The active members of KLCC are primarily elderly, Gen X, and Gen Z. There are very few consistent millennial congregants. Due to the need to create simultaneous meetings in virtual and in-person settings, and a shortage of mature, available disciplers, most church activities are intergenerational, which creates the need to develop an intergenerational discipleship approach. Although much is written about Millennials and Gen Z, a gap in the literature exists around the discipleship of Gen X, Baby Boomers, and the Silent Generation.

Holly C. Allen and Jason B. Santos survey the history of intergenerational ministry in a recently published article, within which they trace the transition from intergenerational engagement, which existed for centuries, to age-specific division.⁴⁶ According to Allen and Santos, age-specific ministry is a recent development in Christianity that is directly connected to “the implementation of age-graded Sunday school during the twentieth century.”⁴⁷ Based on the Western literature available, there seems to be a correlation between the prioritization of researching the challenges of discipling Millennials and the deficit of research on discipling Gen X and older – especially elderly Christians.

⁴⁴ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 8.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Holly C. Allen and Jason B. Santos, “Intergenerational Ministry - A Forty-Year Perspective: 1980-2020,” *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 3 (2020): 509.

⁴⁷ Allen and Santos, “Intergenerational Ministry,” 509.

In “Christian Education for the Elderly and Their Life and Faith Story,” Kyungseuk Oh presents the findings of his research among a group of elderly South Koreans.⁴⁸ His conclusion, after a series of discipleship meetings and interviews with the participants, was that the most effective connection points for elderly discipleship are the individual’s life story, faith story, and faith community.⁴⁹ According to Oh, “The faith community model can be a framework and great resource and relief for the present Korean Christian education for the elderly because many Korean elderly find their life meaning in their church life.”⁵⁰

Within a communal, intergenerational discipleship context, young and old disciples can learn from one another.⁵¹ The following section will review the literature about discipling in digital and in-person settings (i.e., hybrid discipleship).

Hybrid Discipleship

The term “hybrid” has been used in multiple ways when referring to the church. For example, in *Hybrid Church: The Fusion of Intimacy and Impact*, Dave Browning uses the term to refer to the unity between large and small churches in the USA;⁵² and in *The Hybrid Church in the City*, Christopher R. Baker explores hybridity in terms of the Christian response to the complexities of cultural intersectionality in Western contexts.⁵³ In recent literature, although rarely used, the term “hybrid” refers to a ministry model that utilizes digital and physical spaces

⁴⁸ Kyungseuk Oh, “Christian Education for the Elderly and Their Life and Faith Story,” *Journal of Christian Education in Korea* 45, no. 1 (2016): 181.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 204.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, *How to Disciple Well*, 69.

⁵² Dave Browning, *Hybrid Church: The Fusion of Intimacy and Impact* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 2.

⁵³ Christopher Richard Baker, *The Hybrid Church in the City: Third Space Thinking* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 9.

simultaneously and asynchronously.⁵⁴ In terms of the current ministry model at KLCC, the recent definition will be used to review the literature on churches who meet virtually and in person.

Discipling on Digital Platforms

Examining the unique problems and implications of discipling in virtual spaces is necessary for researching discipleship in hybrid contexts. This section will review the literature written on digital platforms, digital media, spiritual leadership in virtual spaces, and virtual community. Dunlow defines *digital platforms* as “spaces of multi-directional, instantaneous communication . . . [including, but not limited to] Zoom, Google Meets, Facebook, etc.”⁵⁵ Each digital discipleship platform has unique features, making it essential to determine the platform in which discipleship will take place. The statistics on the preferred digital platforms of Millennials changed drastically between 2016 and 2019. In 2016, most Millennials (i.e., 83%) preferred to use Facebook, with 49% using Instagram and 35% using Snapchat.⁵⁶ In 2019, Millennials still preferred Facebook, but the numbers of those using Instagram and Snapchat increased significantly (i.e., 78% Snapchat, 71% Instagram).⁵⁷

The use of digital media in discipleship has also been examined. Catherine Gomes et al. define *digital media* as “those that we immerse ourselves in and surround ourselves with, and that, increasingly, we use to engage the social and cultural worlds in which we live.”⁵⁸ According

⁵⁴ Barna Group, *Six Questions About the Future of the Hybrid Church Experience*, State of the Digital Church Series (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2020), 4.

⁵⁵ Dunlow, “Digital Discipleship,” 460.

⁵⁶ David G. Ford, Joshua L. Mann, and Peter M. Phillips, *The Bible and Digital Millennials* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 51.

⁵⁷ Hunt, “The Digital Way,” 91–92.

⁵⁸ Catherine Gomes, Lily Kong, and Orlando Woods, eds., *Religion, Hypermobility and Digital Media in Global Asia: Faith, Flows and Fellowship* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 14.

to Gomes et al., the increase of digital media enables hypermobility of populations through the instant connection and sharing facilitated by digital platforms.⁵⁹ In response to the hypermobility of digital media, Tim Hutchings warns that disciplers who neglect the influence of digital media may find their religious institutions being subsumed by external media, which increasingly become internal elements of the discipleship context.⁶⁰ In contrast to Hutchings, Jay Kim believes that churches should resist the pressure to digitize based on the idea that analog church (i.e., in-person, digital free church gatherings) is desperately needed in this increasingly digital age.⁶¹ Jodi Hunt offers a middle ground perspective by recommending that digital media be used as a means of action, not the action itself. She writes, “Digital media should only be used by digital disciples in their ongoing mission to spread the Good News to those whom they encounter in the virtual world. An effective digital disciple uses new media with caution and care.”⁶²

While digital media is a reality of digital discipleship, Mamo recognizes that the increase in digital access to the Bible is not leading to biblically informed lives.⁶³ The literature uncovers a hyper-focus on digital platforms and media and neglect of spiritual leadership in virtual spaces.⁶⁴ According to Hunt, young people navigating the complex, hyper-mobile digital world need spiritual guidance and discipleship.⁶⁵ In addition to learning how to spread the gospel on social media, youth need to gain a “practical understanding of how to live like Christ while

⁵⁹ Gomes, Kong, and Woods, Religion, *Hypermobility and Digital Media in Global Asia*, 172.

⁶⁰ Tim Hutchings, *Creating Church Online: Ritual, Community and New Media* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 209.

⁶¹ Jay Kim, *Analog Church: Why We Need Real People, Places, and Things in the Digital Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 12.

⁶² Hunt, “The Digital Way,” 98.

⁶³ Mamo, *The Maturing Church*, 13.

⁶⁴ Hutchings, *Creating Church Online*, 43.

⁶⁵ Hunt, “The Digital Way,” 103.

journeying through the digital community.”⁶⁶ Along the same lines, Dunlow writes that spiritual leaders need to use discernment when discipling on digital platforms, examining the diverse relational effect that any given digital platform may be having on those they are leading.⁶⁷

While more discerning disciplers are needed in digital spaces, Gomes et al. acknowledge that celebrity pastors heavily utilize virtual platforms to extend their reach.⁶⁸ The magnetism of celebrity pastors works together with the quick-formation nature of online communities. Gomes et al. write that digital environments result from real-world dislocation.⁶⁹ People who feel displaced and rejected within their real-world contexts can find a space of belonging in digital spaces.⁷⁰ The resulting digital communities can have positive and negative effects on digital discipleship. Dunlow, after researching the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on churches in New York, NY, found that digital discipleship ministries created effective virtual communities.⁷¹

In his research, Dunlow acknowledges that “digital discipleship may not be ideal, but it is not unbiblical.”⁷² He defines *digital discipleship* as “the use of online technology to engage in discipleship ministries.”⁷³ In the execution of digital discipleship, Garner distinguishes between *digital theology* and *digital religion*, with *digital theology* being the field in which he places digital discipleship.⁷⁴ Digital discipleship cannot be separated from humanity, according to

⁶⁶ Hunt, “The Digital Way,” 96.

⁶⁷ Dunlow, “Digital Discipleship,” 468.

⁶⁸ Gomes, Kong, and Woods, *Religion, Hypermobility and Digital Media in Global Asia*, 172.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷¹ Dunlow, “Digital Discipleship,” 470.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 460.

⁷⁴ Garner, “Imaging Christ in Digital Worlds,” 21.

Hunt.⁷⁵ She writes that the goal of digital discipleship is “being something in the world that invites connection and compassion, not selling [Christ’s] message in a way that makes it likable or believable.”⁷⁶

Hybrid Discipleship

As mentioned earlier, there is a gap in research on hybrid discipleship contexts. Of the literature surveyed, only Hutchings, Gomes et al., and the Barna Group wrote about discipleship in hybrid settings. Hutchings acknowledges the need for more qualitative research on hybrid churches.⁷⁷ In his research, he traces the shift from independent online ministries to the use of virtual spaces as an extension of in-person ministries.⁷⁸ Gomes et al. acknowledge the need to straddle between in-person and virtual spaces in hybrid communities but neither Hutchings nor Gomes et al. offers recommendations for discipleship in hybrid settings.⁷⁹ The Barna Group offers recent data on the effect of digital discipleship in hybrid settings, and offers related tips on how to offer church services (e.g., hospitality, volunteer opportunities, pastoral care) with the purpose of discipleship.⁸⁰

Discipleship Curricula and Materials

The literature surveyed in this review yielded multiple recommendations for discipleship curricula and materials. Concerning the role of the Bible in discipleship, Moon, Wright, Smith,

⁷⁵ Hunt, “The Digital Way,” 99.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 97.

⁷⁷ Hutchings, *Creating Church Online*, 55.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Gomes, Kong, and Woods, *Religion, Hypermobility and Digital Media in Global Asia*, 35.

⁸⁰ Barna Group, *Six Questions About the Future of the Hybrid Church Experience*, 38–42.

and Oh write that the Bible alone is insufficient for discipleship. In contrast, Mark E. Powell et al. and the Assemblies of God push for more Bible study in discipleship. Wright and Mandy Smith both write that the Bible must be read and lived,⁸¹ stating that Bible study alone is insufficient in forming disciples who represent Christ in their actions.⁸² Moon warns that discipleship methods that rely on behavior (e.g., Bible reading and scripture memory) can lead to syncretism,⁸³ and Oh writes that Bible study alone is not sufficient for discipling elderly Christians.⁸⁴ In contrast, the Church of Christ's,⁸⁵ and Assemblies of God's denominational approaches to discipleship lead to recommending an increase in Bible study.⁸⁶

In terms of additional discipleship curricula and tools, Moon and Mamo, who both focus on discipleship in intercultural contexts, highlight the importance of context-appropriate curriculums. Moon suggests using proverbs, which “have an emic value that those outside the culture do not always appreciate.”⁸⁷ He feels that “once proverbs are valued and used to express Christianity, the heartfelt, intimate issues of culture can be exposed and transformed by the gospel.”⁸⁸ Mamo adds the importance of acknowledging past failures of Western curricula being

⁸¹ Wright, *Here Are Your Gods*, 115.

⁸² Mandy Smith, *The Vulnerable Pastor: How Human Limitations Empower Our Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 86.

⁸³ Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 78.

⁸⁴ Oh, “Christian Education for the Elderly,” 186.

⁸⁵ Mark E. Powell, John Mark Hicks, and Greg McKinzie, *Discipleship in Community: A Theological Vision for the Future* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2020), 14.

⁸⁶ Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, *How to Disciple Well*, 7.

⁸⁷ Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 151.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

used in non-Western contexts.⁸⁹ Brandt and Frederick,⁹⁰ and the Assemblies of God,⁹¹ recommend selecting a curriculum that focuses significantly on the Holy Spirit and Pentecost. Along the denominational approach, Powell et al. suggest using a curriculum based on the Stone-Campbell movement (i.e., Church of Christ),⁹² and Siew recommends an Anglican liturgy-based curriculum.⁹³

In terms of intergenerational discipleship, Oh emphasizes the importance of connecting elderly discipleship curricula to the disciple's life and faith community stories.⁹⁴ Allen and Santos recommend two books: *Intergenerational Christian Formation* by Holly C. Allen and Christine M. Lawton,⁹⁵ and *Effective Generational Ministry* by Craig L. Blomberg and Elisabeth A. Nesbit Sbanotto.⁹⁶ In *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, Allen and Lawton suggest a small group model that combines family learning with intergenerational discussions between non-related group members. In this model, family groups break apart to explore “wondering questions” (i.e., questions to explore the subject of study), then come back together to share their findings.⁹⁷ *Effective Generational Ministry* does not recommend a specific curriculum, but

⁸⁹ Mamo, *The Maturing Church*, 146.

⁹⁰ Brandt and Frederick, *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church*, 53.

⁹¹ Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, *How to Disciple Well*, 44.

⁹² Powell, Hicks, and McKinzie, *Discipleship in Community*, 3.

⁹³ Siew, “A Case Study in Adult Discipleship,” 206.

⁹⁴ Oh, “Christian Education for the Elderly,” 188.

⁹⁵ Allen and Santos, “Intergenerational Ministry,” 519.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 522.

⁹⁷ Holly C. Allen, Christine M. Lawton, and Cory L. Siebel, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023), 225.

provides detailed considerations for discipling Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials, to help ministries understand the unique needs of these generations.⁹⁸

English, Hunt, and Garner all offer frameworks for discipleship, which is an approach that may work best for the diverse needs of the nondenominational KLCC congregation. Garner's curriculum recommendation is general, advising that digital curricula employ a framework that is "both wise and practical."⁹⁹ Hunt offers a more specific digital discipleship curriculum suggestion in "Groome's Shared Christian Praxis,"¹⁰⁰ and likewise, English offers a specific framework built on "structure, predictability, accountability, accessibility, community, [and] excellence (SPAACE)."¹⁰¹

Theological Foundations

The need for intercultural and intergenerational discipleship in various spaces was a reality for many local churches in the New Testament. Churches in pluralistic settings, like Antioch (Gal 2:11-12) and Corinth,¹⁰² required instruction on how to come together in unity under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The Gospel writers, Paul, and other NT authors address this issue in their writings. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus clarified what was required of His disciples. In his epistles, Paul provided instruction on how people from diverse backgrounds can be united by their acceptance of the gospel and membership in God's church. And in Revelation, John helps readers measure the distance between today and the future reality of a diverse

⁹⁸ Craig L. Blomberg and Elisabeth A. Nesbit Sbanotto, *Effective Generational Ministry: Biblical and Practical Insights for Transforming Church Communities* (Baker Academic, 2016), xviii.

⁹⁹ Garner, "Imaging Christ in Digital Worlds," 27.

¹⁰⁰ Hunt, "The Digital Way," 104.

¹⁰¹ English, *Deep Discipleship*, 7.

¹⁰² Finny Philip, "1 Corinthians," in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1555.

multitude worshipping in unity before the Lamb of God.¹⁰³ Through a survey of Jesus' teachings, two Pauline epistles (i.e., 1 Cor 1, 1 Tim 4), and Revelation 7:9, this section of the thesis paper will explore the biblical foundations of discipleship in general, discipleship in intercultural and intergenerational church communities, and the eternal nature of diversity.

Jesus' Teaching on Discipleship

Only a small percentage of those that followed Jesus were true disciples. While a crowd can be built through clever marketing, disciples of Jesus are made distinct from the crowd by the specific qualities they possess.¹⁰⁴ According to Jesus, His disciples are those who follow Him (Mark 8:34), prioritize Him over anyone or anything else (Luke 14:26), carry their own crosses (Luke 14:27; Mark 8:34), reflect His love to one another (John 13:34-35), walk freely in the truth (John 8:31-32), and understand that all they possess belongs to God (Luke 14:33). After the Resurrection, Jesus commissioned His disciples into God's reconciliatory, redemptive mission by commanding them to go into the world and make additional disciples (Matt 28:16-20). These themes (i.e., *the qualities of disciples* and *the responsibilities of disciples*) will be explored in more detail.

After rebuking Peter for attempting to dissuade Him from God's purpose (Mark 8:31-33), Jesus called a crowd to join Him and His disciples (8:34). In His discourse with those gathered, Jesus taught them, saying, "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me" (NIV). Therein, Jesus outlines three qualities of His disciples: (1) self-denial, (2) the taking up of one's own cross, and (3) following Jesus. According to Kim Huat

¹⁰³ Scot McKnight, *Revelation for the Rest of Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2023), 13.

¹⁰⁴ Thabiti Anyabwile, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Luke* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2018), 239.

Tan, self-denial is “about the giving up of one’s rights in order to be at the disposal of a higher call.”¹⁰⁵ In addition to self-denial, Tan adds that taking up one’s cross, which was known at the time as a symbol of execution, as opposed to a sword, a symbol of strength, indicates a commitment to self-renunciation and opposition to violence.¹⁰⁶ The necessity of carrying one’s cross is also recorded in Luke 14:27. In both Mark 8:34 and Luke 14:27, self-denial and carrying one’s cross are presented as requirements that precede following Jesus.

About following, Jesus uses two phrases that are translated as “follow Me” in the NASB: “come after Me” (Mark 1:17, Greek Interlinear) and “follow me” (Mark 8:34). To “come after” Jesus means to pattern oneself after Jesus,¹⁰⁷ whereas to “follow” Jesus, as stated in Mark 8:34 means to work alongside, or accompany, Jesus as He goes about His mission.¹⁰⁸ Both definitions are requirements of discipleship. Jesus’ call to follow Him requires more than gaining proximity for observation purposes.

The primary quality of Jesus that He shares with His disciples is how He loves others. In a “new commandment,” Jesus instructed them to “love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34). This commandment was given shortly after Jesus explained that He expected them to emulate His example of humble service (e.g., washing feet) (13:15). Within this context, Jesus is stating that His disciples, present and future, would be identified by their Christlike love and service to one another.¹⁰⁹ The command was new because

¹⁰⁵ Kim Huat Tan, *Mark: A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2016), 115.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*, s.v. “duete,” accessed September 11, 2022, BibleHub.

¹⁰⁸ *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*, s.v. “akoloutheó,” accessed September 11, 2022, BibleHub.

¹⁰⁹ Pratap C. Gine and Jacob Cherian, “John,” in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1429.

of the standard of love (i.e., “. . . as I have loved you.”)¹¹⁰ that was about to be demonstrated through Jesus’ crucifixion.¹¹¹ John Colwell asserts that through the life, message, and worship of Christ’s disciples, the world gains access to the gospel story.¹¹² The Crucifixion reveals a new, transformative manner of loving others that has the power to change any context. To this point, Michael Gorman states, “The cross of Christ reveals a missional, justifying, justice-making God and creates a missional, justified, justice-making people.”¹¹³

In John 8:31-32, Jesus uses a conditional statement to present additional qualities of His disciples. Speaking to a group of Jews who had once believed in Him, He taught, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Disciples who obey Jesus’ word,¹¹⁴ also walk in truth and freedom.¹¹⁵ The truth and freedom that Jesus is speaking of are not defined in the same manner as how the phrase is used in facets of U.S. American culture. Although John 8:32 is engraved on the floor of the CIA headquarters and is often conflated with U.S. American national values, Jesus was not talking about freedom from authority or uncovering hidden truths within the government.¹¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas warned against thinking of freedom in a “perverted” way where it can give

¹¹⁰ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 435.

¹¹¹ Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2015), 274.

¹¹² John E. Colwell, *Living the Christian Story: The Distinctiveness of Christian Ethics* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2001), 85.

¹¹³ Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), 9.

¹¹⁴ Jey J. Kanagaraj, *John: A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2013), 93.

¹¹⁵ Gail R. O’Day and Susan E. Hylen, *John* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 94.

¹¹⁶ Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 149–150.

license to sin instead of freeing one from sin.¹¹⁷ Jesus was teaching about the freedom from the bondage of sin and death which could only be found through Him. The offer of true freedom through being Jesus' disciple was offered in an appropriate context: during a festival commemorating Israel's journey through the wilderness after having been freed from slavery in Egypt.¹¹⁸ On the matter of truth, Jesus taught that truth was known relationally, not rationally. According to Robert H. Mounce, He is speaking of "the revelatory truth of knowing Jesus for who He is. It is the truth that liberates people from the bondage of sin and sets them free to become the kind of people their Creator intended them to be."¹¹⁹

The freedom with which Jesus' disciples walk comes at the cost of all their possessions. Jesus taught in Luke 14:33, "None of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions." It is necessary to count the cost of discipleship.¹²⁰ Jesus was speaking to a large crowd of followers and may have sensed that their most significant challenge to moving from spectating to discipleship was their connection to their belongings.¹²¹ The twelve disciples demonstrated an initial prioritization of Jesus over their possessions by leaving everything to follow Him (Luke 5:9-11). However, they gradually learned that the cost of discipleship included a lifetime commitment to prioritizing Jesus.¹²² According to Darrell L. Bock, "The giving up of everything means recognizing that God has a claim on all areas of our lives. Part of discipleship is learning from God what He desires in these areas. No one can know at the start of the walk

¹¹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 6-12*, trans. Fabian Larcher and James A. Weisheipl (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 128.

¹¹⁸ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 747.

¹¹⁹ Robert H. Mounce, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), part 3.

¹²⁰ Justo L. González, *Luke* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 170.

¹²¹ Judith M. Lieu, *The Gospel of Luke* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 118.

¹²² Diane G. Chen, *Luke* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 210.

everything involved, but one can enter the journey with an understanding that God has access to all that we are.”¹²³

Following Jesus means emulating His likeness and working alongside Him on His mission by accepting it as one’s own. After training His disciples in this manner, Jesus commissioned them to reproduce disciples of Jesus Christ throughout the world (i.e., the Great Commission). To this point, D.A. Carson defines disciples as “those who hear, understand, and obey Jesus’ teaching. . . . [and] make others what they themselves are.”¹²⁴ In other words, new disciples need to be baptized and taught about Jesus through word and deed by Holy Spirit empowered disciples (Acts 1:8) that are themselves baptized followers, in the fullest sense, of Jesus Christ.¹²⁵ Disciples should be able to recognize God as the source behind the teaching they receive. In the *Didache*, the early apostles taught this, writing: “If the teacher himself turns and teaches another doctrine with a view to subvert you, do not listen to him, but if he comes to add to your righteousness, and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.”¹²⁶

These fundamental principles of discipleship, as designed and demonstrated by Jesus Christ, are foundational for Christian discipleship in all contexts. What the twelve disciples accomplished alongside the physical presence of the Messiah, the church surpasses through the

¹²³ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 1996), 191.

¹²⁴ D.A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Temper Longman III and David E. Garland, Revised ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 734.

¹²⁵ Brian Wintle, “Matthew,” in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1284.

¹²⁶ Charles H. Hoole, *The Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (London, UK: David Nutt, 1894), 75–85.

empowerment of the Holy Spirit (John 14:12-17). The task of global discipleship would require disciples to reach and affect the most profound elements of cultures foreign to themselves.¹²⁷

Intercultural Discipleship in 1 Corinthians 1

The Roman city-state of Corinth, in which Paul established a church, was culturally, politically, and religiously diverse.¹²⁸ The diversity of Corinth was also reflected in its language, with Greek as the *lingua franca*, Latin as the language of government, and Hebrew spoken by the Jewish inhabitants.¹²⁹ Many Jews in the city were refugees from Rome, having escaped the persecution of Emperor Claudius.¹³⁰ For them, Corinth was a safe haven because citizens of Corinth were not required to hold the same religious or political beliefs. Deep-rooted political, ethnic, and social divisions existed within Corinthian society, with Greeks viewing non-Greek speakers as “barbarians” and Jews working to keep themselves separate from Gentiles.¹³¹ Naturally, the church founded in Corinth would reflect the same qualities as the outside culture; the difference being that the city-state was required to unify under Roman authority while the church was required to unify under the superseding lordship of Jesus Christ.

Paul spent eighteen months in Corinth evangelizing and discipling a church of diverse new converts (Acts 18:11). After leaving Corinth, he received communication from “Chloe’s people” that the divisive nature of the city had found its way into the church (1 Cor 1:11). An

¹²⁷ Joe Kapolyo, “Matthew,” in *Africa Bible Commentary*, ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1196.

¹²⁸ Matthew R. Malcolm, *The World of 1 Corinthians: An Annotated Visual and Literary Source-Commentary* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2012), xvi.

¹²⁹ B.J. Oropeza, *1 Corinthians: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 3.

¹³⁰ Willie James Jennings, *Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 135.

¹³¹ Philip, “1 Corinthians,” 1559.

exegetical study of how Paul confronts the divisions within the intercultural Corinthian church provides rich information for contemporary intercultural churches (e.g., KLCC).

The division in the Corinthian church, which led to members identifying with various apostles (i.e., Paul, Apollos, Cephas) (1:12), may have been caused by a lack of awareness of the effect their default cultural values were having on the congregation. This deduction is inferred by Paul's references to political divisions (1:10), Jewish and Greek views of the Cross (1:22-25), and Jewish and Greek cultural hierarchies (1:27-28). According to Paul G. Hiebert, to facilitate the examination of one's default cultural values against the values of Jesus Christ, one must "make explicit what is implicit."¹³² Paul calling out the divisions by name is an example of making the possibly implicit divisions in the congregation explicit. Those identifying with Paul were likely Gentile church members attracted to his teaching on the law of grace over the Law of Moses.¹³³ Followers of Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, were likely members who were attracted to his charisma and rhetorical skills. Paul admitted that he was not a great speaker (1:17), while Apollos was described in Acts as an "eloquent man" who was "proficient in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24).¹³⁴ The "I am with Cephas" group may have been Judaizers in the congregation who preferred Cephas (i.e., Peter) for his observance of the Law and his relationship with Jesus as one of the Twelve.¹³⁵ Finally, those who identified themselves as being "with Christ" were likely self-righteous members declaring their independence from the influence and discipleship of any human. Alternatively, it could mean that Paul was classifying himself as a follower of Christ, not

¹³² Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 17.

¹³³ Dachollom Datiri, "1 Corinthians," in *Africa Bible Commentary*, ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1405.

¹³⁴ Datiri, "1 Corinthians," 1405.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

people.¹³⁶ However the divisions came about, eliminating them was one of Paul's first matters of business in the epistle.

In verse 10, Paul calls for the end of division by using a Greek political term (i.e., *schisma*) used in Roman culture to signify a fracture or break within a political party. In addition to removing divisions, Paul wished that the Corinthian church would agree (i.e., say the same things)¹³⁷ and “be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1:10). The Greek verb translated “be made complete” (i.e., *katartizó*), like the word for “division,” carries a secular cultural meaning as well. It is an ancient medical term that could also mean “to be restored to a former condition.”¹³⁸ In this context, Paul may have used the same culturally familiar secular Greek words (i.e., *schisma* and *katartizó*) to both *teach* and *attempt to restore* Christian unity, which would have been a new cultural concept for the Jews and Gentiles within the Corinthian church. Without submitting their default cultural political values to those of Christ, individuals within the congregation may have been naturally drawn to different apostles based on their cultural heritage (e.g., Gentiles favoring Paul, Jews favoring Cephas).¹³⁹

In addition to serving as a political mirror, Paul used Jewish and Greek concepts of cultural hierarchies and preconceived implicit beliefs about the Cross to teach truths about Jesus. Paul's reference to the absence of wise, mighty, and noble members in the Corinthian church may have been a gentle attempt to address a lack of confidence in the congregation. Philosophical wisdom (e.g., stoicism and epicureanism) were highly lauded in the Greco-Roman

¹³⁶ Datiri, “1 Corinthians,” 1405.

¹³⁷ *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*, s.v. “legó,” accessed September 11, 2022, BibleHub.

¹³⁸ Datiri, “1 Corinthians,” 1405.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

world,¹⁴⁰ and for Jews, those well-versed in ancient Jewish texts (e.g., the Law, the Prophets, Psalms) were looked to for wisdom. In terms of might, the military strength of the Roman empire would have been the shared reality of the Jews and Gentiles in the church. Concerning nobility, except for a few church members, Paul elucidates the lack of nobility in the Corinthian congregation (1:26). These factors may have contributed to a feeling among the congregation that they lacked the human resources to accomplish God's purposes. Paul's strategy of making these feelings explicit provides an opportunity to disciple by showing the Corinthian church that God chose to use them because of their low status (1:28).

Along with low Corinthian status, the church members had implicit biases that influenced how they viewed the Crucifixion. Paul wrote that the Crucifixion was "to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness" (1:23). The Jews were expecting the Messiah to be the King that would lead them to victory over their Roman lords. A crucified Messiah was an incomprehensible idea (i.e., "stumbling block"). On the other hand, Greeks believed that God was entirely separate from humanity and could never share human emotions; therefore, the idea of an incarnate God was foolish to them.¹⁴¹

The three examples above of Paul's use of implicit cultural values within the intercultural Corinthian church guide those discipling in contemporary intercultural settings. Paul's call for Christian unity in Corinth was not made in ignorance but through cultural competency. By exposing their non-Christian thoughts, Paul could teach them how to be secure in their identity "in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God" (1:30). Before concluding this section in

¹⁴⁰ Malcolm, *The World of 1 Corinthians: An Annotated Visual and Literary Source-Commentary*, 12.

¹⁴¹ Datiri, "1 Corinthians," 1405–1406.

Revelation 7, a brief survey of Timothy's relationship with older congregants in Ephesus will provide a foundation for the task of discipling within intergenerational contexts.

Intergenerational Discipleship in 1 Timothy 4:11-12

In the person of Timothy, Paul's "son in the faith" (1 Tim 1:2), exists intercultural and intergenerational realities. In terms of culture, Timothy was half Jewish, half Greek, and had to be circumcised to minister to the Jews in his homeland (Acts 16:1-3).¹⁴² Timothy demonstrated a cultural flexibility that served as a great gift to the early church. As a young man, he was installed by Paul as the pastor over the church in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3). Although the word "discipleship" is never used in terms of Timothy's work in Ephesus, the elements of discipleship are present in his ministry (i.e., teaching in 1:3 and 4:11; living a life patterned after Christ's 4:12). In terms of intergenerational discipleship, Timothy was being discipled by Paul, who was significantly older and more experienced than Timothy, and was also tasked with discipling older congregants.¹⁴³ This actuality prompted Paul to encourage Timothy, writing, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe" (4:12).

In verse 11, Paul admonishes Timothy to "prescribe and teach" gospel truths to the intergenerational congregation, who were prone to interlace "strange doctrines" and "useless speculation" fueled by "myths and endless genealogies" with the pure gospel and plan of God (1:3-4).¹⁴⁴ It should be noted that Paul's mention of "worthless stories . . . typical of old women"

¹⁴² F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1977), 169.

¹⁴³ Paul Cornelius, "1 Timothy," in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1682.

¹⁴⁴ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 251.

in 4:7 is best understood as a warning against a specific category of myths known in the male-dominated first-century Roman society by the derogatory expression: “old wives tales.”¹⁴⁵ This verse should not be interpreted as an instruction not to listen to older women in the congregation.

Although Timothy had the pastoral responsibility of correcting doctrinal errors, his comparative youth may have led to a reluctance to do so.¹⁴⁶ The instruction to teach in verse 11 implies teaching through the ancient Jewish tradition of repetition.¹⁴⁷ Verse 12 balances the repetition-based teaching with teaching through lifestyle.¹⁴⁸ Paul’s encouragement to Timothy also extends to intergenerational discipleship contexts today. Older church members must not reject qualified young leaders and should be humble enough to be disciplined by someone younger. Likewise, just as Timothy was disciplined by Paul, young Christians should embrace being disciplined by older, more experienced leaders.¹⁴⁹ According to Paul, one’s energy should be spent living a godly lifestyle, not quarreling about age. To this point, Philip H. Towner writes, “The explicit reference to Timothy’s youth adds the burden of crossing the cultural line of age veneration. To overcome any liabilities associated with youth, Paul urges Timothy to become an ‘example for the believers.’”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 246.

¹⁴⁶ Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London, UK: T&T Clark, 1999), 559.

¹⁴⁷ Aída Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2014), 125.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁴⁹ Spencer, *1 Timothy*, 126.

¹⁵⁰ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 251.

Eternal Diversity in Revelation 7:9

The goal of Christianity is not to erase diversity but to redeem it. According to Jerome Gay Jr., “The gospel isn’t colorblind; it’s color-engaging.”¹⁵¹ Human diversity was God’s design (Gen 11:9) and, according to Revelation 7:9, an eternal reality: “. . . I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all the tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands.” According to Ian Paul, John’s vision answers the question at the end of chapter 6, “Who is able to stand?” (Rev 6:17).¹⁵² Revelation 7:9 provides an answer to that question: a diverse multitude of worshippers will remain after the terror of the Sixth Seal, signifying the eternal diversity of God’s people. G.K. Beale draws attention to the parallel between Revelation 5:6, 9; and 7:9. Both passages mention people from every nation, tribe, language, and people, with the Lamb standing for all of the people in 5:6 and the multitude standing before the Lamb in 7:9.¹⁵³ The “great multitude” in 7:9 is also too numerous to count,¹⁵⁴ which reflects God’s promise that He would multiply Abraham’s descendants “so that they will be too many to count” (Gen 16:10).¹⁵⁵ These parallels are significant because they connect the Abrahamic promise with John’s eschatological vision of people in God’s kingdom.¹⁵⁶ God’s plan of redemption has always included all of humanity and is perfectly actualized in John’s vision.

¹⁵¹ Gay Jr., *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future*, 207.

¹⁵² Ian Paul, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 161.

¹⁵³ G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 421.

¹⁵⁴ Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 150.

¹⁵⁵ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 423.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

According to Ramesh Khatry, John's recognition of distinct attributes within the crowd indicates the harmony of diversity and unity within the kingdom of heaven.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, the white robes and palm branches denote purity and triumph, respectively.¹⁵⁸ The contamination of sin on the relationships between humans has no home in the fully realized kingdom of heaven. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza notes that at the time of John's vision, the Roman source of the salvation sung about in Rev 7:10 would have been the emperor. In contrast, "those who stand before the throne acknowledge God and the Lamb as the ultimate source of all well-being and salvation."¹⁵⁹ This truth has profound implications for the diverse modern global church. Churches who work through and embrace the call to be ministers of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18) while moving progressively towards harmony in diversity (e.g., color-engaging) under Jesus' lordship provide a modern-day reflection of the future reality of God's people.

Theoretical Foundations

Of the three discipleship focuses of this thesis (i.e., intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid), intercultural discipleship has benefitted from much research. Unfortunately, there is little research on intergenerational discipleship in Western contexts and even less on hybrid discipleship, although, with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing research has been emerging. This section of the thesis project will explore the merits and demerits of previous theoretical approaches to intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid discipleship with an added

¹⁵⁷ Ramesh Khatry, "Revelation," in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1785.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 79.

look toward future possibilities that may help KLCC form an effective internal discipleship model.

Hybrid Discipleship Approaches

The most successful approaches to hybrid discipleship focus primarily on learning the nuances of ministry on virtual platforms. Because most churches are familiar with in-person ministry, online ministry may seem foreign, awkward, and less effective in its reach. Locating the background assumptions that drive one's approach to ministry (e.g., "virtual discipleship is not effective") is essential for engaging in hybrid ministry.¹⁶⁰ In *Creating Church Online*, Tim Hutchings mentions three approaches to building online ministry. They are: (1) the competitive approach, (2) the complementary approach, and (3) the missional approach. These three approaches will be used as the framework for exploring the approaches to hybrid discipleship in this thesis project.

The competitive approach places in-person and virtual ministry against one another.¹⁶¹ This approach invites debates around the question, "Which ministry platform is most effective?" While this is the least effective of the three approaches, it has been the most popular in the last three years. In *Analog Church*, Jay Kim posits in-person meetings as a confrontation to the digital age.¹⁶² Similarly, Tish Harrison Warren's 2022 *New York Times* article, titled "Why Churches Should Drop Their Online Services," fanned the flames of an intense North American debate around the quality of online church services with Warren concluding that Christians should resist the cultural trend towards digital ministry by limiting services to in-person

¹⁶⁰ Hutchings, *Creating Church Online*, 24.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 25.

¹⁶² Kim, *Analog Church: Why We Need Real People, Places, and Things in the Digital Age*, 12.

gatherings.¹⁶³ Her opinion was met with solid support from those who witnessed the congregational disconnect caused by the sudden shift from in-person to online gathering, but was also challenged by immunocompromised and physically challenged readers who were greatly benefitting from the increased access to Christian community.¹⁶⁴ P. Adam McClendon also takes the competitive approach. In *Timeless Church: Five Lessons from Acts*, McClendon responds to a pastor who was finding success online by writing, “That is not church.”¹⁶⁵ According to McClendon, online church is a passive experience.¹⁶⁶ By taking an either-or, competitive approach to hybrid ministry, McClendon, Kim, and Warren fail to adequately account for those who have benefited from the increased access to Christian community afforded by higher quality virtual ministry experiences (e.g., face-to-face Zoom meetings, increased visibility). According to Hutchings, the competitive approach is fear-based and not supported by concrete data.¹⁶⁷ A recent Barna Group poll found that 81% of churched U.S. adults, considering the pandemic, still prefer in-person gatherings, and 90% of those polled are still primarily engaged with the church they attended before the pandemic which disproves the myth that virtual gatherings are replacing or luring large numbers of congregants away from in-person gatherings.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Tish Harrison Warren, “Opinion | Why Churches Should Drop Their Online Services,” *The New York Times*, January 30, 2022, sec. Opinion, accessed September 13, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/30/opinion/church-online-services-covid.html>.

¹⁶⁴ Tish Harrison Warren, “Opinion | 7 Thoughtful Reader Responses on Ending Online Church,” *The New York Times*, February 6, 2022, sec. Opinion, accessed September 13, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/06/opinion/online-church-services-readers.html>.

¹⁶⁵ P. Adam McClendon and Jared E. Lockhart, *Timeless Church: Five Lessons from Acts* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020), 57.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Hutchings, *Creating Church Online*, 26.

¹⁶⁸ Barna Group, *Six Questions About the Future of the Hybrid Church Experience*, 13–15.

In contrast to the competitive approach, the complementary approach views online ministry as a supplement to in-person activities.¹⁶⁹ In “The Digital Way: Re-imagining Digital Discipleship in the Age of Social Media,” Jodi G. Hunt recommends supplementing in-person youth and young adult ministries with digital offerings that teach how to navigate the virtual world (e.g., social media, online games) as representatives of Christ.¹⁷⁰ Recently, an increasing number of churches have launched podcasts as an addition to their regular weekly offerings, finding that digital users appreciate the asynchronous access to discipleship materials created by their local church.¹⁷¹ While the complementary approach creates a richer experience for those already engaged in church community, it can be inadequate in reaching and engaging non-Christians and those without access to consistent Christian community. This leads to the third approach, which is supported most by contemporary online church users: the missional approach.¹⁷²

According to Hutchings, the missional approach is built upon the premise that online churches are already reaching new audiences of those without *access to* or *interest in* in-person Christian community and should therefore be recognized, supported, and extended.¹⁷³ The online churches at the center of Hutchings’ ethnographic case studies (i.e., “Church of Fools,” “i-church,” “St. Pixels,” “the Anglican Cathedral of Second Life,” and LifeChurch’s “Church Online”) all purported to be built around an evangelistic mission.¹⁷⁴ Of the online churches

¹⁶⁹ Barna Group, *Six Questions About the Future of the Hybrid Church Experience*, 13-15.

¹⁷⁰ Hunt, “The Digital Way,” 96-97.

¹⁷¹ Barna Group, *Six Questions About the Future of the Hybrid Church Experience*, 25-26.

¹⁷² Hutchings, *Creating Church Online*, 28.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

studied, the only one still thriving is LifeChurch’s “Church Online” whose success is attributed to consistent support and connection to in-person church community.¹⁷⁵ The online churches that existed entirely online or lost support from in-person communities either no longer exist or are operating at a minimal standard of ministry.¹⁷⁶ Hutchings’ findings from 2017 are consistent with recent data. According to the Barna Group, 87% of unchurched adults are highly open to attending a church service online. In contrast, only 44% of the same group were highly open to attending an in-person service with someone else.¹⁷⁷ Going forward, it will be necessary to explore emerging research on the effectiveness of hybrid churches that take both a complementary and missional approach to using digital platforms.

Intergenerational Discipleship

In a forty-year perspective of intergenerational ministry (i.e., 1980-2020), Holly C. Allen and Jason B. Santos acknowledge the newness of age-separated ministry within the history of the church.¹⁷⁸ Past research approaches have attempted to discover which approach is more effective: intergenerational, or age-graded discipleship.

In a recent adult discipleship study in a Canadian Anglican Church, Yau Man Siew found that the church’s flexible discipleship approach was highly influential among adult participants of various ages.¹⁷⁹ As opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach to intergenerational discipleship, the church adopted a strategy of initiating new ministries with a “strong emphasis on learning the

¹⁷⁵Hutchings, *Creating Church Online*, 264.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Barna Group, *Six Questions About the Future of the Hybrid Church Experience*, 44.

¹⁷⁸ Allen and Santos, “Intergenerational Ministry,” 509.

¹⁷⁹ Siew, “A Case Study in Adult Discipleship,” 206.

Christian basics for people at different faith and life stages.”¹⁸⁰ Kyungseuk Oh also noted the success of discipling elderly congregants in an age-graded system. In an ethnographic study limited to elderly South Koreans,¹⁸¹ Oh discovered that successful elderly discipleship initiatives are those that take place in a community in which the participants can share and explore their life and faith stories.¹⁸² In his results, he did not specify whether the participants preferred to be in a *same-aged community*, or *community in general*. Perhaps these same participants would find similar results in an intergenerational community if they retained the opportunity to explore and engage their life and faith stories. According to the Assemblies of God’s discipleship guide, intergenerational ministry opens a rich opportunity for participants to learn from the perspectives of those from diverse generations.¹⁸³ In their denominational approach, they suggest implementing a combination approach in which age-graded Sunday School classes regularly engage with one another through periodic intergenerational projects and discussions.¹⁸⁴

Although this thesis project is limited to adults, it is worth mentioning Ermias G. Mamo’s endorsement of family-based discipleship, which is a form of intergenerational discipleship that trains participants within their family units.¹⁸⁵ According to Mamo, this was the model through which his primary spiritual formation took place. He also explains that family-based discipleship is effective for Christians in migrant or persecuted communities in which the family unit is the most consistent Christian community.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁰ Siew, “A Case Study in Adult Discipleship,” 206.

¹⁸¹ Oh, “Christian Education for the Elderly,” 181.

¹⁸² Ibid., 202.

¹⁸³ Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, *How to Disciple Well*, 69.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 69.

¹⁸⁵ Mamo, *The Maturing Church*, 4.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

Similar to the theoretical exploration of hybrid church approaches, the most effective intergenerational discipleship approach for KLCC, which contains many families with school-aged children, is likely one that gives voice to each generation present while equipping elders and parents with the tools needed to continue discipling within their families. Allen and Santos extend a message of hope for intergenerational discipleship that extends to KLCC's ministry context: "Challenging the shortcomings of age-and-stage ministries and the rampant fragmentation we are seeing in Western culture, this conversation is exploring new ways of being spiritually formed together in our communities of faith, and we are hopeful for what the church might become."¹⁸⁷

Intercultural Discipleship

Before examining theoretical approaches to intercultural discipleship, it is imperative to note that most scholarly texts on the subject are written from the perspective of White Western Christians with experience contextualizing biblical texts to suit a non-White, non-Western audience. While this perspective is most helpful for those within said context, it is less useful for disciplers from non-White majority-world default cultures looking for tools for contextualizing biblical truths for a Western audience. This is often the case at KLCC, wherein many leaders were born in majority-world, non-Western contexts, and many new converts hold a default Western worldview. Without checking the cultural assumption that Christian mission extends from the West to the rest of the world, new majority-world Christians may implicitly believe they cannot serve the Great Commission. To this point, Joe Kapolyo, a Zambian-British theologian, directed this message to the church throughout Africa: "For too long we have been

¹⁸⁷ Allen and Santos, "Intergenerational Ministry," 525–526.

recipients of the benefits of the gospel, and with few exceptions most of our church communities do not anticipate, let alone participate in, mission.”¹⁸⁸ Simply stated, tools for intercultural discipleship written from diverse perspectives are needed to equip diverse disciplers. In response to this gap in discipleship methodology, this thesis project engages theoretical approaches from diverse Western and non-Western scholars.

The two most essential skills needed for intercultural discipleship are the ability to accurately exegete biblical passages with sufficient awareness of one’s default cultural assumptions and the ability to contextualize the Bible without losing the integrity of the messages being presented.¹⁸⁹ A somewhat common issue found in the literature was a recommendation towards a fixed discipleship curriculum that left little room for contextualization. For example, in *Discipleship in Community*, the authors, Mark E. Powell et al., recognize the challenges around community discipleship in the Church of Christ denomination. As a solution, they recommend that all discipleship curricula be built on “six theological convictions of early Stone-Campbell leaders,”¹⁹⁰ which were created by two White U.S. American men in the 1830s.¹⁹¹ The Church of Christ is a diverse denomination with members in the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. Despite its diversity, it remains divided along the lines of “doctrine, practice, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.”¹⁹² While the race of Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell, the founders of the Church of Christ denomination, is a non-

¹⁸⁸ Kapolyo, “Matthew,” 1196.

¹⁸⁹ E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O’Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 48–49.

¹⁹⁰ Powell, Hicks, and McKinzie, *Discipleship in Community*, 3.

¹⁹¹ D. Newell Williams, Douglas A. Foster, and Paul M. Blowers, eds., *The Stone-Campbell Movement: A Global History* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2013), 1.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 380.

issue regarding of the founding of the Stone-Campbell movement, it is problematic when their theological convictions are used to govern the discipleship of a diverse people. Jerome Gay Jr. explains the adverse effect of culturally rigid Christian materials that frame Christianity within a White-Western perspective. According to Gay, failure to recognize the diversity present within Christian history “has led many Black people to question whether they have any place in the Christian church – and has pushed many to seek belonging in religious identity groups outside of the church.”¹⁹³ As a solution, he suggests calling out whitewashed Christianity, acknowledging its effects, and embracing the diversity of Christian history by highlighting God’s use of all people in His redemptive plan for the world He created.¹⁹⁴

Ermias G. Mamo calls attention to the ineffectiveness of rigid discipleship curricula (e.g., the Stone-Campbell curriculum) that fail to address the lived experience and cultural values of Christians from non-Western contexts.¹⁹⁵ As an alternative, he offers an approach that begins with biblical community building (i.e., socialization) in which Christian education and emphasis on the “reality of human experience” are addressed simultaneously.¹⁹⁶ He warns that discipleship initiatives that fail to build community between group members spread adverse reports that affect the witness of the ministry and limit the local ministry reach.¹⁹⁷ What Mamo calls the “reality of human experience,” Jay W. Moon and Paul Hiebert refer to as “middle issues.”¹⁹⁸ Moon also warns that discipleship attempts that fail to account for middle issues, or cultural issues that are

¹⁹³ Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with The Gospel*, 35.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 56.

¹⁹⁵ Mamo, *The Maturing Church*, 146.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., loc 3188, Kindle.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 29.

not clearly addressed in the Bible (e.g., rituals around birth, death, and marriage; community obligations), are greatly hampered.¹⁹⁹ Moon offers a solid intercultural discipleship model, patterned after Jesus' use of parables, that uses "culturally available genres" (e.g., local proverbs, music, stories, language) to form mature disciples while also avoiding syncretism and split-level Christianity.²⁰⁰ This process requires a local community committed to Scripture, Holy Spirit-led leaders, exploration of emic and etic cultural values, mother-tongue Scripture, and evidence that God is at work within the culture.²⁰¹ Latasha Morrison suggests a discussion-based curriculum aimed at building bridges between members of multi-racial small groups. The "Building Bridges" curriculum uses a racial reconciliation process that includes awareness, acknowledgment and lament, addressing shame and guilt, confession, forgiveness, repentance, making amends, restoration, and reproduction.²⁰²

Quality intercultural discipleship curricula do not come in tidy packages. Instead, the immediate need for contextualization requires disciplers who are willing to do the work to engage in their discipleship context long enough to learn how to build cultural bridges, after which the bridges must be designed and built. Community transformation requires the humble personal transformation of disciples, whether they are teachers, students, or both.²⁰³ Morrison shared a testimony about a predominantly White church in a diverse Floridian community who decided to engage in the work of bridging out into their surrounding community. By humbly leaning into the difficult conversations and working to remove barriers to the reconciliatory work

¹⁹⁹ Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 30.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 61-62.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 114.

²⁰² Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, ix-x.

²⁰³ Davis, *Making Disciples Across Cultures*, 160.

of the Holy Spirit, they experienced a transformation that not only included the development of a diverse staff and congregation, but the training of other congregations looking to do the same.²⁰⁴

Conclusion

The problem addressed through this thesis project is the underdeveloped spiritual maturity of the adult members of KLCC due to the need for a progressive discipleship structure. This DMIN action research project aims to develop congruent discipleship initiatives through which KLCC's members grow spiritually in virtual and in-person spaces. If the KLCC leadership develops progressive hybrid discipleship initiatives, members who commit to consistent participation will mature as disciples of Jesus Christ.

A review of the literature about intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid discipleship has helped to create a centered set framework to build a contextually appropriate, decolonized discipleship curriculum. Through research, non-Western approaches to all three discipleship targets (i.e., intercultural, intergenerational, hybrid) filled some of the spaces largely unaddressed by Western scholars. Acknowledgment of the gaps in literature invites space for deep prayer, discussion, creativity, and further research.

The Theological Foundations explored ensure that future initiatives are derived from biblical principles instead of an eisegetical approach that reads KLCC's context into Scripture. Jesus' teaching provides knowledge on what it means to be one of His disciples; Paul's letters to Timothy and the Corinthians provide biblical examples of intercultural and intergenerational wisdom from which to draw inspiration. In addition, Revelation 7:9 provides an eschatological hope for the complex work of engaging interculturality.

²⁰⁴ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 200-201.

Finally, the Theoretical Foundations surveyed are instrumental in identifying approaches to discipleship at KLCC that are most likely to be effective. While it would be easiest to adopt a pre-written discipleship curriculum, research shows that successful intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid discipleship initiatives require disciplers committed to designing contextually appropriate mediums.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

To address the problem of the underdeveloped spiritual maturity of the adult members of Kingdom Life Community Church (KLCC), a plan of intervention has been created to facilitate the design and implementation of a discipleship curriculum that accounts for the congregation's intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid nature. This section of the paper will detail the intervention design with thought given to IRB approval, recruitment, curriculum design, curriculum implementation, project timeline, data collection and analysis, and reporting.

Intervention Design

A key component in the intervention design is the development of a discipleship curriculum through collaboration with the KLCC elders. Before beginning the collaborative planning process, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted through Liberty University's IRB (APPENDIX J). Before receiving IRB approval, the researcher completed the required training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). After securing IRB approval, the researcher consulted with their faculty mentor and developed a project timeline, which was presented to the KLCC Board of Elders in mid-January 2023.

Recruitment

This thesis project requires the participation of KLCC's Board of Elders and a sample group from the church's existing small groups (i.e., Kingdom Life Communities or KLCs). It was necessary to recruit the elders first to ensure their cooperation and participation early in the intervention process.¹ The elders were officially invited to participate through a verbal

¹ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 76.

presentation at one of their weekly meetings, which included a PowerPoint presentation through which the researcher put forward the problem and proposed solution. During the presentation, in collaboration with the elders, the group decided that the project would be first announced during the Sunday Gathering on January 22nd, followed immediately by sending a recruitment email (APPENDIX A) and an informed consent letter (APPENDIX B). The researcher created an opt-in form using Google Forms (APPENDIX C) to allow eligible church members the convenience of opting in electronically. The elders requested that all recruitment forms be emailed to the elders before sending them to the congregation.

During the initial presentation meeting with the elders, one elder agreed to join the researcher (also a KLCC elder) in forming a Curriculum Design Team (CDT). The CDT's primary purpose was to ensure that the KLCC leadership was directly involved in the curriculum development process, which is a part of the purpose of this thesis project.

Purposeful sampling was used in selecting the sample group for this project. This sampling method was chosen based on the possibility of gaining greater information from participants familiar with the church context.² Currently, KLCC has three small groups called Kingdom Life Communities (KLCs), two in person and one online. A facilitator leads each KLC. The sample group of participants for this project was selected from those currently participating or willing to participate in a KLC. Due to the size of the church, there were not enough people to create a separate group of project participants apart from those currently in KLCs. As a result, a goal was set to recruit fifteen KLC participants with the hope that at least ten would remain throughout the duration of the study. The fifteen recruits would then function as the sample

² Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 83.

group for this project. Two presentations were given to ensure the highest probability of recruiting fifteen participants to join the sample group: one to the general church population and one to the small groups. The general church population was invited through a five-minute verbal presentation during the January 22nd Sunday Gathering, and an informational email was sent to the church's email list. The following week, those currently in KLCs were also invited through verbal presentations at their meetings after receiving the email invite sent to the general church population. The informational email included the same recruitment email and informed consent letter sent to the elders. To be clear, some people in the KLCs were not a part of this research project (i.e., children and those who did not opt in). Only those who opted into this project were used to collect the appropriate data.

All invitees were asked to respond within one week of being invited. They were invited to opt in electronically via a link in their email and were confirmed as project participants upon the receipt of their consent form. Those who declined participation were thanked for their response. Those who opted into the research project received a thank-you email detailing the process's next steps. The primary purpose of the follow-up email was to introduce and formulate a method of communication that would include emails and options to meet by telephone or face-to-face online (e.g., FaceTime, Zoom).³

Although children often participate in the KLCs, the participants in this research project were limited to those 18 years of age or older. Limiting the study to adults made obtaining consent and collecting data easier, all while maintaining the intergenerational nature of the groups. Each participant was expected to commit to eight consecutive KLCs. In addition, they were asked to:

³ Stringer, *Action Research*, 77.

- complete two online questionnaires, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the project (10 minutes each) (APPENDIX E and APPENDIX F)
- complete four bi-weekly journal entries (5-10 minutes each) (APPENDIX G)
- participate in up to two interviews (15 minutes each) (APPENDIX H)
- participate in one focus group discussion (60 minutes) (APPENDIX I)

Curriculum Design

Following the confirmation of the CDT, two initial meetings were scheduled to provide the needed space for curriculum development. The purpose of the first meeting was to familiarize the team with the curriculum framework and to brainstorm ideas for the biblical passage(s) to be studied during the project. In line with this project's theoretical foundations, the curriculum needed to account for the church's diverse, multi-platform realities. This required space to be created within KLC meetings for: (1) biblical and contemporary contextualization, and (2) discussion. For this reason, a custom curriculum was designed as opposed to using a pre-written curriculum.

The agenda for the second meeting included: (1) confirming the biblical passages for study, (2) finalizing the meeting schedule, (3) and scheduling a facilitator training session. The facilitator training session took place on January 31st. In this meeting, each of the three facilitators was given a binder that included a draft of a "Facilitator Guide," compiled by the researcher, which included notes on: (1) the KLC meeting format, (2) Bible study facilitation, and (3) considerations for facilitating meetings in an intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid context (APPENDIX D). While reviewing the guide, the facilitators provided feedback to help create a document for future facilitators.

To support project participants in remaining accountable during the project, Ernest T. Stringer’s three-phase action plan framework was incorporated into the curriculum to connect the biblical passage being studied with the participants’ personal spiritual growth (see Table 1).

Table 1. Weekly Participant Action Plan

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Planning | “This week I want to . . .” |
| Implementation | “I can do this by . . .” or “This will require me to . . .” |
| Review | Action statement follow-up at the beginning of each meeting. |

In this framework, Stringer encourages facilitators and researchers to incorporate the participants into the process of action research by presenting ways for them to plan, implement, and review the study in which they are involved.⁴ Encouraging participants to create planning (e.g., “This week I want to . . .”) and implementation (e.g., “I can do this by . . .”) statements in response to the week’s Bible study will involve them in the exploration of the diverse implications of the text. Beginning each meeting with a follow-up allows participants the opportunity to review, evaluate, and share their progress.⁵

Curriculum Implementation

The initial curriculum, designed by the CDT, was implemented in all three existing KLCs (i.e., Wednesday In-Person, Wednesday Online, and Friday In-Person). Each meeting lasted 90 minutes and adhered to the following schedule (Table 2):

⁴ Stringer, *Action Research*, 168.

⁵ Ibid.

Table 2. Sample Meeting Schedule

| Time | Activity |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| 6:30 - 6:35 pm | Opening Prayer |
| 6:35 - 7:00 | Action Statement Follow Up |
| 7:00 - 7:45 | Bible Study and Discussion |
| 7:45 - 7:55 | Action Statement Formulation |
| 7:55 - 8:00 | Closing Prayer |

Each meeting opened and closed in prayer. The CDT was responsible for determining the biblical passages that would be studied. KLC facilitators recorded each participant's action statement to follow-up in the subsequent week. In addition, participants involved in this research project were required to record their action statements in bi-weekly participant journals (APPENDIX G), which were stored securely online and used as qualitative data by the researcher. These journal entries included reflections on the interactions between group members during meetings and how the biblical passage being studied corrected or informed their cultural and generational perspectives. The purpose of the journals was to capture key experiences from the participants throughout the project, providing a primary source of participant-created data which aided in determining the impact of the curriculum.⁶

In-person meetings took place in selected participants' homes. The homes for the 2022/2023 KLCs were chosen before this thesis project. The Wednesday in-person KLC rotated between three homes, and the Friday in-person KLC primarily took place in one home. A successful effort was made to include each host in the research process to ensure that consent was given for research to take place in their home. Virtual meetings took place on Zoom via

⁶ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 134.

face-to-face meetings in which each participant was encouraged to attend with their cameras turned on.

Trial Period

The project timeline was developed by the researcher in consultation with his faculty mentor and the KLCC elders. The trial period for this thesis research project was eight KLC meetings over ten weeks (i.e., January 30 – April 7, 2023). Although it was possible to complete the study in eight weeks, the ten-week window was selected to account for Spring Break (i.e., March 13-24, 2023), through which all KLC meetings were canceled.

Data Collection and Analysis

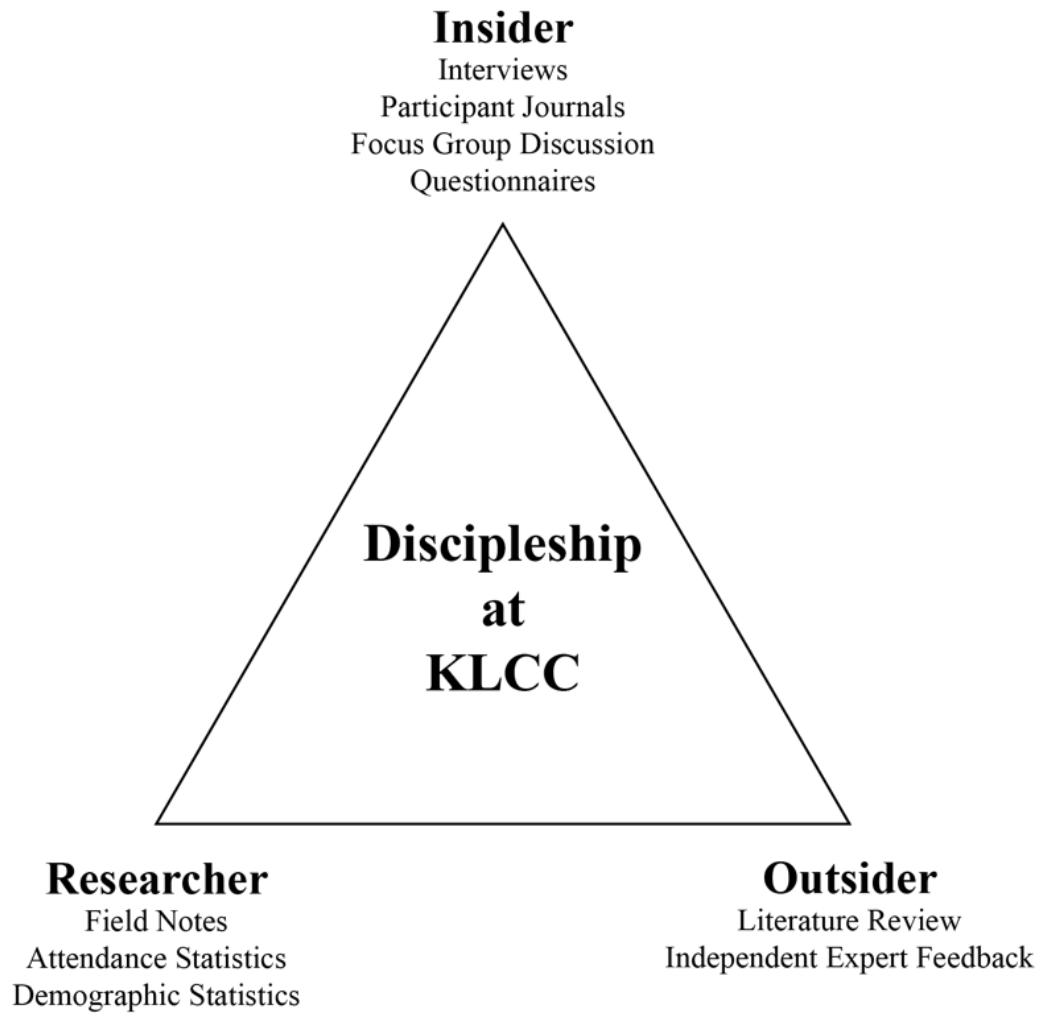
To ensure depth in the data available for analysis and interpretation, triangulation was used to gather data from a variety of sources.⁷ As suggested by Tim Sensing, the information collected before and during this project was balanced by cross-checking three perspectives: insider, outsider, and researcher (see Figure 1).⁸ The project participants provided the insider angle through interviews, participant journals, a focus group discussion, and questionnaires. The researcher provided field notes and statistical information through participant observation and project administration. The outsider's perspective was sought primarily before the beginning of the trial period and provided accountability for building a framework through which to form this project. The literature review (see Chapter 2) continued to inform the insider and researcher data. Additionally, feedback from two Liberty University professors, Philip Adam McClendon and W. Ryan Steenburg, as well as input from a faculty mentor, Seth Bible, provided preliminary

⁷ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72.

⁸ Ibid., 75.

evaluation and insight into aspects of this thesis project and paper (i.e., the “7 Marks of Discipleship” used in the questionnaires, this thesis project paper).

Figure 1. Triangulation



Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through surveys, interviews, a focus group discussion, participant observation, and participant journal entries. To account for the hybrid nature of the KLCs, options were given for completing documents physically or digitally whenever possible. A physical folder containing the required documents was given to those who

preferred physical media. For those comfortable using digital media, a digital folder containing the materials needed was created and shared using Google Drive.

All participants were asked to complete two identical questionnaires, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the trial period. The purposes of these questionnaires included collecting demographic information, feedback on discipleship at KLCC before and after the trial period, and a comparative self-evaluation of each participant's spiritual maturity. Those with digital folders were asked to upload completed questionnaires to their digital project folders. Those with physical folders were asked to give their completed questionnaires to the researcher at the next in-person gathering. A numeric Likert scale was used on both questionnaires to provide another source of quantitative data for statistical analysis.⁹

The questionnaires centered around seven qualities, or “marks,” of discipleship developed by the researcher through biblical hermeneutics and exegesis, and in consultation with Liberty University professor Philip Adam McClendon. Participants were asked to assess themselves using pre-written personal statements about discipleship. A five-point scale was used, with each number correlating to the degree to which the participant found the statement true (Table 3). A maximum of 30 points were possible for each of the seven categories, with a possible grand total of 210 points. Each participant's point total was calculated and recorded for both the entrance and exit interviews, providing the researcher with numeric data to analyze with the goal of determining if participants felt differently about themselves as disciples of Jesus Christ at the end of the trial period.

⁹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 113.

Table 3. Discipleship Questionnaire Sample

| Mark No. 1: Disciples Make Disciples | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|--|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1. I understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. | | | | | |
| 2. I look for opportunities to share my testimony with others. | | | | | |
| 3. I lead nonbelievers into relationship with God through Jesus Christ. | | | | | |
| 4. I am actively helping one or more other Christians grow in their relationship with Jesus. | | | | | |
| 5. I personally encourage new Christians to get baptized. | | | | | |
| 6. I work to contextualize the gospel and Jesus' teachings so that others can understand them. | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

In addition to the questionnaires, each participant was interviewed twice: after taking the entrance questionnaire and after taking the exit questionnaire. The entrance interviews were scheduled electronically through an online appointment platform (i.e., Calendly) and were conducted on Zoom whenever possible. For those uncomfortable using Zoom, interviews took place over the phone or in person. Zoom interviews were recorded using the built-in meeting recording function. In-person and phone interviews were recorded using a portable audio recording device (i.e., smartphone voice memo). The exit interviews were conducted by email. Each participant was emailed a set of questions to which they responded by including their answers in an email response. The shift from face-to-face to email interviews was done to simplify the hybrid scheduling and transcription of the exit interviews.

A focus group discussion took place during the last two weeks of the project trial period. It was hosted and recorded on Zoom. A series of grand tour and minitour questions were asked for the purpose of hearing descriptions of KLCs from the participants' perspectives (APPENDIX

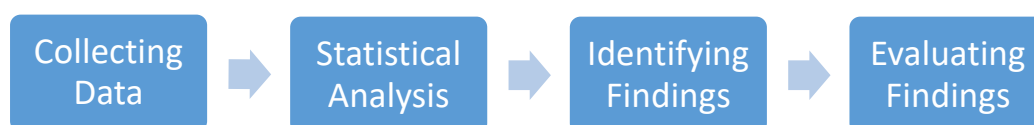
I).¹⁰ The focus group discussion was also the only time the researcher was able to hear from all sample group participants in one setting and observe their interactions.

The researcher also gathered data as a participant-observer by attending in-person meetings as an observer and the virtual meeting as a facilitator. He used his field observations to guide the formation of the focus group and exit interview questions, helping to inform the truthfulness of their observations.¹¹ Through well-informed questions, the researcher was equipped with the tools needed to guide the participants in exploring the problem being addressed and the intervention in their terms. The researcher's participant observation notes were recorded in an electronic journal.

Quantitative Data Analysis and Interpretation

The process of analyzing and interpreting the quantitative data is an adapted version of Stringer's process for distilling data.¹² For this project, the process included collecting data, statistical analysis, identifying findings, and evaluating findings (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Quantitative Data Analysis and Interpretation Process



To measure the implications of the intervention through quantitative data, all numeric and demographic data were examined through descriptive analysis, correlation tests, and t-tests. The numeric data analyzed included questionnaire results, attendance, and age. The demographic data

¹⁰ Stringer, *Action Research*, 109.

¹¹ Ibid., 114.

¹² Ibid., 139.

examined included each participant's generation, ethnicity/race, KLC meeting style (i.e., online, in-person, hybrid), gender, and length of time as a Christian. The generational labels used in this project (i.e., Baby Boomer, Gen X, Millennial) are those used in the 2021 Canadian census.¹³

Likewise, the ethnic and racial categories used are also from the 2021 Canadian census.¹⁴

Descriptive analysis was used to examine trends, central tendencies, and distributions within similar demographics and between diverse demographics (e.g., comparing the attendance records of Baby Boomer and Gen X participants).¹⁵ Numeric data was analyzed through correlation tests and t-tests. Correlation tests were used to determine if age or attendance affected the questionnaire outcomes. Two-tailed, paired t-tests helped determine if the questionnaires' results were real or random.

The statistical tests and data analysis results were evaluated by balancing them against the qualitative data analysis and findings.

Qualitative Data Analysis and Interpretation

The qualitative data for this thesis project included interviews, field notes, action statement logs, and participant journals. The qualitative data analysis and interpretation process also follows a modified model of Stringer's process for distilling data.¹⁶ It includes collecting data, unitizing, categorizing and coding, identifying findings, evaluating findings, and developing conclusions (see Figure 3).

¹³ Statistics Canada, "A Generational Portrait of Canada's Aging Population from the 2021 Census," 5.

¹⁴ Statistics Canada, "Visible Minority and Population Group Reference Guide," *Catalogue* 98-500-X, no. 2021006 (February 2023): 5.

¹⁵ Stringer, *Action Research*, 122-123.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

Figure 3. Qualitative Data Analysis and Interpretation Process



Once the data was collected, it was organized into various forms, allowing for ease of review. Interviews were unitized in matrixes in Microsoft Excel. Field notes, interviews, and participant journals were categorized and coded using themes related to the thesis of this project (e.g., approaches to online ministry, seven marks of a disciple, cultural and generational perspectives, bounded set theory vs. centered set theory). To avoid analyzing the qualitative data from a purely academic perspective, the researcher distilled the data by using the key experiences of each participant, as recorded in their interviews and journal entries, to focus on the aspects of the curriculum that had a marked impact on their spiritual maturation.¹⁷ Findings were discovered by evaluating trends, emic/etic understandings, omissions, and silences in the data. After assessing both the qualitative and quantitative findings, conclusions were developed.

Reporting

Upon the completion of the trial period, data collection, and data analysis, a detailed report will be completed in which the outcomes and recommendations will be presented to all project participants. In the final report, all participant identifying information will be obscured using pseudonyms and nameless quotes to protect the privacy of those involved. In addition to suggesting actions that will improve discipleship at KLCC, the researcher will also acknowledge the areas that would benefit from further research and development.

¹⁷ Stringer, *Action Research*, 144.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

In relation to the intervention design, this section details the intervention implementation, including recruitment, curriculum design, curriculum implementation, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Throughout the implementation process, it was necessary to focus on the purpose of this project regularly: to develop congruent discipleship initiatives through which members of KLCC grow spiritually in virtual and in-person spaces, with special consideration given to the intercultural and intergenerational nature of the congregation. Stringer maintains the importance of keeping perspective during the implementation phase, writing, “The heart of action research is not the techniques and procedures that guide action but the sense of unity that holds people to a collective vision of their world and inspires them to work together for the common good.”¹⁸ In other words, the purpose of the project participants is not to help the researcher complete the project. Instead, the researcher’s purpose is to serve the good of the participants, in this case, by facilitating a project that helps them mature spiritually.

Recruitment

The recruitment was implemented per the intervention design. The goal was to recruit 15 participants hoping that at least ten would finish the trial period. After the invitation was extended, 18 congregants opted into the project; 17 of whom remained through the duration. Although no one opted out of the project, one participant paused their church attendance and project involvement two weeks into the project. The project participants made up a sample group representative of the intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid nature of KLCC (Table 4).

¹⁸ Stringer, *Action Research*, 173.

Generationally, the sample group was comprised of Baby Boomers (i.e., Boomers), Generation X (i.e., Gen X), and Millennials. Five races/ethnicities were represented in the sample group: White (72%), Black (11%), Latin American (6%), East Asian (6%), and South Asian (6%). Although the generational and racial/ethnic composition of the sample group is less diverse than the larger KLCC congregation, the involvement of additional KLC members in the discussion (i.e., children, youth, and adults not participating in the sample group) allowed for intergenerational and intercultural dialogue and interaction at each of the three KLCs.

Table 4. Project Participants and Demographic Data ¹⁹

| Name | Generation | Race/Ethnicity | Primary KLC | Gender | Years as a Christian |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Adelina | Gen X | South Asian | Fri. In Person | F | 10-19 years |
| Ana | Millennial | Latin American | Wed. Online | F | 10-19 years |
| Camila | Gen X | White | Wed. In Person | F | 30+ years |
| Daisy | Boomer | White | Wed. Online | F | 30+ years |
| Edith | Boomer | White | Wed. Online | F | 30+ years |
| George | Boomer | White | Wed. Online | M | 10-19 years |
| Gloria | Boomer | Black | Wed. In Person | F | 30+ years |
| Henriette | Boomer | White | Wed. In Person | F | 30+ years |
| Joel | Millennial | East Asian | Wed. Online | M | 30+ years |
| Karl | Boomer | White | Wed. Online | M | 30+ years |
| Linda | Gen X | White | Fri. In Person | F | 30+ years |
| Melicent | Gen X | Black | Wed. Online | F | 20-29 years |
| Mya | Gen X | White | Wed. Online | F | 30+ years |
| Nikolas | Boomer | White | Wed. In Person | M | 30+ years |
| Olivia | Gen X | White | Fri. In Person | F | 20-29 years |
| Ruby | Boomer | White | Fri. In Person | F | 30+ years |
| Ryan | Gen X | White | Fri. In Person | M | 20-29 years |
| Tabitha | Gen X | White | Fri. In Person | F | 0-9 years |

¹⁹ To protect the identity of the participants, names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

61% of the sample group self-reported to have been Christians for over 30 years. Their participation in the project helped determine if the intervention design was effective in moving long-time Christians from a place of spiritual maintenance and stagnation to consistent spiritual growth. KLCC's hybrid meeting style is also adequately represented in the sample group, with 56% of the participants belonging primarily to in-person KLCs (i.e., Wednesday In-Person KLC and Friday In-Person KLC) and 44% belonging mainly to the Wednesday Online KLC. This representation is critical in determining if the meeting platform affects the result of the intervention design. While gender is not a focus of this thesis project, the demographic information was helpful in understanding inter-group dynamics.

The Researcher's Roles

Sensing advises that researchers avoid falling victim to the "Star Trek Syndrome," which leads one to believe they are neutral observers without influence on the research setting. According to Sensing, "While researchers strive for accuracy in their observations and validity in their analysis, they also must reflect on how their role as researcher influences the setting."²⁰ For this thesis project, the researcher was also involved in critical components of the project that affected the ministry context.

In addition to functioning as the project coordinator, the researcher was a participant observer. As a participant, he facilitated the Wednesday Online KLC and is an associate pastor at KLCC. As an observer, he recorded field notes during and after the Wednesday Online KLC meetings. He also observed the Friday In-Person KLC bi-weekly and participated as an attendee while recording field notes during the meeting. Because the Wednesday In-Person KLC met at

²⁰ Sensing, *Qualitative Data*, 95.

the same time as the Wednesday Online KLC, the researcher could not attend the meetings as a participant observer. As a result, he relied heavily on the information given through interviews with the Wednesday In-Person participants, as well as their journals.

Curriculum Design and Implementation

The curriculum design happened in accordance with the intervention design. The CDT chose eight biblical passages as material for the Bible study portion of the meetings (Table 5).

Table 5. Bible Study Passages

| Part 1: Being a Disciple | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Week 1: Mark 8:34-38 |
| | Week 2: John 8:31-36 |
| | Week 3: John 13:34-35 |
| | Week 4: Luke 14:25-27 |
| | Week 5: Luke 14:28-35 |
| Part 2: Remaining a Disciple | |
| | Week 6: John 15:1-5 |
| | Week 7: John 15:6-11 |
| | Week 8: John 15:12-17 |

The passages were chosen based on select teachings of Jesus on discipleship in the Gospels of Mark, John, and Luke. The eight passages were divided into two categories: “Being a Disciple” (weeks 1 through 5), and “Remaining a Disciple” (weeks 6 through 8). The idea was that by allowing Jesus’ words to inform the participants’ current realities, they would become aware of the distance between them and His standard. In addition, through the action statements, the hope was that they would identify and share at least one action they could take between KLC meetings to move closer to Jesus’ standard for discipleship. The weekly check-ins, then, would function as accountability and encouragement for participants who were willing to share updates.

The curriculum was implemented fluidly, with a couple of issues around the Friday meeting space and schedule. Whereas the Wednesday In-Person KLC was hosted on a rotating basis between three homes, the Friday In-Person KLC regularly met in the home of a project participant. When the Friday host went on vacation for two weeks, a new place had to be located. Two hosts stepped forward, and the issue was solved. Regarding the schedule, the final week of the trial period coincided with Good Friday (i.e., April 7, 2023). At the beginning of the trial period, the KLCC leadership had not planned a Good Friday service, but in early March, a service was planned that would require the Friday KLC to be canceled that week. Because it was the last week of the trial period, the Friday KLC members who were a part of the sample group were encouraged to attend either Wednesday KLC. Most participants could participate in one of the Wednesday KLCs, but two participants, Ryan and Linda, could not attend and therefore missed the Week 8 study.

Data Collection and Analysis

While the data analysis happened according to the intervention design, a few unexpected challenges arose when collecting data from project participants. Two types of data collection methods were designed and offered to account for the hybrid meeting style of the KLCs and the participants' personal preferences. Those who prefer physical media were given a red folder that contained a consent form, the entrance discipleship questionnaire, a bi-weekly participant journal, and a checklist that included each required element of the project. Participants who were comfortable with digital media were set up with digital folders on a secure Google Drive that only the individual participant and researcher could access. Each digital folder contained the same documents as the physical folders but in digital form. The facilitators of the Wednesday and Friday In-Person KLCs were also given a facilitator binder that included action statement

logs, a list of Bible study passages, and a draft of the facilitator guide. The physical folders were distributed during the in-person KLCC Sunday Gathering on January 29th, and the digital folders were shared at the same time. Most consent forms, which were required before commencing with the project, were submitted shortly after participants opted in.

The challenges with collecting participant documents can be primarily attributed to two factors: (1) KLCC's in-person meeting space, and (2) hybrid attendees. As mentioned in Chapter 1, KLCC does not currently have a permanent meeting space and meets weekly in an elementary school gym. The church does have an office that is a significant distance from the elementary school and is utilized by one staff member. As a result, KLCC is without a centralized place for congregants to meet during the week, meaning that project participants with physical folders were required to remember to bring their completed documents to the in-person Sunday Gatherings. While a couple of participants remembered, most forgot, causing a delay in collecting preliminary data. The second challenge was related to the hybrid meeting patterns of some of the project participants, including the researcher. KLCC currently holds Sunday Gatherings live in-person and online simultaneously. Due to the school's wireless internet limitations, one person is required to manage the online portion of the service remotely. During the project, the researcher rotated this position with another church member, which allowed them to attend in-person gatherings every other week, creating another challenge for those seeking to hand in physical documents during the in-person Sunday Gathering. A few project participants who were only comfortable with physical media also attended hybridly. Combined, the abovementioned issues delayed the collection of entrance discipleship assessments and journal entries. While almost everyone completed the entrance assessments before their interview, most were not collected until the later part of the project.

To solve this issue, additional means of data collection had to be implemented. Some participants took pictures of their documents and texted or emailed them to the researcher. One participant came to the researcher's home to pick up and hand in documents. To keep track of each participant's progress in completing the project's required components, the researcher created a spreadsheet with a row for each participant and a column for each required component. With documents being submitted asynchronously in-person and digitally through Google Drive, email, and text messages, the spreadsheet was vital in monitoring the progress of each project participant.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The issue at the center of this paper is the spiritual maturity of the congregation at Kingdom Life Community Church (KLCC). Although many within the congregation purport to be long-time Christians, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for more spiritual maturity within the congregation and leadership. Also highlighted was the need for a progressive discipleship structure. To address the issue, the researcher, with the input of the KLCC elders, created a curriculum framework called the “Intercultural, Intergenerational, Hybrid Discipleship Curriculum” (IIHD Curriculum), which was tested by a sample group of 18 participants from within the KLCC congregation over a 10-week, 8-session trial period.

The purpose of this section is to present the findings of the trial period. The implications of the findings will be examined in Chapter 5. This chapter addresses the question: “Did the project participants grow spiritually?” It also looks at intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid themes, silences, and developments indicated in the qualitative and quantitative data drawn from various sources. Triangulation was used to help determine if the findings were significant or random. Both the qualitative and quantitative findings were balanced against the literature review, theological foundations, and theoretical foundations presented in Chapter 2.

Did the Project Participants Grow Spiritually?

Before addressing the question of spiritual growth, it is necessary to examine the initial spiritual state of the participants at the beginning of the project trial period. At the project’s onset, the participants were asked to complete and submit an “Entrance Discipleship Assessment,” a questionnaire through which they self-assessed their discipleship condition by comparing themselves to statements derived from Jesus Christ’s teachings on discipleship in the Gospels (APPENDIX E). They were asked to complete the questionnaire before their entrance

interview to aid in assessing their spiritual condition at the outset of the trial period. The entrance interviews were then used to explore their spiritual condition in their own words.

Entrance Interviews

When asked during their entrance interview, “What are the qualities of a mature Christian?” Participants shared specific qualities of those they consider to be spiritually mature. Their answers were then categorized using the seven marks of a disciple from the entrance discipleship questionnaire. They are:

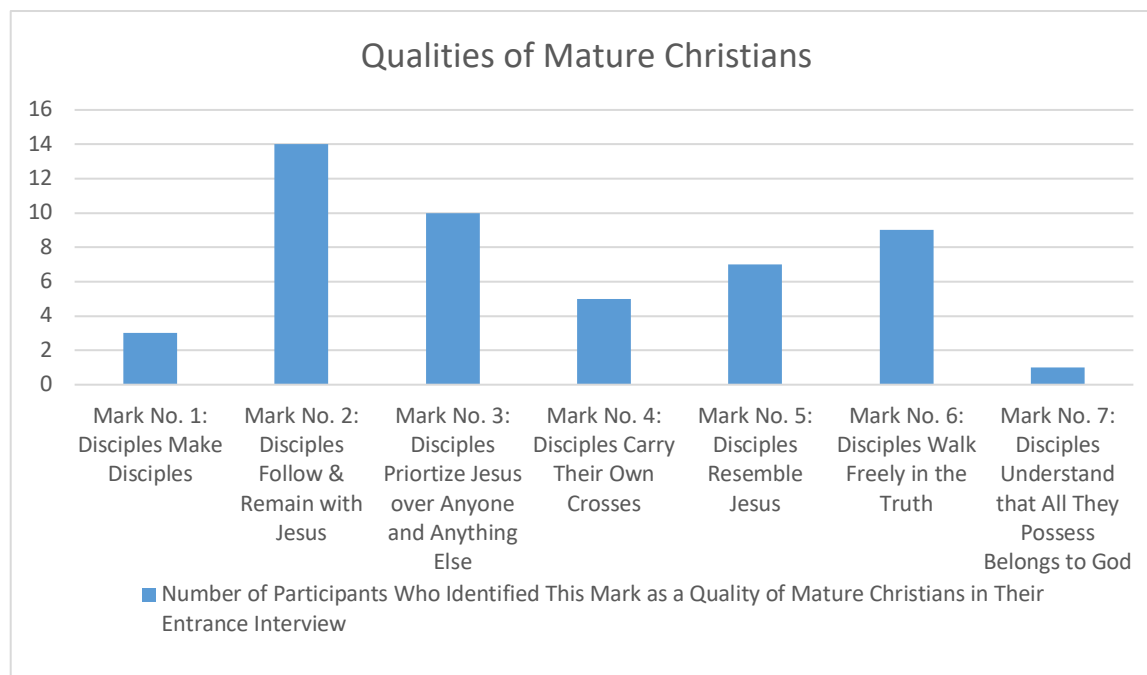
1. Disciples make disciples.
2. Disciples follow and remain with Jesus.
3. Disciples prioritize Jesus over anyone or anything else.
4. Disciples carry their own crosses.
5. Disciples resemble Jesus.
6. Disciples walk freely in the truth.
7. Disciples understand that all they possess belongs to God.

Of the seven categories, participants identified qualities in line with marks two, three, and six when describing the traits of mature Christians (Figure 4). The two most popular qualities were: (1) reading or studying the Bible, and (2) listening to the Holy Spirit. In contrast, qualities congruent with marks one and seven were referred to the least, signifying that most participants believed that one could be a mature Christian without making disciples or surrendering all their possessions to God.

The entrance interviews also uncovered confusion between *spiritual growth* and *spiritual health*. For example, when asked, “What questions should someone ask you to determine if you are growing spiritually?” Only six out of eighteen participants (i.e., 33%) suggested asking questions about their spiritual growth or transformation. Twelve participants (i.e., 66%) suggested asking questions about their spiritual health or maintenance to determine if they are growing spiritually. This finding suggests that most people entered the project equating *spiritual*

growth with spiritual health, which could partially explain the tendency toward spiritual stagnation at KLCC.

Figure 4. Qualities of Mature Christians



Approaching discipleship from a bounded set theory approach instead of a centered set approach could be another contributor to a lack of spiritual growth. A bounded set theory approach views discipleship as a one-time decision. Conversely, centered set theory defines discipleship based on one's direction of movement.¹ A disciple who defines their relationship with Jesus using a centered set approach views discipleship as a progressive movement in the direction of Jesus, making it the healthier approach. When asked to share their conversion stories, three participants shared their testimonies using language that signifies a one-time, bounded set understanding of their relationship with Jesus (e.g., "I said the sinner's prayer.").

¹ Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 46-47.

Spiritual Development

In their exit interviews, 100% of the participants who finished the trial period (17 participants) stated that they matured spiritually during the project. To confirm the veracity of their feelings about their spiritual condition, this section will present statistical data from the two discipleship questionnaires (i.e., “Entrance Discipleship Assessment” and “Exit Discipleship Assessment”) and findings from the exit interviews.

Statistical Data

After comparing the results of the identical entrance and exit questionnaires, two trends emerged. First, 88% of the 16 participants who completed both questionnaires scored themselves higher on the exit questionnaire than they did on the entrance questionnaire. In contrast, 12%, or two participants, scored themselves lower on the exit questionnaire than they did on the entrance questionnaire (Table 6). Both changes, the higher and lower differences, can be partially attributed to the repeated exposure to Jesus’ teachings on discipleship in the KLCs, and the accountability provided through the action statements. For most, the exposure to Jesus’ teachings challenged them to seek transformation. For a couple of participants, exposure to Jesus’ teachings made them realize that they overestimated their spiritual condition at the beginning of the project. For the second group, growth entailed coming to terms with their actual state of discipleship.

A t-test was employed to address the research question of whether the IIHD Curriculum significantly changed how participants saw themselves as disciples of Jesus Christ. Using a significance level of $p = 0.05$, a two-tailed, paired t-test was used to determine a p-value of 0.004. This shows a 99.6% confidence interval, proving that the differences between the entrance and exit discipleship questionnaires are real, not random, results. This finding suggests that those

who participate in a KLC, online or in-person, using the IIHD Curriculum for at least eight sessions, will experience a significant change in the way they view themselves as disciples of Jesus Christ.²

Table 6. Discipleship Assessment Comparison

| | Entrance Assessment Total | Exit Assessment Total | Difference (Exit – Entrance) |
|-----------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Adelina | 140 | 134 | -6 |
| Ana | 150 | 188 | 38 |
| Camila | 151 | 160 | 9 |
| Daisy | 197 | 198 | 1 |
| Edith | 174 | 171 | -3 |
| George | 155 | 160 | 5 |
| Henriette | 192 | 200 | 8 |
| Joel | 145 | 155 | 10 |
| Karl | 163 | 189 | 26 |
| Linda | 167 | 168 | 1 |
| Melicent | 180 | 181 | 1 |
| Mya | 173 | 177 | 4 |
| Nikolas | 146 | 161 | 15 |
| Olivia | 161 | 187 | 26 |
| Ruby | 167 | 186 | 19 |
| Ryan | 157 | 166 | 9 |

A series of correlation tests were conducted to detect any significant connections between attendance, meeting platform, age, and discipleship assessment differences. All correlation tests conducted showed that there was no significant relationship between assessment differences and the other categories. The insignificant correlation between attendance and assessment differences could be attributed to the consistent attendance of the 17 participants who completed the trial

² Lee Kennedy-Shaffer, “Before $p < 0.05$ to Beyond $p < 0.05$: Using History to Contextualize p-Values and Significance Testing,” *The American Statistician* 73, no. 51 (2019): 82.

period. To balance the statistical findings with the insider perspectives of the project participants, the next section will present the findings from the exit interviews.

Exit Interviews

As mentioned, every participant who completed the trial period acknowledged their spiritual growth through this project. In answering the question, “Do you feel you have grown spiritually over the past ten weeks? If so, in what ways have you grown? If not, what do you feel may have prevented your growth?” Project participants explained the ways in which they grew and the means of growth.

The two most common ways participants grew were *in their understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ* and *in their ability to examine their spiritual state*. For example, Ana, a Latin American Millennial woman who speaks English as a second language and attended the Wednesday Online KLC, said in her exit interview, “I [now] understand the importance of remaining in Jesus and [that I can] share the love that Jesus shows me with others. Another important thing is that I learned that if I have Jesus as my principal goal, [God] can help me to remain in Jesus.” Ana’s spiritual growth in a culturally distant context, especially in terms of language, is a meaningful reflection on the effectiveness of the intervention design and implementation in an intercultural environment. Adelina, a South Asian Gen-X woman who attended the Friday In-Person KLC, spoke of her growth in spiritual awareness through the project: “I have become self-aware that I am a lukewarm Christian.” Adelina was one of the two participants who assessed themselves with a lower point value on their exit discipleship questionnaire, showing that she became more aware of her discipleship condition through participation in this project.

As detailed in the participants' exit interviews, the two most common means of spiritual growth were *learning in community*, and *Bible study*. Daisy, a White Baby Boomer who attended the Wednesday Online KLC, wrote that by "gathering in a small group like this where everyone is opening up and sharing from their hearts, we all get to learn – not just what God is highlighting for us personally but also from the lessons learned by the others. . . . This gives valuable perspectives from many different cultures and age groups." Daisy's reflection is in line with Kyungseuk Oh's finding that the most effective elderly discipleship initiatives take place in a community in which the participants can share and explore their life and faith stories.³ On the efficacy of Bible study, Ruby, a White Baby Boomer who attended the Friday In-Person KLC, noted: "Discussing and dissecting each passage gave me a lot to think and pray about." It is a remarkable finding that every participant who completed the trial period demonstrated and self-reported overall spiritual growth; however, it is necessary to note that said finding does not indicate that participants grew in every area of discipleship.

Mark No. 1 and Mark No. 7

In the entrance interviews, participants least associated discipleship Mark No. 1 (i.e., "Disciples make disciples.") and Mark No. 7 (i.e., "Disciples understand that all they possess belongs to God.") with signs of spiritual maturity. The entrance discipleship questionnaire also showed that Mark No. 1 was the one in which participants felt the least confident. After participation in the project, only three participants (i.e., Mya, Henriette, and Ruby) indicated growth in their confidence and desire to evangelize and make disciples (i.e., Mark No. 1). No

³ Oh, "Christian Education for the Elderly," 181.

participant showed an increase in their understanding that all they possess belongs to God in their exit interviews (i.e., Mark No. 7).

While it was Adelina, Joel, and Melicent who mentioned qualities of Mark No. 1 as signs of spiritual maturity in their entrance interviews, none of the three participants reflected upon personal growth in this area in their exit interviews, although Melicent and Joel both had slight increases in their Mark No. 1 scores on their exit discipleship questionnaires. Concerning the lack of growth in the qualities associated with Mark No. 7, five participants identified *submission of time* as a potential challenge to their spiritual growth in their exit interviews. Olivia, a White Gen-X participant who attended the Friday In-Person KLC, admitted, “I feel like there are so many things in my schedule that it is easy to waste my ‘free time’ . . . I sometimes get lazy and think of ‘my time’ as my time, not God’s time.”

The difference between the participants’ experience with Mark No. 1 and Mark No. 7 is that despite the lack of attention given to Mark No. 7 in participant interviews, they scored themselves the highest in this area on the entrance discipleship questionnaire and second highest on their exit discipleship questionnaire. This disparity between the interviews and questionnaires, concerning Mark No. 7, may be attributed to two possible reasons. First, the disparity may signify a lack of awareness that time is a possession being withheld from God. Second, it may be pointing to emic and etic understandings of time as a possession. The high questionnaire scores may suggest an etic, external understanding that all one has, including time, belongs to God. In contrast, the trend shown in the interviews may suggest an emic, internal understanding that a disciple can be mature without submitting all their possessions, including time, to God. The second reason is the most probable explanation for the disparity based on the data. Although

growth is still needed in the qualities of spiritual maturity associated with Mark No. 1 and Mark No. 7, a significant spiritual transformation occurred in many of the participants.

Karl's Journey: Shifting from Bounded Set to Centered Set Thinking

Karl is a White male Baby Boomer who attended the Wednesday Online KLC. He entered the project with a bounded set approach to discipleship that seemed to be causing problems with how he viewed himself as a disciple. It was as if he was trying to get back to the feeling he had when he first converted. In his entrance interview, he explained:

My first year [as a Christian] was screeching [*sic*] joy. My subsequent years have been kind of on an “up and down” situation. I had a one-year space where I was reading the Word every day. . . . And more recently, in this four-year space, I was really digging into the Word. I’m thinking that [*sic*] might help me . . . to restore my joy, my fervor, my spiritual excitement. None of that has helped. I just feel like I’m on a level plane. So, if you ask me, “How’s my spiritual life improved?” I don’t know what you would ask me, you know, to measure that.

Karl’s bounded set view of discipleship is evidenced by most of his discipleship journey being defined as a pursuit of what he once had. Throughout the trial period, he faithfully attended and participated in seven of eight KLC meetings, and in the second half of the project, a noticeable shift began to occur. After studying Jesus’ teaching on the efficacy of salt in Luke 14:34 during the week six KLC, Karl set a goal through his action statement of believing that he could be “salty even when down in the dumps.” During the action statement check-in portion of the week 7 KLC, as recorded in the researcher’s participant observation field notes, Karl said that the progress on his action statement was “going okay.” He then read a statement from his journal: “The world believes doing the same thing and expecting different results is insanity. Well, when you’re pressing into God and into the Word, the results may not change, but the roots of what’s happening are changing.”

The final three weeks of the Bible study were spent studying John 15:1-17, where Jesus taught the necessity of abiding in Him. Karl was impacted by Jesus' teaching, and the surrounding discussion, and in his final participant journal entry, he wrote: "To remain in Jesus' love is most important. In Christ, my heart and the roots of all things that emanate from me are changing." The language of "remaining in Jesus," instead of trying to get back to Jesus, is a sign that his thinking about discipleship shifted from a bounded set approach to a centered set approach defined by being transformed while walking in a constant relationship with Jesus.

Karl confirmed his shift to centered set thinking in his final interview. He stated: "I now better understand that being a disciple is not so much a number or an accomplishment; but a relational lifestyle that I must live to be a disciple." Like Karl, the analyzed statistical and qualitative data signifies an overall spiritual growth within the sample group, although some areas of discipleship developed more than others. To look closely at additional details of discipleship development, the following three sections will focus on the findings related to intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid discipleship.

Intercultural Discipleship

KLCC is a diverse church. Over 20 ethnicities, races, and nationalities exist within a mid-sized congregation of approximately 120 members. Many church leaders are from non-White majority-world default cultures and need a methodology for discipling those with default Western perspectives. With most cross-cultural discipleship curricula being written from a Western perspective, purposed with equipping White-Western Christians with tools for discipling in non-White contexts, the need for intercultural discipleship methodologies persists. The IIHD Curriculum, utilized during this thesis project, attempted to help fill the void. As a

result of analyzing the sample group data, this section will present the findings and results of the intervention implementation in terms of the IIHD Curriculum's intercultural component.

Entrance Interviews

In the entrance interviews, each participant was asked for their perspective on intercultural discipleship. All but two participants spoke in favorable terms using the popular phrases, "It's beautiful" and "I love it." The two participants who spoke in non-positive terms, Ryan and Karl, did not disparage intercultural discipleship but spoke directly about the complexities and requirements of engaging in diverse contexts. According to Ryan, "It's gotta [sic] be inter-personal. It's gotta [sic] be life-on-life . . . because you're dealing with people who see things in many different ways . . . unless there's some space for the culture bumps to be worked through together, I think people can get lost in it."

Six participants spoke of the need for cultural flexibility, and four participants referred to the Bible when sharing their perspective, with Edith and Nikolas mentioning diversity in heaven. While Edith and Nikolas connected diversity with the kingdom of heaven, Gloria and Karl associated culture with immaturity and sin, using the word "flavor." Karl described culture as "sin with a different color . . . with a different flavor," and Gloria stated, "People bring to their Christianity the flavor of their culture . . . a part of being a mature Christian is that you're not locked into your culture."

In *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*, E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien present the danger of failing to examine one's default culture. They wrote, "If our cultural blind spots keep us from reading the Bible correctly, then they can also keep us from applying the Bible correctly. If we want to follow Jesus faithfully and help others do the same,

we need to do all we can to allow the Scriptures to speak to us on their own terms.”⁴ In terms of the initial cultural awareness of the sample group, every non-White participant reflected on their personal default cultures, through which they engage in intercultural settings. In terms of the White participants, five people showed an awareness of their personal default culture (i.e., Mya, Olivia, Nikolas, Henriette, and Linda), four did not refer to their default culture (i.e., Daisy, George, Ryan, Tabitha), and four demonstrated a general lack of awareness (i.e., Camila, Edith, Mya, Ruby). While Mya showed awareness of a past bias against a specific ethnic group (i.e., an aspect of her default perspective), she also seemed unacquainted with the default culture operating behind her faith. This is significant because it shows that every non-White project participant is engaging in intercultural contexts with an awareness of their personal views, which is necessary for allowing the teachings of Jesus to address the parts of their default cultures that contradict biblical teachings. In contrast, the mixed awareness of the White participants limits the extent to which Jesus’ teachings can address their contradicting default cultural values.

Traces of Colonial Discipleship at KLCC

The colonial foundations of Christianity in modern Western Christian contexts merit scrutiny. As discussed in Chapter 2, any successful intercultural Christian discipleship initiative must show awareness of the historical influence of colonization and systemic racism on the images of Jesus and Christianity. Colonial Christianity can be detected through perspectives that portray White-Western Christian traditions as the exemplar of global Christianity.⁵ Such perspectives present diversity as something that is added to an almost-complete context (e.g.,

⁴ Richards and O’Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*, 17.

⁵ Uwan, Higgins, and Edmondson, *Truth’s Table: Black Women’s Musings on Life, Love, and Liberation*, 56.

“adding perspectives,” “experiencing other cultures,” “cultural flavor”). Unaddressed colonial propensities in churches can lead to an *ethnic fair* approach to intercultural engagement in which cultures are externally categorized and experienced primarily through external effects like cuisine, language, physical appearance, and art forms.⁶

Two project participants, both White women, used language in their entrance interviews that implied an ethnic fair view of intercultural discipleship. In talking about engaging with South American and African Christians, Henrietta said, “If somebody came from a different country, I’d like to find out how they worship and what their church was like. There’s so much depth in even people from the African backgrounds . . . How they worship . . . I love culture.” In her interview, her interest in intercultural engagement was expressed as a desire to experience more cultures. In a similar way, Mya said that she loves “all races, but there’s something really specific about African Canadian people . . . my spirit kind of leaps when I’m with them.” She then continued to talk about how she feels when she experiences Black Canadian culture. While it may be natural to hold curiosity and appreciation for those from different default cultures, the issue arises in viewing culture as a fixed entity that is only experienced, as opposed to something with which one engages.

Similarly, two different project participants, also White women, exhibited a one-sided view of intercultural engagement wherein diversity is something one receives. Camila referred to mono-cultural places as “missing a piece of the puzzle.” Similarly, Edith stated that the problem with mono-cultural learning is that the missing diversity is a “learning piece I’m missing because I’m not hearing different voices.”

⁶ Howell and Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective*, 29.

All four statements are problematic because they present non-White cultures as additives. Traces of colonial Christianity can be identified in such statements by the subconscious assumption that White-Canadian Christian traditions need to be added to instead of transformed.

When asked about intercultural discipleship, the omission of self-reflection on their default cultural values by eight White participants is also problematic. Hints of colonial Christianity can be detected in the tendency to see diversity as the addition of non-White cultural expressions to a predominately White context. This signifies an implicit view of White-Western Christianity as the norm. The more effective approach is to be aware of the symbiotic interaction between *all* parties within a diverse context.

Intercultural Development

There was a noticeable correlation between the amount of intercultural engagement and the diversity of the KLC. The Wednesday Online KLC was the most diverse, with over 50% of the participants being Black, Latin American, South Asian, or East Asian. Conversely, the Friday In-Person KLC was the least diverse, with an approximate 75% White racial composition. In his participant observation field notes, the researcher recorded the difference between the intercultural in-group engagement in the two contrasting KLCs. He noticed that most of the discussions in the Friday KLC bounced between White participants, while the Wednesday KLC naturally transitioned between diverse group members. The increased intercultural engagement during the Wednesday group led to culturally rich discussions on biblical themes of slavery (i.e., John 8:34-36), cross-bearing (i.e., Mark 8:34), and hate (i.e., Luke 14:25).

Throughout the trial period, Linda, a White female Baby Boomer who attended the Friday In-Person KLC, wrestled with matters of race and diversity. In her second participant journal entry, she wrote: “We talked about racism a bit and also the word ‘hate.’ I can’t really

comment on the race stuff because I haven't experienced it like others, although it seems okay in today's world to hate anyone, that we all must agree." She continued to wrestle with the role of diversity throughout the project, as documented in her journal entries and the researcher's field notes. Although she grappled with views on racism and division, she never worked out a settled interpretation. In her exit interview, she noted, "There wasn't a lot addressed biblically regarding diversity. Diversity came through, for me anyway, in the discussions after the KLC."

In contrast with Linda's experience, Edith, a White female Baby Boomer who attended the Wednesday Online KLC, exhibited a noticeable shift in the examination of her default cultural perspective, as documented in the researcher's field notes and her exit interview. Coming into the project, Edith seemed unaware of her cultural perspectives, as mentioned in the previous section. During the March 8th online KLC meeting, the facilitator asked the participants if they found it easier to witness to *family and friends* or to *strangers*. Most participants said it was easier to witness to strangers. Ana, a Latina Millennial who speaks English as a second language, disagreed. She found it easier to witness to family and friends because of the language issues associated with communicating in the broader Canadian context. Ana's experience impacted Edith, who mentioned it as a key moment during the focus group discussion. She reflected on her appreciation of the online KLC discussions, saying, "You really get to hear from people who have different life experiences and perspectives on things. And particularly in a community like ours that is culturally diverse. You get to check some of your own assumptions; because when you're inside you, you think everybody thinks like you." This comment indicates a significant shift in Edith's awareness of her own default culture, which was further confirmed in her exit interview. When asked if and how she matured spiritually during the trial period, she shared, "I have grown a number of ways over the past weeks. As we looked more deeply at

scriptures and issues, I needed to regularly look at my assumptions and beliefs. . . . It reminded me of the importance of an examined mind and life, and several times I had to challenge my thinking to give an account for itself.”

Intergenerational Discipleship

The sample group included members of three generations: Baby Boomers (44.4% of participants), Gen X (44.4% of participants), and Millennials (11% of participants). This section will examine the qualitative findings resulting from intergenerational engagement throughout the project. It is important to mention that although children were not included in the sample group for this thesis project, their participation in the KLCs significantly impacted intergenerational interactions during meetings. As opposed to the age-separated discipleship model, made popular in North American churches in the 1990s,⁷ the IIHD Curriculum attempted to combine generations to foster intergenerational engagement through which diverse age groups could gain perspective from one another.

Entrance Interviews

In the entrance interviews, 11 participants mentioned the importance of including children and youth in church discipleship initiatives. In relation, four participants expressed a negative view of age-separated ministry approaches. While the need for children to be discipled in mixed-age contexts was highlighted in many interviews, only one participant, Ruby, mentioned the need for elderly discipleship. Instead, most participants cited the need to learn from older Christians. This initial silence on elderly discipleship is consistent with the gap in

⁷ Allen and Santos, “Intergenerational Ministry,” 509.

Western Christian literature around the discipleship of Christians from the Baby Boomer and Silent generations mentioned in Chapter 2.

Of the 18 interviewed, one participant engaged the Bible when discussing intergenerational ministry. Melicent referred to Jesus' words in Matthew 19:14, "Leave the children alone, and do not forbid them to come to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these," underscoring the need for adults to learn from children. The scarcity of scriptural engagement by most participants revealed the need for default cultural views on age to be exposed to and transformed by the Holy Spirit through scriptural and community engagement.

Intergenerational Development

Two significant developments occurred during the trial period: (1) Baby Boomer participants recognizing the need for continual spiritual growth, and (2) the broadening of perspective resulting from intergenerational engagement in all three KLCs. While participants from every generation said they grew spiritually through the project, it is remarkable that the eight participants from the Baby Boomer generation admitted to spiritual growth (Table 7). This is significant considering the tendency in North America to neglect the spiritual growth of elderly Christians. By having room in the curriculum to explore their faith stories in community, as stated by Oh, every elderly participant reported spiritual growth and plan on continuing to grow once the project ends. In Oh's study, which was conducted in South Korea, the participants were in the same age group.⁸ The findings of this project show that elderly participants can also grow spiritually in intergenerational contexts.

⁸ Oh, "Christian Education for the Elderly and Their Life and Faith Story," 181.

Table 7. Statements about Continued Spiritual Growth from Elderly Participants' Exit Interviews

| Participant | Answers to the questions: "Have you grown spiritually over the past ten weeks?" and "What do you need to do to continue growing after this project?" |
|-------------|---|
| Daisy | "Yes. I need to make a conscious effort to make sure that I have opportunities to take in and grow." |
| Edith | "I have grown in a number of ways over the past weeks. I'll continue to fully participate in church services, KLCs . . . above all, I'll continue to seek God so He can equip and use me on a regular basis as His disciple." |
| George | "I feel that I have grown spiritually over the past ten weeks. I will continue to grow spiritually after this project because of my dedication to the Word, my immersion in my community of believers, and my relationship with God in prayer." |
| Gloria | "I have grown spiritually over the last ten weeks. I am motivated to grow in Christ, regardless of how old or seasoned I sometimes think I am." |
| Henriette | "[I am] more intentional to implement new spiritual insight into daily experiences. I want to journal more diligently – especially regarding prayer items and answers to prayer." |
| Karl | "I now better understand that [discipleship] is not so much a number or an accomplishment, but a relational lifestyle that I must live. I will encourage myself that I am on the right road." |
| Nikolas | "I believe that I've grown spiritually over these past ten weeks. The best way to keep growing is to stay connected – especially to the Vine, but also staying connected to brothers and sisters in the Lord." |
| Ruby | "I have most definitely grown spiritually in the past ten weeks! I am going to commit to staying involved in small groups. I am also going to apply the action statements in my own personal Bible study." |

In addition to the growth of elderly participants, members in each of the three KLCs noted that the intergenerational engagement within their groups expanded their perspectives on different age groups. In his second participant journal entry, Ryan, who facilitated the Friday In-Person KLC, wrote: "I have grown in my appreciation for the older generation and the wisdom of experience they bring." In his exit interview, Nikolas, a member of the Wednesday In-Person KLC, stated: "I learned once again how unique each group member is – and therefore I need to accept these differences of perspective. We may be at different stages in life, but we're all growing towards the same goal." And finally, Joel, who attended the Wednesday Online KLC, wrote in his first journal entry: "I have been encouraged by the level of desire to learn from across the generations. The level of understanding and questions has prompted me to look at my

own level of desire to be better than I am now.” The previous statements are representative of the general feel of the project sample group, supporting the view from the Assemblies of God’s discipleship guide that intergenerational ministry provides an opportunity for the expansion of previously held perspectives.⁹

Hybrid Discipleship

KLCC’s hybrid, multi-platform approach to ministry was borne out of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which all churches in Canada had to explore new ways to gather. Because of the sudden shift, congregants did not have a chance to adjust to the stark shift in church culture. In the focus interview discussion, Edith summarized the group’s sentiments: “Online is still new for us.”

Of the three components at the center of this thesis project (i.e., intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid discipleship), hybrid discipleship drew the most nonconcurrence between participants. The participants’ comments on hybrid ministry at KLCC ranged from George’s exclamation, “It’s brilliant!” To Henriette’s deliberation, “I’m just not really sure how it can work.” As stated earlier, the project data (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) showed no significant correlation between the discipleship platform and the participants’ spiritual growth. Members of the sample group developed similarly online and in person. The findings in this section have been triangulated using attendance records, discipleship assessment scores, participant journals, the researcher’s field notes, and previous theoretical approaches noted in the literature review (Chapter 2).

⁹ Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, *How to Disciple Well*, 69.

Two Additional Approaches: Accessibility and Convenience

Throughout the project, the participants' views on hybrid gathering, documented in their interviews, journals, and focus group discussion, were categorized using Tim Hutchings' three approaches to online ministry: (1) the competitive approach, (2) the complementary approach, and (3) the missional approach.¹⁰ The competitive approach, which has been found to be the least effective, asks the question, "Which gathering style is most effective?" The complementary approach uses online platforms to supplement in-person gatherings, and the missional approach uses online platforms to extend the reach of the church.

Coming into the project, six participants held a competitive view of hybrid ministry, as indicated in their entrance interviews. One participant, Tabitha, held a primarily missional perspective; no participant took a complementary approach. Through analysis, two additional approaches emerged, which the researcher refers to as the *accessibility* and the *convenience* approaches.

The Accessibility Approach

When asked for their perspectives on hybrid discipleship during the entrance interviews, nine participants (i.e., 50%) were primarily concerned with providing access to those who otherwise could not attend in-person gatherings. Adelina reflected, "I'm grateful that I can personally, physically get to all these things [church gatherings], whereas some people cannot." Olivia shared a similar outlook, "I like it [hybrid ministry] because I know that there are a great number of people who can't join in person for a great number of reasons, and the fact that there's an option to join online is incredible." Adelina and Olivia's approach to online ministry, which is

¹⁰ Hutchings, *Creating Church Online*, 25-28.

shared with the highest number of participants within the sample group, has been named the “accessibility approach,” based on the primary concern for hybrid ministry providing access to Christian community.

The Convenience Approach

The entrance interviews also uncovered a trend of individual internal discord concerning the platform one should use. Linda stated, “I really like it [church online] when I’m sick. . . . We really need those [online] people in the building because we need each other.” In her reflection, Linda displayed a dissonance between her classification as an online attendee and an in-person attendee. Similarly, referring to hybrid church, Camila stated, “I think that it’s handy. That it can be convenient for different circumstances.” Shortly following the first KLC meeting, which she attended online, Camila sent a message to the researcher stating that she would be switching to the Wednesday In-Person KLC because she found it “super hard to keep focused online.” Throughout the project, she bounced between the Wednesday in-person and online KLCs based on necessity and convenience. Although she preferred meeting in person, she often utilized the online option. Joel and Ruby also exhibited similar discord between their preferred meeting style and their meeting attendance.

This approach to online ministry differs from the competitive approach because of its primary concern with convenience; therefore, it has been classified as the “convenience approach.” Participants who take this approach are often asking the question, “Which platform is better?” (i.e., the competitive approach). However, the predominant question with which they wrestle is, “What works best for me?”

With the addition of the accessibility and convenience approaches, the following sections will explore the implications of the five approaches to hybrid ministry (Table 8).

Table 8. Five Approaches to Hybrid Ministry

| Approach | Underlying Question |
|------------------------|---|
| Accessibility Approach | “How can we use online platforms to provide access to the church community?” |
| Competitive Approach | “Which is more effective: online or in-person ministry?” |
| Complementary Approach | “How can we use online platforms to supplement our current ministry offerings?” |
| Convenience Approach | “Which platform is the most convenient for me?” |
| Missional Approach | “How can we use online platforms to extend our reach as a church?” |

Emic and Etic Understandings of Online Ministry

As mentioned in the previous section, a few participants displayed internal conflict when sharing their perspectives on online ministry. Through participant observation, the researcher sought to detect the emic and etic values of the sample group, especially concerning hybrid discipleship. When talking about hybrid discipleship, a couple of participants shared conflicting sentiments in the same statement. In her entrance interview, Ruby quickly transitioned between incongruent feelings: “I love the fact that we’re hybrid . . . I struggled with being hybrid over COVID . . . I don’t care for the hybrid approach too much.”

The observation of discordant views was brought up during the focus group discussion, which was held online via Zoom. Ruby and Linda shared that they appreciated the hybrid method but felt the in-person meetings were more effective. Ruby shared, “For me personally, the hybrid is great for teaching. But for me personally, I need the body around me.” Linda echoed Ruby’s sentiment in the Zoom chat. Ruby’s repeated use of the phrase “me personally” highlighted the self-focus of her approach to hybrid ministry, which will be developed further in the next section. Edith and Melicent responded by challenging participants not to limit the possibilities of ministry online. Melicent noted that the church needed to work through “what is individual versus what God is saying and what God wants.”

Participants who prefer in-person meetings to online meetings (i.e., participants who take the competitive and convenience approaches) often preceded sharing their preference with a compliment of their least preferred meeting style (e.g., Ruby, “I love the fact that we’re hybrid ... I don’t care for the hybrid approach too much.”). The apparent discord signifies an etic understanding that Christians at KLCC should openly embrace hybrid ministry, an emic understanding that in-person gathering is more effective than online gathering, and an emic belief that it is better to attend online rather than miss a meeting when it is not possible to attend in person. These emic and etic understandings inform the unresolved internal conflicts within Camila, Ruby, Linda, and Joel. Ideally, all four participants externally support hybrid ministry with their words (i.e., etic value), internally feel that in-person gathering is the most effective (i.e., emic value), and attend meetings in the way that is the most convenient (i.e., emic action). Although their etic and emic values contradict one another, their etic values and emic actions agree (Table 9). This is essential information for those deciding about the meeting platforms used at KLCC. With this finding, they can proceed with the understanding that decisions should consider congregants’ actions (i.e., emic actions) over their preferences (i.e., emic values).

Table 9. Etic and Emic Values, and Emic Actions

| | Etic Value | Emic Value | Emic Action |
|--------|---|---|------------------------|
| Camila | Hybrid ministry is convenient. | In-person gatherings are more effective. | Attends KLCs hybridly. |
| Joel | Hybrid ministry is valuable because it provides access to the KLCC community. | In-person gatherings foster authentic fellowship. | Attends KLCs online. |
| Linda | Hybrid ministry is convenient. | In-person gatherings are more powerful. | Attends KLCs hybridly. |
| Ruby | Hybrid ministry is good. | In-person gatherings work best for me. | Attends KLCs hybridly. |

Self-Focus vs. Neighbor-Focus

The various approaches to hybrid ministry the project participants took revealed whether their perspectives on community gathering were self- or other-focused. The participants who take the competitive and convenience approaches trend towards a self-centered focus, while those who take the complementary, accessibility, and missional approaches trend towards a neighbor-focused perspective.

In his exit interview, Joel shifted towards a convenience approach and focused primarily on how online meetings interacted with his work life. Nikolas, who took a competitive approach, focused on what felt the most natural to him. Similarly, Ruby also took the competitive approach and focused on where she felt her gifts operated more naturally. And Linda, who took the convenience approach, focused on her preference and what was the most convenient for her. These four participants represent a consistent self-focused trend within the participants who hold to the convenience and competitive approaches to hybrid ministry.

In contrast, those who took the complementary, accessibility, and missional approaches showed a consistent concern for how others access KLCC's gatherings. Edith, who shifted from a competitive to a complementary approach, spoke of the need to prioritize the connections between church members (i.e., online and in-person) over one's personal preferences. Melicent, who shifted from an accessibility to a missional approach, focused on whether KLCC's missional goals lined up with the church's approach to online ministry. Daisy, who took an accessibility approach, focused on KLCC's online access to members who do not live locally.

Conclusion

The designed and implemented intervention aimed to facilitate the spiritual maturity of KLCC's congregation by developing a progressive discipleship curriculum that considers the church's intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid nature. The findings presented in this chapter provide specific insights that could potentially guide the KLCC leadership in maintaining and strengthening its discipleship initiatives with precision and wisdom.

Participants were asked to share their most memorable moments (i.e., key experiences) during the project in the focus group discussion. Every reflection shared was based on intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid experiences. For example, Daisy shared an appreciation for the ability to join the online KLC while on mission in South America. Gloria reflected on the interaction between the youngest and oldest attendees at the Wednesday In-Person KLC, and Edith was impacted by Ana's drive to witness through a language barrier. These reflections are a reminder that it is possible to prioritize biblical teaching without ignoring the uniqueness of the ministry context.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The purpose of the action research project at the center of this paper is to develop and implement a multi-platform (i.e., hybrid) discipleship initiative through which the diverse congregation of Kingdom Life Community Church (KLCC) would continually mature spiritually. After conducting a thorough review of recent literature written by diverse authors, and exploring theoretical approaches and biblical teaching on discipleship in intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid settings (Chapter 2), an intervention was designed to facilitate the development and implementation of a comprehensive, contextualized discipleship curriculum (Chapter 3). During the intervention implementation, qualitative and quantitative data was derived from a sample group of 18 adult KLCC congregants from diverse backgrounds using questionnaires, demographic info, attendance records, participant journals, participant observation field notes, a focus group discussion, and two interviews. Data analysis yielded significant findings, which were presented in Chapter 4. The final chapter of this thesis paper will present the research implications, applications, and limitations, with a forward look toward future research possibilities.

Research Implications

This section will explore the interaction between the findings presented in Chapter 4 and the theological and theoretical approaches outlined in Chapter 2. In some areas, the project findings confirm or underscore existing research; in other instances, the project findings extend beyond previously held frameworks. While this project's scope was limited to the congregation at KLCC, the research implications may provide insight to ministries facing a similar discipleship dilemma.

Flexible Curriculum

Jay Moon and Ermias Mamo, both of whom wrote books on discipleship in intercultural contexts, highlight the necessity of using context-appropriate curriculums.¹ Moon also warned that Bible study alone is insufficient for intercultural contexts due to the need for space to explore cultural values and perspectives in light of the truth derived from exegetical study of Scripture.² Based on previous approaches to deciding on discipleship curricula for diverse churches, the intervention design at the center of this project employed a discipleship framework centered on Bible study while allowing consistent space for discussion. The data findings verify the effectiveness of this approach at KLCC in the triangulated outcome of 100% of the project participants who finished the trial period growing spiritually.

The results of the IIHD Curriculum imply that space for discussion, questions, testimonies, and cultural exploration is imperative for diverse discipleship environments. To avoid syncretism, space to explore the default cultural values of the group members is necessary. Regarding the curriculum used at KLCC, the action statement discussions provided a safe platform for members to explore their discipleship stories in community. To allow room for discussion without compromising the Bible study, it is recommended that short biblical passages are selected.

Significance for KLCC

The results of this project bear great significance to the KLCC community. From the intervention design, implementation, and analysis, KLCC has a repeatable methodology for discipling its congregants. Based on statistical and qualitative data, the church's leadership can

¹ Mamo, *The Maturing Church*, 146.

² Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 78.

be confident that the positive results exhibited in the project sample group represent what is possible in the larger church body. Additionally, the church now has a draft of a training resource (i.e., Facilitator's Training Guide) that can be adapted and used to train future KLC facilitators. For the Kingdom Life Communities (KLCs), the church now has a custom-designed framework for their 90-minute meetings.

Going forward, the leaders of KLCC have detailed information on the areas of discipleship that still need development (i.e., default cultural awareness, self-focused approaches to hybrid discipleship, traces of colonial discipleship within the congregation, and scriptural engagement on matters of diversity). Because the IIHD Curriculum does not require a specific order of Bible passages, future meetings could be designed to address the areas that need development.

Centered Set Discipleship Approach

The intervention design used a centered set approach to defining discipleship by focusing on the continual movement towards the standard of Jesus Christ and avoiding language that defines one's identity as a disciple through a one-time event (i.e., bounded set theory). The danger with bounded set thinking in Christian communities is that the lack of direction can cause institutions to cave in on themselves.³ Dallas Willard quips that "the governing assumption today, among professing Christians, is that we can be 'Christian' forever and never become

³ Hong-Kwan Kim, "The Structure Renewal of the Korean Church: With Special Analysis through Paul Hiebert's Set Theory," *Journal of Korean Christian Theology*, no. 45 (2006): 113.

disciples.”⁴ Defining a relationship with Jesus based solely on a one-time decision does not lead to a life of progressive spiritual transformation.⁵

Although centered set frameworks can be frustrating due to the lack of definitive boundaries, Charles A. Davis identifies it as the preferred approach, writing, “Centered set reasoning provides direction and growth but does not provide much material for the measurable objectives.”⁶ Heeding Davis’ experience, the growth of the sample group participants was ascertained through self-reporting (i.e., interviews, participant journals, focus group discussion), observation (i.e., the researcher’s field notes), and questionnaires. Through the methodology used in this project, spiritual growth was detected, not measured. This suggests that others who take a centered set approach to defining discipleship and avoid fixed arrival points (e.g., baby Christian, Christian adolescent) can detect the direction they are moving as disciples of Jesus.

Intergenerational Engagement and Elderly Discipleship

Intergenerational engagement has been inherent in Christian communities throughout church history. The advent of age-specific ministry is a twentieth-century invention of the Western church.⁷ Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, KLCC engaged in age-separated ministry by operating children’s, youth, and young adult ministries. During the pandemic, the church naturally developed into an intergenerational congregation, with multiple generations present and engaging with one another during the Sunday Gathering and weekly KLCs. For this

⁴ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2006), loc 117.

⁵ Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited*, Revised. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 40.

⁶ Davis, *Making Disciples Across Cultures*, 32.

⁷ Allen and Santos, “Intergenerational Ministry,” 509.

reason, the intervention design accounted for the intergenerational makeup of the congregation by including children in the KLCs instead of separating them from the meetings. Facilitators were encouraged to include all generations in the discussion, and all participants submitted and were accountable for the action statements presented during the meetings. Participants from each generation grew within a shared context through the intervention implementation.

In intergenerational settings, younger participants are often expected to learn from their older counterparts. Tabitha reflected on this idea in her entrance interview, hoping that through the KLCs, she would be enlightened by “an older lady that’s gone through similar things in the past.” Unfortunately, missing from the reviewed Western Christian literature was research on how to disciple elderly Christians. To inform the elderly discipleship aspect of the intervention design, the results of a study conducted in South Korea by Kyungseuk Oh were applied, as discussed in the previous section.

The findings from this project suggest that disciples of all ages and stages can grow in the same group context provided that all generations are engaged in the discussion, and space is given inside and outside the meeting for participants, especially elderly Christians, to explore their faith stories. Similar to how Timothy was simultaneously being disciplined by Paul and discipling older congregants (1 Tim 4), children can learn from adults, and adults can learn from children. Ruby reflected this theme in her first journal entry: “I was pleasantly surprised that some of the teens in the group had a better understanding of the scripture passage than several of the adults.”

Hybrid Discipleship

The findings presented in Chapter 4 demonstrate that it is possible to implement a successful discipleship curriculum simultaneously on multiple platforms. Based on statistical

data (i.e., correlation tests), no significant correlation was found between the spiritual growth of those in-person and online. In other words, with adequate measures, participants can spiritually mature online and in person.

The discovery of two additional approaches to hybrid ministry within the KLCC context expands the categories outlined by Tim Hutchings, which were used as a guideline for the intervention design (i.e., the competitive, complementary, and missional approaches). Through observation and qualitative analysis, accessibility and convenience approaches were detected among the sample group. The accessibility approach, which the highest number of project participants took, views hybrid ministry as providing additional access to the community. The convenience approach, taken by a few participants, engages with multiple ministry platforms based on personal convenience.

The approach taken by participants implies one's tendency towards self-focus or neighbor-focus. For hybrid churches, discovering a congregant's approach to hybrid ministry may help detect whether their view of the church is self-centered or neighbor-centered. The questions at the center of Christian community should be, "Are we loving God?" And "Are we loving one another?"⁸ Asking these types of questions requires a focus outside of oneself. The findings of this project show a connection between self-centered thinking and the competitive and convenience approaches, which is why these approaches should be avoided. In contrast, those who take an accessibility, complementary, or missional approach trend towards a focus on their Christian and non-Christian neighbors, making them the healthier approaches for a maturing congregation.

⁸ Jay Y. Kim, *Analog Christian: Cultivating Contentment, Resilience, and Wisdom in the Digital Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 25.

Default Culture Awareness

Every human context possesses default cultural elements that potentially pose a threat to spiritual maturity within community.⁹ Being honest with oneself about the personal feelings associated with engagement in a diverse community is a necessary preliminary step towards effective intercultural and intergenerational engagement.¹⁰ It is helpful to learn what is operating in the shadows of diverse communities like KLCC. The disparity in default cultural awareness within the project sample group hurt a few participants' ability to engage interculturally.

Sherwood Lingenfelter defines default culture as “the culture people learn from their parents and peers from birth, with all the inherent strengths and weaknesses of their society.”¹¹ In hindsight, this is an area that may have benefitted from more attention in the intervention design. As mentioned in Chapter 4, entrance interviews revealed that every non-White (i.e., Black, Latina, East Asian, South Asian) participant entered the project with an awareness of their default culture. In contrast, the White participants displayed mixed awareness, with eight participants showing no awareness of their default culture. While Ruby and Edith displayed a positive shift in their awareness of their default cultures, most other participants who initially lacked awareness showed no development throughout the project.

This finding signifies a deficit in the IIHD Curriculum that will need to be attended to before future discipleship endeavors. The traces of colonial discipleship detected at KLCC and the confusion about the role of one's unique identity within the body of Christ present barriers to deep intercultural engagement and must be addressed. Disciples may profess a desire to engage

⁹ Mamo, *The Maturing Church*, 15.

¹⁰ David Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: AMACOM, 2015), 49.

¹¹ Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership*, 71.

interculturally and intergenerationally, but their true beliefs are reflected in their actions which are either the result of faith or default culture.¹² Although the quest to uncover one's default values may lead to horrible truths, it should be taken up with faith in the redemptive character of God.¹³ The purpose of default culture discovery is not to learn one's identity; it is to understand what one brings into interactions with others and with Scripture. According to Tim Keller, while some people look to themselves or to their community to learn their identity, it is those who learn to look to God who learn who they truly are.¹⁴ Ministries looking to learn from the results of this intervention implementation should develop tools for participants to closely examine their individual default cultural values at the outset of the trial period. A suggestion for future development will be outlined in the section of this chapter titled "Further Research."

Research Applications

Two suggested research applications emerged from this project: (1) the employment of Stringer's action plan framework to help move project participants from knowledge to application, and (2) a suggested approach to addressing problems within a Christian community.

Action Statement Framework

The intervention design integrated Stringer's three-phase action plan framework (i.e., planning, implementation, review), which helped KLCC achieve favorable results. He presents the framework with the purpose of including stakeholders in the action of the intervention

¹² Os Guinness, *Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 121.

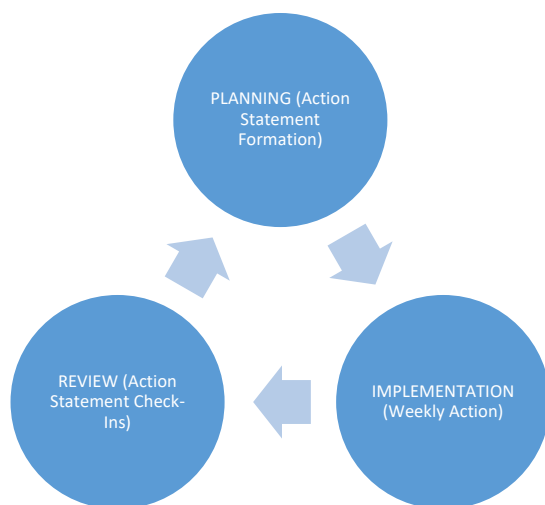
¹³ Darrell L. Bock, *Recovering the Real Lost Gospel: Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2010), loc 994.

¹⁴ Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God: Finding God in the Modern World* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2016), 133.

implementation, as opposed to waiting for a diagnosis or recipe from a so-called expert.¹⁵

According to Stringer, “clearly articulated plans based on systematic and inclusive processes of inquiry have a high probability of achieving successful results.”¹⁶ During the trial period, Stringer’s framework was adapted to facilitate a method of moving participants from knowledge to application (Figure 5). Within the KLC meeting, the planning phase is represented by the facilitator asking the participants to use a prompt to design an action statement (e.g., “This week I want to . . .”). The facilitator is then responsible for recording the action statements as they are submitted for the purpose of following up in the next meeting. The implementation phase occurs in the week between KLC meetings, in which the participants are responsible for carrying out their action statements, which are slightly different from the intervention design. The review takes place at the beginning of the next meeting, in which the facilitator goes person to person, checking in on their progress (e.g., “Last week you said you wanted to [insert action statement]. How did that go?”).

Figure 5. Action Statement Framework



¹⁵ Stringer, *Action Research*, 167.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Many project participants reflected on how the action statement framework held them accountable for applying what they learned in the Bible study portion of the meetings to their lives outside of the meetings. They also mentioned how encouraging it was to hear the successes and failures of their fellow participants, including pastors who submitted themselves to the same process as all other KLC members. Adelina reflected this sentiment in her second journal entry: “Weekly action statements are a brilliant idea for self-improvement and pushing myself to do better for God’s kingdom. Hearing others wanting to be patient, kind, more understanding . . . [and hearing] that we do not always reach our goal is comforting.” Transparency is a vital component of discipleship communities. Bob Macrae advises leaders to use wisdom in deciding what to share in group settings, writing: “Go too far, and we wonder why we are following you. Don’t go far enough, and we think you are hiding something or are too good to be true.”¹⁷ Discernment from the Holy Spirit is needed to know the balance.

On reviewing one’s progress, it is necessary to allow the Holy Spirit the space to review spiritual progress. Knowing what actual progress looks like without divine counsel is challenging. When teaching about biblical interpretation, Origen of Alexandria wrote, “We are taught out of Scripture itself how we ought to think of it.”¹⁸ In the same manner, learning one’s true spiritual condition comes through discipleship.

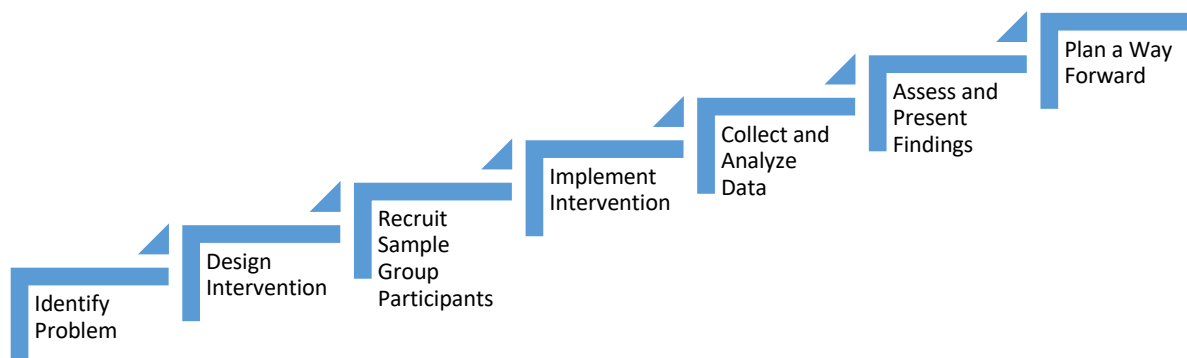
¹⁷ Bob Macrae, “The Essence of the Life of a Teacher,” in *Teaching the Next Generations: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 34.

¹⁸ Origen of Alexandria, *On First Principles*, trans. G.W. Butterworth (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1966), 288–289.

An Approach for Addressing Problems within Christian Communities

After completing the thesis project, the intervention design, implementation, and analysis reveal an approach for addressing wide-ranging problems within Christian communities (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Step-by-Step Problem Intervention Plan



Using this project as an example, the first step is to identify the problem, which is the spiritual immaturity of the congregation at KLCC. After identifying the problem, a plan of intervention must be designed. A helpful guiding question for this process is, “What can we do about the problem?” The planning process should not be rushed and should include prayer, research, and collaboration discussions. Once the intervention has been designed, a sample group representing the community should be recruited. While recruiting, it is suggested that methods and implements of producing triangulated data are formed, which will increase the validity and credibility of the results.¹⁹ Quantitative data, which will help create statistics, can be acquired through numeric measurables like attendance and number-coded questionnaires (e.g., questionnaires using a Likert scale). Qualitative data can be collected through interviews, participant journals, surveys, research notes, and other methods.

¹⁹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72.

The next step is to implement the intervention. At this stage of the journey, it is essential to focus on providing participants with the necessary information and resources, preparing means of data collection, and managing the various aspects of the intervention design (e.g., scheduling interviews, facilitating meetings). The data needs to be collected and analyzed during and after the intervention implementation. Methods for analyzing quantitative and qualitative data are available in Chapter 3. Ample time should be taken to examine trends, silences, and surprises in the data. Once the data is distilled into key findings, it is suggested that the findings are shared with ministry collaborators with an invitation to join in planning a way forward for the ministry. A well-planned and executed intervention is highly probable to yield positive results.

Research Limitations

Ministry leaders looking to recreate the findings of this project should consider the following limitations.

This project was designed for a diverse church. The results may differ greatly in a mono-ethnic church or an age-graded ministry (e.g., church youth group). It was also designed for a hybrid church with live engagement online and in-person. This does not imply that the methods utilized in this project are exclusive to diverse hybrid ministries. It is an acknowledgment of the formation of the intervention in relation to the specific context of KLCC.

Although children comprise a significant portion of the congregation, this project was limited to adults. To gain an extensive survey of intergenerational ministry at KLCC, children would need to be included in the sample group. The exclusion of children from the sample group makes the project easier to manage, but it limits the amount of data derived from intergenerational engagement within KLC meetings.

Finally, it is important to note that the KLC facilitators for this project were all KLCC pastors. One of the hopes of this project is that it will yield a framework to train additional facilitators from within the congregation. The IIHD Curriculum relies on facilitators who can skillfully lead the Bible study portion of meetings, catching when discussions stray from the truth and answering challenging questions that arise. The use of pastor-facilitators for this project limits the ability to observe congregants growing in their ability to disciple others.

Further Research

Due to the limited scope of this thesis project and paper, further research is suggested in the areas of hybrid discipleship, building default culture awareness in intercultural settings, the discipleship of children and youth in diverse contexts, and developing a methodology for training facilitators to lead discipleship meetings in contexts similar to KLCC.

Data around hybrid ministry is constantly emerging. Recent (2023) Barna research revealed that 60% of Christians polled said they would attend church online if their physical location was unavailable.²⁰ With 40% of those polled saying that they would not attend online church, the data suggests at least two truths: (1) hybrid ministry is here to stay, (2) Christians are far from reaching a consensus on the matter. Pastors and ministry leaders of hybrid churches are advised to stay current on emerging research while keeping the hybrid church discussion open within their ministry contexts.

The necessity of individual default culture awareness in intercultural settings was evident by the end of this thesis project. Intercultural churches would benefit from further research into tools to help congregants build awareness of their personal default cultural values. One

²⁰ Barna Group, “40% of Christians Wouldn’t Attend Their Church If It Was Solely Online,” accessed May 1, 2023, <https://www.barna.com/research/in-person-over-online-church/>.

suggestion is the development of a questionnaire that explores the dominant cultural values presented in most people-groups. Stella Ting-Toomey and Tenzin Dorjee provide a list of cultural values in *Communicating Across Cultures* (Table 10).²¹

Table 10. List of Core Cultural Values

| Core Cultural Values |
|---|
| Individualism vs. Collectivism |
| Low Power Distance vs. High Power Distance |
| Weak Uncertainty Avoidance vs. Strong Uncertainty Avoidance |
| Short-Term Orientation vs. Long-Term Orientation |
| Indulgence vs. Restraint |

As previously mentioned, this project sample group was limited to adults interacting within an intergenerational context. Children’s ministry and youth leaders may benefit from adapting portions of this thesis project to create a discipleship curriculum for children and youth in diverse contexts.

Finally, to answer Jesus’ call for all disciples to make disciples (Matt 28:19), ministry leaders would benefit from additional research on methodologies for training facilitators to lead small group meetings in diverse, multi-platform contexts.

²¹ Stella Ting-Toomey and Tenzin Dorjee, *Communicating Across Cultures* (New York, NY: Guildford Press, 2019), 161.

Bibliography

- Allen, Holly C., Christine M. Lawton, and Cory L. Siebel. *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023.
- Allen, Holly C., and Jason B. Santos. "Intergenerational Ministry - A Forty-Year Perspective: 1980-2020." *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 3 (2020): 506–529.
- Anyabwile, Thabiti. *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Luke*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2018.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 6-12*. Translated by Fabian Larcher and James A. Weisheipl. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010.
- Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship. *How to Disciple Well: A Discipleship Guide for the Everyday Leader*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2021.
- Baker, Christopher Richard. *The Hybrid Church in the City: Third Space Thinking*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007.
- Bantu, Vince L. *A Multitude of All Peoples: Engaging Ancient Christianity's Global Identity (Missiological Engagements)*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020.
- Barna Group. "40% of Christians Wouldn't Attend Their Church If It Was Solely Online." Accessed May 1, 2023. <https://www.barna.com/research/in-person-over-online-church/>.
- . "56% of Christians Feel Their Spiritual Life Is Entirely Private." Accessed July 31, 2022. <https://www.barna.com/research/discipleship-friendship/>.
- . *Six Questions About the Future of the Hybrid Church Experience*. State of the Digital Church Series. Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2020.
- Beale, G.K. *The Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999.
- Bergler, Thomas E. "Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity." *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 1 (2020): 75–91.
- Blomberg, Craig L., and Elisabeth A. Nesbit Sbanotto. *Effective Generational Ministry: Biblical and Practical Insights for Transforming Church Communities*. Baker Academic, 2016.
- Blount, Brian K. *Revelation: A Commentary*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Luke*. Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 1996.

- . *Recovering the Real Lost Gospel: Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2010.
- Bowler, Kate. *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Brandt, Ryan A., and John Frederick. *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church: A Multi-Denominational, Multi-Ethnic Approach*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021.
- Brant, Jo-Ann A. *John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011.
- Browning, Dave. *Hybrid Church: The Fusion of Intimacy and Impact*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Bruce, F.F. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1977.
- Buys, Josh D., Carol Griffiths, Doug Bartel, John H. Littlejohn, Sophia Barton-Bucknor, and Aaron Rogers. “Statement of Intent.” Calvary Langley, January 25, 2017.
- Carson, D.A. “Matthew.” In *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, edited by Temper Longman III and David E. Garland. Revised ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- . *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991.
- Chen, Diane G. *Luke*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017.
- Colwell, John E. *Living the Christian Story: The Distinctiveness of Christian Ethics*. New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2001.
- Cone, James H. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011.
- Cornelius, Paul. “1 Timothy.” In *South Asia Bible Commentary*, edited by Brian Wintle, 1682–1692. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
- Datiri, Dachollom. “1 Corinthians.” In *Africa Bible Commentary*, edited by Tokunboh Adeyemo, 1403–1424. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.
- Davis, Charles A. *Making Disciples Across Cultures: Missional Principles for a Diverse World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- Dunlow, Jacob. “Digital Discipleship: A Study of How Churches in New York Used Technology for Adult Discipleship During the COVID-19 Pandemic.” *Christian Education Journal* 18, no. 3 (2021): 458–472.
- English, JT. *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2020.

Fellowship Pacific. "Fellowship Pacific." Accessed August 28, 2022.
<https://fellowshippacific.ca>.

Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler. *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991.

Ford, David G., Joshua L. Mann, and Peter M. Phillips. *The Bible and Digital Millennials*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2019.

Garner, Stephen. "Imaging Christ in Digital Worlds: Continuity and Discontinuity in Discipleship." *Communication Research Trends* 38, no. 4 (2019): 21–30.

Gay Jr., Jerome. *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future*. Chicago, IL: 13th & Joan, 2020.

Gine, Pratap C., and Jacob Cherian. "John." In *South Asia Bible Commentary*, edited by Brian Wintle, 1386–1448. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.

Gomes, Catherine, Lily Kong, and Orlando Woods, eds. *Religion, Hypermobility and Digital Media in Global Asia: Faith, Flows and Fellowship*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.

González, Justo L. *Luke*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

Gorman, Michael J. *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2015.

Grant, Carlos A., and Agostino Portera. *Intercultural and Multicultural Education: Enhancing Global Interconnectedness*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011.

Guinness, Os. *Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.

Hoole, Charles H. *The Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. London, UK: David Nutt, 1894.

Howell, Brian M., and Jenell Paris. *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019.

Hunt, Jodi G. "The Digital Way: Re-Imagining Digital Discipleship in the Age of Social Media." *Journal of Youth and Theology* 18, no. 1 (2019): 91–112.

Hutchings, Tim. *Creating Church Online: Ritual, Community and New Media*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2017.

Jennings, Willie James. *Acts*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

Judd, Amy. "Coronavirus: All In-Person Services in B.C. Places of Worship Suspended." *Global News*. Last modified November 20, 2020. Accessed May 8, 2023.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7473312/in-person-services-bc-places-worship-suspended-coronavirus/>.

Kanagaraj, Jey J. *John: A New Covenant Commentary*. Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2013.

Kapolyo, Joe. "Matthew." In *Africa Bible Commentary*, edited by Tokunboh Adeyemo, 1131–1196. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.

Keller, Timothy. *Making Sense of God: Finding God in the Modern World*. London, UK: Penguin Books, 2016.

Kennedy-Shaffer, Lee. "Before $p < 0.05$ to Beyond $p < 0.05$: Using History to Contextualize p-Values and Significance Testing." *The American Statistician* 73, no. 51 (2019): 82–90.

Khatry, Ramesh. "Revelation." In *South Asia Bible Commentary*, edited by Brian Wintle, 1769–1806. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.

Kim, Hong-Kwan. "The Structure Renewal of the Korean Church: With Special Analysis through Paul Hiebert's Set Theory." *Journal of Korean Christian Theology*, no. 45 (2006): 103–120.

Kim, Jay. *Analog Church: Why We Need Real People, Places, and Things in the Digital Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020.

Kim, Jay Y. *Analog Christian: Cultivating Contentment, Resilience, and Wisdom in the Digital Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022.

Kingdom Life Community Church. "Kingdom Life Community Church: Constitution and Bylaws," July 8, 2017.

———. "What We Believe." Accessed August 28, 2022. <https://www.thekingdomlife.ca/what-we-believe>.

Lieu, Judith M. *The Gospel of Luke*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997.

Lingenfelter, Sherwood G. *Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.

Livermore, David. *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: AMACOM, 2015.

Macrae, Bob. "The Essence of the Life of a Teacher." In *Teaching the Next Generations: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching Christian Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.

- Malcolm, Matthew R. *The World of 1 Corinthians: An Annotated Visual and Literary Source-Commentary*. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2012.
- Mamo, Ermias G. *The Maturing Church: An Integrated Approach to Contextualization, Discipleship and Mission*. Carlisle, UK: Langham Creative Projects, 2017.
- Marshall, Howard. *The Pastoral Epistles*. London, UK: T&T Clark, 1999.
- Mason, Eric. *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with The Gospel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021.
- McCaulley, Esau. *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020.
- McClendon, P. Adam, and Jared E. Lockhart. *Timeless Church: Five Lessons from Acts*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020.
- McKnight, Scot. *Revelation for the Rest of Us*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2023.
- . *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited*. Revised. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.
- Moon, Jay W. *Intercultural Discipleship (Encountering Mission): Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.
- Morris, L.L. “Church Government.” In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell, 256–258. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Morrison, Latasha. *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God’s Heart for Racial Reconciliation*. Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2019.
- Mounce, Robert H. *John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.
- O’Day, Gail R., and Susan E. Hylen. *John*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.
- Oh, Kyungseuk. “Christian Education for the Elderly and Their Life and Faith Story.” *Journal of Christian Education in Korea* 45, no. 1 (2016): 181–210.
- Origen of Alexandria. *On First Principles*. Translated by G.W. Butterworth. New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1966.
- Oropeza, B.J. *1 Corinthians: A New Covenant Commentary*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017.
- Paul, Ian. *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018.
- Pew Research Center. “Where People Around the World Find Meaning in Life.” *Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project*, November 18, 2021. Accessed May 8, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/interactives/meaning-in-life/>.

- Philip, Finny. "1 Corinthians." In *South Asia Bible Commentary*, edited by Brian Wintle, 1555–1584. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
- Powell, Mark E., John Mark Hicks, and Greg McKinzie. *Discipleship in Community: A Theological Vision for the Future*. Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2020.
- Richards, E. Randolph, and Brandon J. O'Brien. *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- Seemiller, Corey, and Meghan Grace. *Generation Z: A Century in the Making*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2019.
- Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011.
- Siew, Yau Man. "A Case Study in Adult Discipleship: Stories of Apprenticeship to Jesus at an Urban Anglican (Episcopal) Church." *Christian Education Journal* 18, no. 2 (2020): 189–211.
- Smith, Buster G., Christopher P. Scheitle, and Christopher D. Bader. "The Ties That Bind: Network Overlap among Independent Congregations." *Social Science* 30, no. 3 (2012): 259–273.
- Smith, James K.A. *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014.
- Smith, Mandy. *The Vulnerable Pastor: How Human Limitations Empower Our Ministry*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- Spencer, Aída Besançon. *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary*. Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2014.
- Statistics Canada. "A Generational Portrait of Canada's Aging Population from the 2021 Census." *Catalogue* 98-200-X, no. 2021003 (April 2022).
- . "Ethnocultural and Religious Diversity – 2021 Census." Last modified October 26, 2022. Accessed May 8, 2023. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/census/census-engagement/community-supporter/ethnocultural-and-religious-diversity>.
- . "Religiosity in Canada and Its Evolution from 1985 to 2019." Last modified October 28, 2021. Accessed May 8, 2023. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/211028/dq211028b-eng.htm>.
- . "Visible Minority and Population Group Reference Guide." *Catalogue* 98-500-X, no. 2021006 (February 2023).
- Stringer, Ernest T. *Action Research*. 4th ed. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014.

- Tan, Kim Huat. *Mark: A New Covenant Commentary*. Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2016.
- Thompson, Marianne Meye. *John: A Commentary*. Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2015.
- Ting-Toomey, Stella, and Tenzin Dorjee. *Communicating Across Cultures*. New York, NY: Guildford Press, 2019.
- Towner, Philip H. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006.
- Uwan, Ekemini, Michelle Higgins, and Christina Edmondson. *Truth's Table: Black Women's Musings on Life, Love, and Liberation*. New York, NY: Convergent Books, 2022.
- Warren, Tish Harrison. "Opinion | 7 Thoughtful Reader Responses on Ending Online Church." *The New York Times*, February 6, 2022, sec. Opinion. Accessed September 13, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/06/opinion/online-church-services-readers.html>.
- . "Opinion | Why Churches Should Drop Their Online Services." *The New York Times*, January 30, 2022, sec. Opinion. Accessed September 13, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/30/opinion/church-online-services-covid.html>.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2006.
- Williams, D. Newell, Douglas A. Foster, and Paul M. Blowers, eds. *The Stone-Campbell Movement: A Global History*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2013.
- Wintle, Brian. "Matthew." In *South Asia Bible Commentary*, edited by Brian Wintle, 1219–1284. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
- Wong, Arch C.K., Joel Thiessen, and Keith Walker. "Discipleship from Catholic, Mainline and Conservative Protestant Congregant Perspectives in Canada." *Journal of Beliefs & Values* ahead of print (2021): 1–18.
- Wright, Christopher J.H. *Here Are Your Gods: Faithful Discipleship in Idolatrous Times*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020.
- Yoder, Michael L., Micheal H. Lee, Jonathan Ro, and Robert J. Priest. "Understanding Christian Identity in Terms of Bounded and Centered Set Theory in the Writings of Paul G. Hiebert." *Trinity Journal* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 177–188.
- "A Study Finds Nondenominational Churches Continuing Their Growth Trajectory Even as They Now Outpace Denominational Evangelical Congregations on Such Key Measures as Attendance, Youthfulness, Diversity, and Outreach." *Religion Watch* 6, no. 12 (December 2021): NA.

APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT EMAIL (DRAFT)

Dear KLCC:

Many of us find ourselves arriving in 2023 in need of restoration and spiritual direction. I am writing to invite you to participate in an exciting project that addresses both!

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am facilitating a quality improvement project to improve discipleship at Kingdom Life Community Church. The purpose of this study is to facilitate the development of a discipleship curriculum that accounts for the church's intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid realities. Currently, no such curriculum exists at KLCC or elsewhere.

It is believed that through this curriculum, those who commit to consistent participation will be restored through the study of God's Word. They will also mature as disciples of Jesus Christ. In addition to the individual impact of this project, benefits to KLCC include: (1) a spiritually maturing congregation, (2) the formation of a repeatable, flexible discipleship curriculum suitable for KLCC's diverse community, and (3) the formation of a resource that can be shared with other diverse, multi-platform churches.

You are invited to take part in this project. Participants must be 18 years of age or older and willing to commit to eight consecutive weeks of participation in a Kingdom Life Community (KLC). Participants, if willing, will be asked to:

- attend 8 KLC meetings in person or virtually (90 minutes each)
- complete 2 online surveys, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the project (10 minutes each)
- complete 4 bi-weekly journal entries (5-10 minutes each)
- participate in 2 interviews (15 minutes each)
- participate in 1 focus group discussion (60 minutes)

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

To participate, please opt in by clicking here: [insert link]

In addition to opting in, participants need to complete and submit a Consent Form, which contains additional information about my project. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the Consent Form and return it to me via email (as an attachment) or in person at a KLCC gathering.

Download the Consent Form here: [insert link]

Thank you for considering taking part in this worthwhile endeavor!

Sincerely,

John Littlejohn
Pastor of Arts, Operations, and Implementation
Kingdom Life Community Church

Cell phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Consent

Title of the Project: Intercultural, Intergenerational, and Hybrid Discipleship at Kingdom Life Community Church

Principal Investigator: John Littlejohn, doctoral candidate, Liberty University School of Divinity

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be over the age of 18 and a regular participant in a Kingdom Life Community (KLC). 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.

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

The purpose of this study is to facilitate the development of a discipleship curriculum at Kingdom Life Community Church (KLCC) that accounts for the church's intercultural, intergenerational, and hybrid realities. Currently, no such curriculum exists. It is believed that through this curriculum, members who commit to consistent participation will mature as disciples of Jesus Christ.

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:

- attend 8 KLC meetings in person or virtually (90 minutes each)
- complete 2 online surveys, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the project (10 minutes each)
- complete 4 bi-weekly journal entries (5-10 minutes each)
- participate in 2 interviews (15 minutes each)
- participate in 1 focus group discussion (60 minutes)

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefit participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study is spiritual maturation alongside those within the KLCC community.

Benefits to KLCC include a spiritually maturing congregation and a discipleship curriculum suitable for KLCC's diverse community.

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. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

Please note:

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. 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 three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews/focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher serves as an associate pastor at KLCC and is a paid staff member. 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 or not participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with KLCC. 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, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, 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 John Littlejohn. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]

and/or [redacted]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [name], at [email].

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.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

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

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX C

OPT-IN FORM

Discipleship Project Opt-In Form

Complete this form to officially opt in to the "Intercultural, Intergenerational, and Hybrid Discipleship at KLCC" quality improvement project.

** Indicates required question*

1. Full Name (First and Last): *

2. Email address (for future communication): *

3. Phone number (XXX-XXX-XXXX): *

4. To opt-in to Pastor Littlejohn's thesis project, please select the option below: *

Mark only one oval.

☐ I would like to participate in this project.

5. I will be participating in the following KLC (select all that apply): *

Check all that apply.

☐ Wednesday In-Person

☐ Wednesday Online

☐ Friday In Person

Google Drive

6. Do you have Google Drive? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes *Skip to question 7*

☐ No *Skip to question 8*

☐ I don't know what that is. *Skip to section 3 (Google Drive (explanation))*

Google Drive (explanation)

Google Drive is a free cloud-based storage service that enables users to store and access files online. It is automatically connected to Gmail email addresses, although it is also possible to connect Google Drive to non-Gmail email addresses. To learn more about Google Drive, [click here](#).

Skip to question 6

Yes, I have Google Drive.

7. What email address is connected to your Google Drive?

Consent Form

If you haven't already done so, please [download](#), read and sign the Consent Form, found here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yHjk-oFtSrH7ZZj2MiqjEnYvtNFiuJz0/view?usp=sharing>

8. I understand that in order to complete the opt-in process, I need to download, sign, and email (as an attachment) my Consent Form to John Littlejohn at: [REDACTED] *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes, I understand.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

APPENDIX D
FACILITATOR GUIDE (DRAFT)



Kingdom Life Communities
Facilitator Guide
Draft

Updated: February 6, 2023

Meeting Format

To allow enough time for discussion and accountability, it is recommended that KLC meetings last 1.5 to 2 hours. For a 90-minute meeting starting at 6:30pm, here is the suggested meeting format:

| Time | Activity |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| 6:30-6:35pm | Opening Prayer |
| 6:35-7:00 | Action Statement Follow Up |
| 7:00-7:45 | Bible Study and Discussion |
| 7:45-7:55 | Action Statement Sharing |
| 7:55-8:00 | Closing Prayer |

Opening Prayer (5 min.)

Starting with prayer is a humble acknowledgement of God’s presence in the meeting. It signifies the official start of the KLC meeting and transitions everyone from a social to a spiritual space.

Action Statement Follow Up (25 min.)

In this part of the meeting, allow the space for each person who submitted an Action Statement in the prior meeting to give an update. A good prompt is, “Last week you said [read previous Action Statement]. How did that go?” Depending on the number of participants, this section of the meeting can go long. Invite participants to share for up to two minutes to keep a good meeting flow. Also, encourage participation in celebrating and reassuring the journey of those sharing.

Long-winded group members should be gently encouraged to stay focused on their Action Statement and to avoid giving an update on their entire week. As members share, beware of cross talk from other group members. This is not a time for counseling or correcting. If follow up is needed, look for a space to connect outside of the KLC meeting.

Bible Study and Discussion (45 min.)

The center of the meeting is the bible study and discussion. Due to the rich discussions that emerge in diverse contexts, avoid attempting to study long passages in one sitting. Allow the space needed to explore the biblical context as well as the groups’ contemporary contexts. When deciding on what to study, avoid strict pre-written curricula. They are often written from a fixed point of view and do not allow the flexibility needed to contextualize materials for diverse contexts.

Listen carefully during discussions and beware of teaching that deviates away from the biblical text, although questions should be encouraged. Allow the discussion to explore advanced concepts and basic principles; good discussions engage mature believers while educating and inspiring new believers. As a facilitator, know and work with your natural personality. If you love a hearty discussion, allow your excitement to keep the conversation moving while also being aware of dominating the conversation.

Action Statement Sharing (10 min.)

During this portion of the meeting, encourage each participant, regardless of age, to craft and share an Action Statement, which is a short statement through which KLC members share their intention to apply the Word of God to their lives. Effective Action Statement prompts encourage participants to think through how they will implement their statement (e.g., “This week I want to . . . ,” “I can do this by . . . ,” or “This will require me to . . .”). In the last 15 minutes of the meeting, encourage everyone to begin crafting and sharing their Action Statements by passing around a notebook (in person) or asking them to type in the chat (online). Remember to record these statements in your facilitator notebook (digital and/or physical). Encourage KLC members to pray for one another between meetings.

Closing Prayer (5 min.)

The closing prayer concludes the KLCC portion of the gathering. Consider choosing different group members to pray each week. The KLC meeting is officially ended after the closing prayer. If in-person hosts choose to invite guests to stay and fellowship, or if online group members want to stay behind to talk, the facilitator should clearly delineate the end of the KLCC portion of the gathering.

Bible Study

Quality Bible study informs and redeems our individual cultures. KLC discussions center around the Word of God, which provides a biblical focus and guards against reading one's default culture into the text.

As a result, KLC facilitators need to study the biblical passages thoroughly before meetings, working to exegete (i.e., derive meaning from) the text. There are many effective Bible study frameworks and facilitators are encouraged to use the method at which they are most skilled.

For those in need of an effective and simple framework, here is a suggestion:

Read the text and guide your research by addressing the following questions:

1. What did this passage mean in its original context?
 - What happened before and after the passage?
 - Who was the originally intended audience?
2. What does this passage teach us about God?
3. What does this passage mean for us today?
 - What are some of the differences between our contemporary contexts and that of the original audience?
 - How does the passage speak to our communities? families? classmates?
 - How does the passage speak to our church?
 - How does the passage speak to us individually?

Whenever possible, study resources will be available for facilitators to use to prepare for meetings.

Intercultural, Intergenerational, and Hybrid Discipleship Considerations

The most effective **intercultural** discipleship approaches:

1. are decolonized. To facilitate a discipleship curriculum that is appropriate for an intercultural church, it is necessary to acknowledge the impact of Western colonization and systemic racism on biblical Christianity. *Decolonized discipleship*, or *decolonizing discipleship*, refers to the process and result of disentangling the Christian faith from the assumptions of White, Eurocentric-normative depictions of biblical culture and characters. The process of *decolonizing discipleship* requires a measuring of the distance between the cultures of the 1st century church and that of the White, Eurocentric Western world.
2. spend time exploring the default cultural values of individual disciples.
3. locate and identify the personal cultural assumptions brought to the text by the reader. It is important to acknowledge that one's default culture is not the norm for all group members.
4. allow the space to discuss biblical passages from diverse viewpoints.
5. explore how the biblical truths being presented inform the disciple's default cultural patterns.

The most effective **intergenerational** discipleship approaches:

1. allow space to discuss issues from different generational perspectives.
2. encourage elderly participants to explore their faith and life stories in view of the biblical passage being studied.
3. encourage family discussions outside of the discipleship group.

The most effective **hybrid** discipleship approaches:

1. avoid the competitive approach, which places in-person and virtual platforms in competition with one another.
2. focus on the missional and complementary qualities of diverse platforms.
3. utilize the strength of each meeting space, whether online or in person.
4. understand the weaknesses and deficits of each meeting space.
5. consider the needs and experiences of differently abled people in each space.
6. prepare the meeting space. Arrive (or log in) early to prepare the space for meeting.
7. provide clear information on where and how meetings take place.

APPENDIX E
ENTRANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name (first and last):

Date:

Demographics

Date of Birth (YYYY-MM-DD):

Race/Ethnicity:

Gender: [Male] [Female]

How do you attend Kingdom Life Community Church (KLCC) gatherings (e.g., Sunday Gathering, Wednesday Morning Prayer, KLCs, meetings)?
(select all that apply)

[in person] [online]

Which Kingdom Life Community (KLC) do you primarily participate in?
(select all that apply)

[Wednesday In-Person] [Wednesday Online] [Friday In-Person]

How long have you been a Christian?

What best describes your role at KLCC?
(select all that apply)

[newcomer] [regular attendee] [Covenant Partner] [leader]

Are you a parent? [yes] [no]

If you are a parent, how would you best describe the age(s) of your child(ren)?
(select all that apply)

[12 and under] [13-17] [18-25] [26 and up]

Entrance Discipleship Assessment

In Galatians 6:17 Paul expresses that he bears on his body “the marks of Jesus.” True disciples of Jesus carry “marks” (Greek “*stigma*”) that identify them as such. According to the New Testament authors, disciples of Jesus: (1) make disciples, (2) follow and remain with Jesus, (3) prioritize Jesus over anyone or anything else, (4) carry their own crosses, (5) resemble Jesus, (6) walk freely in the truth, and (7) understand that all they possess belongs to God.

Do you bear the marks of a disciple? The following 42-question assessment will assist you in evaluating where you are in your walk as one of Jesus’ disciples.

For best results, answer honestly - scoring yourself based on your current reality. Although your name is listed above, it will be kept confidential in any research materials that utilize your results.

| Mark No. 1: Disciples Make Disciples | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|---|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. I understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. | | | | | |
| 8. I look for opportunities to share my testimony with others. | | | | | |
| 9. I lead nonbelievers into relationship with God through Jesus Christ. | | | | | |
| 10. I am actively helping one or more other Christians grow in their relationship with Jesus. | | | | | |
| 11. I personally encourage new Christians to get baptized. | | | | | |
| 12. I work to contextualize the gospel and Jesus’ teachings so that others can understand them. | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 1 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Mark No. 2: Disciples Follow & Remain with Jesus | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|---|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1. I want to be like Jesus. | | | | | |
| 2. I have an active, personal relationship with Jesus. | | | | | |
| 3. I submit under the leadership and teaching of those God sends to teach me to be more like Jesus. | | | | | |
| 4. I know and understand Jesus’ teachings in the Bible. | | | | | |
| 5. I am participating in God’s mission of spreading the gospel around the world. | | | | | |
| 6. I am led daily by the Holy Spirit. | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 2 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Mark No. 3: Disciples Prioritize Jesus over Anyone or Anything Else | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|--|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1. My relationship with Jesus takes priority over every other relationship in my life. | | | | | |
| 2. I love Jesus more than anyone or anything else. | | | | | |
| 3. I allow Jesus' priorities to override my own priorities. | | | | | |
| 4. I am submitted to Jesus in every area of my life. | | | | | |
| 5. I know what is important to Jesus. | | | | | |
| 6. I understand the personal cost of being a disciple of Jesus. | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 3 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Mark No. 4: Disciples Carry Their Own Crosses | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|--|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1. I understand what it means to "carry my own cross." | | | | | |
| 2. I deny the part of me that wants to go against the will of God. | | | | | |
| 3. I understand that I have a new life and identity in Jesus Christ. | | | | | |
| 4. My relationship with Jesus Christ has caused some suffering (e.g., persecution, lack of comfort, self-control, patience, hunger, etc.). | | | | | |
| 5. I can withstand suffering and persecution. | | | | | |
| 6. My actions are not motivated by "self-preservation." Instead, they are motivated by God's love and grace. | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 4 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Mark No. 5: Disciples Resemble Jesus | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|---|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1. People can tell that I am a disciple of Jesus without me telling them. | | | | | |
| 2. I love other Christians the same way that Jesus loves me. | | | | | |
| 3. I love my non-Christian neighbors the same way that Jesus loves me. | | | | | |
| 4. I am constantly changing and growing in my relationship with Jesus. | | | | | |
| 5. I am more like Jesus than when I first became a Christian. | | | | | |
| 6. I lead by serving others (i.e., I am a servant leader.). | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 5 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Mark No. 6: Disciples Walk Freely in The Truth | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|---|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1. I am not bound or imprisoned by sin. | | | | | |
| 2. Through the Holy Spirit, I can recognize deception. | | | | | |
| 3. I listen to the Holy Spirit. | | | | | |
| 4. I understand the difference between <i>having self-control</i> and <i>walking in bondage</i> . | | | | | |
| 5. When I feel burdened or overwhelmed, I pray and give everything to God. | | | | | |
| 6. Jesus Christ is “the way, and the truth, and the life;” and the only way through which anyone can come directly to God the Father. (John 14:6) | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 6 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Mark No. 7: Disciples Understand That All They Possess Belongs to God | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|--|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1. I understand that all my financial resources belong to God. | | | | | |
| 2. All that I have is available for God to use. | | | | | |
| 3. I understand that all my time and schedules belong to God. | | | | | |
| 4. I left my former life behind to follow Christ Jesus. | | | | | |
| 5. I don't argue or negotiate with God when He asks for me to give up my time and resources for His purposes. | | | | | |
| 6. As far as I am concerned, God is the final authority in all my relationships (e.g., friends, family, work). | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 7 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Summary | Section Totals: | Strengths: Which statement(s) had the highest score? (Ex. "1 and 3") | Areas of Growth: Which statement(s) had the lowest score? |
|--|-----------------|---|---|
| Mark No. 1: Disciples Make Disciples | | | |
| Mark No. 2: Disciples Follow & Remain with Jesus | | | |
| Mark No. 3: Disciples Prioritize Jesus over Anyone or Anything Else | | | |
| Mark No. 4: Disciples Carry Their Own Crosses | | | |
| Mark No. 5: Disciples Resemble Jesus | | | |
| Mark No. 6: Disciples Walk Freely in The Truth | | | |
| Mark No. 7: Disciples Understand That All They Possess Belongs to God | | | |
| Grand Total (210 possible): | | | |

Evaluation:

What are some of your strengths as a disciple?

What are some areas where growth is needed?

APPENDIX F

EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name (first and last):

Date:

Exit Discipleship Assessment

In Galatians 6:17 Paul expresses that he bears on his body “the marks of Jesus.” True disciples of Jesus carry “marks” (Greek “*stigma*”) that identify them as such. According to the New Testament authors, disciples of Jesus: (1) make disciples, (2) follow and remain with Jesus, (3) prioritize Jesus over anyone or anything else, (4) carry their own crosses, (5) resemble Jesus, (6) walk freely in the truth, and (7) understand that all they possess belongs to God.

Do you bear the marks of a disciple? The following 42-question assessment will assist you in evaluating where you are in your walk as one of Jesus’ disciples.

For best results, answer honestly - scoring yourself based on your current reality. Although your name is listed above, it will be kept confidential in any research materials that utilize your results.

| Mark No. 1: Disciples Make Disciples | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|---|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. I understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. | | | | | |
| 14. I look for opportunities to share my testimony with others. | | | | | |
| 15. I lead nonbelievers into relationship with God through Jesus Christ. | | | | | |
| 16. I am actively helping one or more other Christians grow in their relationship with Jesus. | | | | | |
| 17. I personally encourage new Christians to get baptized. | | | | | |
| 18. I work to contextualize the gospel and Jesus’ teachings so that others can understand them. | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 1 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Mark No. 2: Disciples Follow & Remain with Jesus | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|---|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. I want to be like Jesus. | | | | | |
| 8. I have an active, personal relationship with Jesus. | | | | | |
| 9. I submit under the leadership and teaching of those God sends to teach me to be more like Jesus. | | | | | |
| 10. I know and understand Jesus' teachings in the Bible. | | | | | |
| 11. I am participating in God's mission of spreading the gospel around the world. | | | | | |
| 12. I am led daily by the Holy Spirit. | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 2 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Mark No. 3: Disciples Prioritize Jesus over Anyone or Anything Else | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|--|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. My relationship with Jesus takes priority over every other relationship in my life. | | | | | |
| 8. I love Jesus more than anyone or anything else. | | | | | |
| 9. I allow Jesus' priorities to override my own priorities. | | | | | |
| 10. I am submitted to Jesus in every area of my life. | | | | | |
| 11. I know what is important to Jesus. | | | | | |
| 12. I understand the personal cost of being a disciple of Jesus. | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 3 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Mark No. 4: Disciples Carry Their Own Crosses | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|---|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. I understand what it means to “carry my own cross.” | | | | | |
| 8. I deny the part of me that wants to go against the will of God. | | | | | |
| 9. I understand that I have a new life and identity in Jesus Christ. | | | | | |
| 10. My relationship with Jesus Christ has caused some suffering (e.g., persecution, lack of comfort, self-control, patience, hunger, etc.). | | | | | |
| 11. I can withstand suffering and persecution. | | | | | |
| 12. My actions are not motivated by “self-preservation.” Instead, they are motivated by God’s love and grace. | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 4 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Mark No. 5: Disciples Resemble Jesus | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|---|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. People can tell that I am a disciple of Jesus without me telling them. | | | | | |
| 8. I love other Christians the same way that Jesus loves me. | | | | | |
| 9. I love my non-Christian neighbors the same way that Jesus loves me. | | | | | |
| 10. I am constantly changing and growing in my relationship with Jesus. | | | | | |
| 11. I am more like Jesus than when I first became a Christian. | | | | | |
| 12. I lead by serving others (i.e., I am a servant leader.). | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 5 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Mark No. 6: Disciples Walk Freely in The Truth | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|--|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. I am not bound or imprisoned by sin. | | | | | |
| 8. Through the Holy Spirit, I can recognize deception. | | | | | |
| 9. I listen to the Holy Spirit. | | | | | |
| 10. I understand the difference between <i>having self-control</i> and <i>walking in bondage</i> . | | | | | |
| 11. When I feel burdened or overwhelmed, I pray and give everything to God. | | | | | |
| 12. Jesus Christ is “the way, and the truth, and the life;” and the only way through which anyone can come directly to God the Father. (John 14:6) | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 6 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Mark No. 7: Disciples Understand That All They Possess Belongs to God | Very True | True | Some-what True | Untrue | Very Untrue |
|---|-----------|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. I understand that all my financial resources belong to God. | | | | | |
| 8. All that I have is available for God to use. | | | | | |
| 9. I understand that all my time and schedules belong to God. | | | | | |
| 10. I left my former life behind to follow Christ Jesus. | | | | | |
| 11. I don’t argue or negotiate with God when He asks for me to give up my time and resources for His purposes. | | | | | |
| 12. As far as I am concerned, God is the final authority in all my relationships (e.g., friends, family, work). | | | | | |
| Column Total: | | | | | |

No. 7 Total (add up all 5 column totals): _____

| Summary | Section Totals: | Strengths: Which statement(s) had the highest score? (Ex. "1 and 3") | Areas of Growth: Which statement(s) had the lowest score? |
|--|-----------------|---|---|
| Mark No. 1: Disciples Make Disciples | | | |
| Mark No. 2: Disciples Follow & Remain with Jesus | | | |
| Mark No. 3: Disciples Prioritize Jesus over Anyone or Anything Else | | | |
| Mark No. 4: Disciples Carry Their Own Crosses | | | |
| Mark No. 5: Disciples Resemble Jesus | | | |
| Mark No. 6: Disciples Walk Freely in The Truth | | | |
| Mark No. 7: Disciples Understand That All They Possess Belongs to God | | | |
| Grand Total (210 possible): | | | |

Evaluation:

Do you feel that you have changed spiritually over the past 10 weeks? If yes, in what ways have you changed? If no, what do you feel prevented change from occurring?

APPENDIX G

Journal Entry No. 1*following the Feb. 8th and 10th KLCs*

Name: _____

Date: _____

Please take a moment to reflect on your KLC experience. Use the following prompts:

1. What were your Week 1 and 2 Action Statements?

Week 1:

Week 2:

2. Over the past 2 weeks, have you been challenged/informed by a group member's different perspective during KLC meetings? Please explain.

3. Over the past 2 weeks, has the Bible study addressed any of your cultural or generational perspectives? Please explain.

4. Over the past 2 weeks, have you been impacted by someone else's Action Statement report during a KLC meeting? Please explain.

5. Anything else on your mind? Please record any other thoughts sparked by this reflection.

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & PROCEDURES

Interview No. 1

- How did you feel after taking the discipleship assessment? Please explain.
- How and where did you become a Christian? What is your conversion story?
- What does it mean to be a mature Christian?
- Do you know any mature Christians? If so, what are their characteristics?
- How do you feel about learning alongside Christians from different ethnic and racial backgrounds?
- How do you feel about learning alongside Christians from different generations?
- Do you feel that you have grown spiritually during your time at KLCC? Please explain.
- What are your thoughts on KLCC's multi-platform approach to discipleship?
- What question(s) should I ask to learn if you are growing spiritually?

Interview No. 2

- How did you feel after taking the discipleship assessment a second time? Please explain?
- Were there any changes between the first assessment and this one? If so, what were they?
 - What do you feel caused the change?
- Did you learn anything new about the others in your KLC? If so, what?
- What are some of the challenges to your spiritual growth? How do you address them?
- What has your KLC experience been like over the past eight weeks?
- What will it take for you to continue to grow after this project finishes?
- What did I miss? Is there anything else you would like me to know?

APPENDIX I

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- Please tell everyone your name and which KLC you attend.
- How would you explain a KLC to someone new to KLCC?
- How does Bible study within the KLC compare to your personal Bible study?
- What are your thoughts on the action steps and follow-up in the meetings?
- Please share a memorable moment from the past 8 weeks.
- Within this group, is there a difference between your internal thoughts and external communication around online ministry and discipleship?

APPENDIX J

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 4, 2023

John Littlejohn
Seth Bible

Re: IRB Application – IRB-FY22-23-612 Intercultural, Intergenerational, Hybrid Discipleship Study

Dear John Littlejohn and Seth Bible,

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 that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your project is not considered human subjects research because it will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46.102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. **If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.**

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

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