

A CAUSAL-COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LEARNER-CENTEREDNESS AMONG  
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CLERGY BY CREDENTIAL LEVEL

by

George Rexaville True, III

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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## ABSTRACT

This non-experimental, causal-comparative study sought to evaluate the learner-centeredness of Pentecostal ministers in the Assemblies of God. Building on the foundations of Adult Learning Theory and Pentecostal epistemology, this study examined the instructional practices of Pentecostal clergy. Utilizing the Principles of Adult Learning Scale [PALS] and a survey of basic demographic information, the instructional methodologies of certified, licensed, and ordained clergy in the Northern New England, Pennsylvania-Delaware, Arkansas, and Northwest districts of the Assemblies of God were examined. A Welch's ANOVA analyzed the relationship between clergy credential level and scores on the PALS. The results of this study revealed a statistically significant difference between clergy credential level and learner-centeredness as measured by the PALS, specifically between certified and licensed ministers, and licensed and ordained ministers. Further research should explore learner-centeredness in other Pentecostal organizations and the instructional environments of Pentecostal colleges, as these often form and shape the instructional methods of the clergy.

*Keywords:* clergy, credentialing, instructional practices, andragogy, adult learning theory

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### **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my lovely wife, Charity, who has sacrificed greatly over the past four years as I have pursued my doctorate. There were many evenings when I would peel away after dinner to work on my studies rather than spending the evening with her, and I am grateful for the love and support she has shown me on this journey.

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Also, Dr. Lisa Foster, my committee member and methodologist, whose insight and knowledge of statistics helped me greatly when my original statistical analysis failed some assumption tests. Her input and guidance towards another test revealed significant differences in the data. I am grateful for her knowledge and expertise.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

This quantitative, causal-comparative study aims to determine if there is a difference in learner-centered practices between certified, licensed, and ordained clergy in the Assemblies of God. Chapter One provides a background for adult learning theory, Pentecostal epistemology, and the educational vision necessary for the Christian church, including instructional and homiletical practices. The background includes an overview of the theoretical framework for this study. The problem statement examines the scope of the recent literature on this topic. An explanation of the current study's significance follows this study's purpose. Finally, the author introduces the research questions and provides definitions pertinent to this study.

### **Background**

Many ministers need to understand the overarching educational vision that accompanies the spiritual oversight of a Christian congregation. The role of teaching within the pastoral ministry (Anderson, 2018; Brown, 2021; Ming, 2012; Wilson, 2018) proves to be an essential aspect of the overall vision of educating and forming congregants in the faith, a fundamental goal of healthy, growing churches (Bingham, 2021; Francis et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2019; Siew, 2013; Todd, 2017). Pastors are educational leaders who instruct through small groups and classes, corporate worship gatherings, and missional service opportunities (Dever & Alexander, 2005; Francis et al., 2021; Siew, 2013, 2021).

Specifically, within the Pentecostal tradition, a unique approach to knowledge acquisition has been proposed due to the unique role of spiritual experience in the Pentecostal study of the Bible. Pentecostals have adopted a unique epistemological framework that allows for the experience of the Holy Spirit within the learning process, something which separates Pentecostal

learning environments from those of other faith traditions (Frestadius, 2016; J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022; Lewis, 2000; Smith, 2010; Yong, 2002, 2014). In addition, Pentecostal education also values the input of other cultures and perspectives (Deng, 2021; Tsekpoe, 2021; Yong, 2020). The participatory nature of Pentecostal worship, democratizing the church's teaching ministry (C. B. Johns, 2010; Nel, 2018), lends itself to the student-directed, learner-centered nature of an andragogical learning environment.

### **Historical Overview**

When developing Christian educational curriculums in the 1960s, most educators did not adopt an andragogical methodology (Budd & Bergen, 2020). This has been notably true in the context of ministry formation and the training of pastors. Scholars (Naidoo, 2021; Ott, 2021) have highlighted the need to practice praxis in theological education. The disciplines of theology and religious education have primarily operated in the improper bifurcation between theory and practice (Adams, 2021; Heath, 2019; Naidoo, 2021; Ott, 2021). Traditional curriculum in education emphasizes a theory-to-application approach (Naidoo, 2021) rather than an integrated approach where action and reflection work together to form students' thinking (Naidoo, 2021; Ott, 2021). Students must integrate theory into their ministry practice through internships and practicums (Naidoo, 2021; Ott, 2021).

Pentecostals were involved in education from the beginning of their movement, tracing their origins to a Bible school in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901. Unfortunately, Pentecostal theological education followed the example of their Evangelical and Fundamentalist counterparts despite their unique epistemology (Frestadius, 2021), upholding this disintegrated approach. The disintegrated, teacher-centered theoretical focus of theological education has trickled down into the ministry practices of pastors and church leaders, as ministers often teach how they were

taught (Gaarden, 2016; Lu, 2020). In addition to the dominance of teacher-centered classrooms, most paths of ministry training need more training in education theory and learner-centered methodology (Jones, 2021). As a result, while expressing a desire to be learner-centered, most ministers are still highly teacher-centered in their instructional practices (Jones, 2021). Some scholars have sought to bring a learner-centered, andragogical approach to the Christian educational process (Beard, 2017; Spaude, 2017), and others have even begun researching what a learner-centered approach to the homiletical and preaching practices of clergy might look like (Gaarden, 2016, 2017, 2019; Stuart, 2011). Little research explores the andragogical principles of education and Pentecostal epistemology.

Andragogy, as a theory of adult education, posits that adults learn best when their educational experience is driven by their knowledge, desire, and experiences. The teacher serves as a guide and facilitator (Knowles, 1977). Andragogy moves students towards greater independence in the learning process, separating it from pedagogy which refers specifically to children's education (Knowles, 1977, 1978). Andragogical, learner-centered practice, emphasizing the teacher as a guide and facilitator of student learning, fits well with the democratic ideals of Pentecostalism (C. B. Johns, 2010; Nel, 2018).

Contemporary clergy instruction tends not to be andragogical and learner-centered (Jones, 2021). At the same time, many clergy desire to be learner-centered in their teaching methodologies (Jones, 2021), but their knowledge and application of learner-centered educational theories are lacking. Even though many Christian educators developed programs and curricula during the period adult learning theory emerged, focused on a learner-centered approach to education, curriculum developers in Christian education failed to interact with theorists and apply their work in the instructional practices of the church (Budd & Bergen,

2020). This lack of application of adult learning theory is particularly notable, given that the views of andragogy and transformative learning theory prove appropriate for the transformation and formation desired by faith leaders (Beard, 2017), especially those of the Pentecostal faith. Many clergies, however, receive little training in learning theory and instructional practices (Jones, 2021), a problem that especially plagues the Assemblies of God (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2021; Global University, 2022; North Central University, 2021; Northwest University, 2021; Southeastern University, 2022; University of Valley Forge, 2021).

### **Society at Large**

The work of clergy has an incredible impact on society as they equip congregants to make a difference within their communities. Moreland (2007) has noted the lack of moral and spiritual formation in modern educational systems of today, where students gain practical and vocational skills separate from holistic development, including formation. Spiritual formation and teaching within the local church can fill this gap by developing moral, contributing citizens to society. Sherman (2011) has written on the power of Christian people to contribute to the good of society, building on Solomon's wisdom: "When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices" (Proverbs 11:10, New International Version). Sherman writes, "To deploy their vocational power for the common good, believers must possess a character that handles this power humbly and eschews its misuse" (p. 129).

Others have written on a biblical perspective of vocation that empowers believers for their work in society (Nelson, 2011; Traeger & Gilbert, 2013). Self (2013) writes about this mission of societal impact and transformation, noting not only the biblical and theological foundations of such a mission but the unique Pentecostal dynamic of the power of the Holy Spirit in the process, something Moreland (2007) included as a part of his answer to the moral lack in



society today. Facilitating spiritual transformation in andragogical learning environments makes room for the Holy Spirit in this process (Moreland, 2007; Self, 2013), helping clergy to deploy transformed believers into society (Nelson, 2011; Sherman, 2011; Traeger & Gilbert, 2013) and fill the gap between currently lacking in what Moreland (2007) calls “highly skilled barbarians” (p. 73). Andragogical theory will allow clergy to bring experiences of the Holy Spirit (Moreland, 2007; Self, 2013) into the learning process of transformation that develops righteous believers who properly deploy their vocational power for the common good (Sherman, 2011), rejoicing their community for the good of all (Proverbs 11:10).

### **Theoretical Context**

The historical struggle between theory and practice within Christian education, together with the biblical call for believers to utilize their God-given vocations for the common good of society, call for a theoretical engagement between adult learning theory and Christian instructional practices, especially in the training and formation of adults (Budd & Bergen, 2020). Malcolm Knowles (1977, 1978) and Jack Mezirow (1978, 1981) have provided a theoretical basis for such educational practices in their adult learning theories. In addition, the unique perspectives of Pentecostal epistemology (Frestadius, 2016; C. B. Johns, 2010; J. D. Johns, 2012; C. B. Johns & J. D. Johns, 1992; Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022; Smith, 2010; Yong, 2002, 2014) provide a third theoretical foundation upon which to build a theory of Pentecostal andragogy.

Adult learning theory, as separate from traditional pedagogy, poses that learner-driven education better fits the pursuits and interests of adults (Knowles, 1978). When the student becomes the focus, and their interests, experiences, and pursuits begin informing the curriculum, the underlying educational theory moves from traditional pedagogy to andragogy. Pedagogy has a place in Christian education, particularly in training children (Knowles, 1978) or people

entirely unfamiliar with the material under study (Henschke, 2019). However, andragogy and learner-centered instruction are particularly beneficial to lead people into more profound learning and transformation (Mezirow, 1978, 1981; Schunk, 2020). Andragogy, particularly transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978, 1981), provides unique insights into the transformation of the mind that proves vital for spiritual transformation. Beard (2017) notes that the integration of experience and the focus on personal enrichment over information transfer within andragogy provides a theoretical foundation for transformative, faith-based education. In addition, the theories of perspective transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978, 1981) offer a unique understanding of how cognitive change takes place within the mind, something involving the Holy Spirit in a Pentecostal learning environment through the development of pneumatological imagination (Frestadius, 2016; Yong, 2002, 2014).

Given the historical struggle in Christian education to integrate theory and practice, approaches to integrating adults' experiences into the learning process would be helpful in faith formation. In addition, experiencing the Holy Spirit proves vital in a Pentecostal learning environment. In light of the uniqueness of the Pentecostal instructional environment, learner-centered andragogical theory seems to best inform the educational practices of Pentecostal clergy seeking to form disciples of Christ. Andragogy, with its integration of experience and fostering of collaboration, provides a theoretical framework for Pentecostal clergy to create transformative, learner-centered environments for their adherents. Pentecostal andragogy, including the theories of Pentecostal epistemology and perspective transformation, should frame the educational vision of Pentecostal pastors.

## **Problem Statement**

Few have sought the application of the educational theory of andragogy and the practice of learner-centered instruction to education and formation within faith communities. This is true in both curriculum development within Christian education (Budd & Bergen, 2020), the Christian definitions of preaching (Gaarden, 2017, 2019), and the professional training of clergy (Jones, 2021).

Lu (2020) has highlighted how the training contexts of clergy influence their ministry practice. Examining the preaching moment has also indicated a learner-centered, constructivist environment of meaning-making, identified as the third room of preaching (Gaarden, 2017, 2019). Others (Beard, 2017; Grimm, 2018, 2020; Nelson, 2021, 2022) have noted how the goal of spiritual transformation within ministry aligns with transformational learning and adult learning theory.

Jones (2021) ran a mixed-methods study about the relationship between educational level and learner-centeredness among clergy in the Anglican Church in North America. The study indicated a pattern between formal education in adult learning theory and the application of adult learning theory within their practice (Jones, 2021). Over 70% of participants in the study had 0-1 courses in adult learning theory, making it extremely difficult to determine the nature of the emerging pattern between educational preparedness and learner-centeredness among the clergy (Jones, 2021). More research is needed to understand the learner-centeredness of the clergy, specifically regarding the level of ordination (Jones, 2021).

The problem is that the literature has not fully addressed the relationship between learner-centered instructional practices and the level of clergy ordination (Jones, 2021). Neither has it engaged the learner-centeredness of the instructional approaches of Pentecostal clergy despite

calls for such in recent literature (Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, 2021; Davis, 2022) nor the learner-centered realities of Pentecostal epistemology (Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022).

### **Purpose Statement**

This quantitative, causal-comparative study examines the difference between the level of ministerial credentials and learner-centeredness (Jones, 2021) among Pentecostal clergy of the Assemblies of God. A quantitative, causal-comparative study measuring the relationship between variables will correlate scores on the Principles of Adult Learning Scale [PALS] (Conti, 1982, 1985), a measurement of learner-centeredness, with the level of credentialing of clergy in Assemblies of God USA fellowship. The learner-centeredness score from the PALS, the dependent variable, will be studied with the independent variable, the level of clergy credentials. The population under study will include certified, licensed, and ordained clergy within the participating districts of the Assemblies of God fellowship.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study provides necessary work applying Pentecostal andragogy to education and formation within Pentecostal faith communities. It builds on the work of others (Jones, 2021) in seeking to examine the relationship between the level of ministerial credentials and clergy instructional practice and desires to add to the educational field by studying the relationship between ministerial credentials and the educational practices of the church, with a particular eye to the Pentecostal community. These clergy often lack understanding and application of learner-centered educational practices (Budd & Bergen, 2020; Jones, 2021).

While work has applied andragogy to spiritual formation (Beard, 2017), preaching (Gaarden, 2017, 2019), and even the training and education of clergy (Sumule, 2018), the

specific measures of learner-centeredness in the instructional practices of the church provide an area for further research. While Jones (2021) has spent some time researching this area, building on educational preparedness and learner-centeredness, she identifies needed research relating this to the level of ordination (Jones, 2021). Further, little research has applied andragogy to Pentecostal learning environments, despite the correlations between andragogy and Pentecostal epistemology.

This study will assist Pentecostal clergy in understanding the dynamics of andragogical, learner-centered instruction for Pentecostal learning environments. The democratic, participatory nature of Pentecostal liturgy (Nel, 2018), the influence of experience in the learning process (Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022), and the shared perspectives of others (Deng, 2021; Livingston-Galloway & George, 2020; Yong, 2020) as hallmarks of Pentecostal learning require an andragogical learning experience. By aligning Pentecostal values with adult learning theory, this study adds to the literature on Pentecostal discipleship and education with a uniquely Pentecostal learning theory to inform educational practices in the Pentecostal church.

### **Research Question**

**RQ:** Is there a statistically significant difference in *learner-centeredness* among Assembly of God clergy by ministerial credential level (certified, licensed, and ordained)?

### **Definitions**

1. *Andragogy* – The educational theory built upon a learner-centered rather than a teacher-centered learning curriculum, focused on the educational needs of adults rather than children (Knowles, 1978).
2. *Learner-centered Instruction* – Methods of instruction characterized by autonomy, empowerment, engagement, and collaboration (Oyelana et al., 2022).

3. *Ministerial Credentials* – Three levels of professional credentials offered by the Assemblies of God USA, an Evangelical Pentecostal fellowship, namely certified (level 1), licensed (level 2), and ordained (level 3) (E. D. Brewer, 2016; C. D. Butler, 2020).
4. *Pentecostal Epistemology* – A particular way of knowing, specifically biblical and theological truth, that is experiential, exploratory, relational, communal, contextual, and practical (Eriksen, 2015; J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022).
5. *Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS)* – A validated instrument that measures whether a teacher is learner-centered or teacher-centered in classroom practice (Conti, 1985).
6. *Teacher-centered Instruction* – Methods of instruction characterized by the transfer of information from teacher to student and are reliant primarily on the lecture method in teaching (Fatima, 2022).

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

This chapter systematically studies the literature concerning learner-centered andragogical theory and Pentecostal epistemology. Related literature was examined concerning the role of ministers in teaching, teaching contexts of ministers, learning contexts of ministers, and how learning contexts shape the instructional practices of clergy. Literature regarding the teaching of ministers in the Assemblies of God was also examined. Synthesizing the literature will demonstrate the necessity for further study and investigation regarding a Pentecostal andragogical approach to clergy instructional practice.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Pentecostals espouse a unique understanding of faith, knowledge, and experience that provide a context for a different approach to the educational task. The dynamics of a Pentecostal worldview make possible a unique Pentecostal epistemology in which spiritual experience plays a distinct role in knowledge acquisition (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022). In a Pentecostal instructional environment, believers experience the God they are studying, so knowledge and experience are inseparable (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992). Knowles's (1977, 1978) theory of andragogy, which factors in experience as a unique contributor to the educational process, embraces a much different approach to education than traditional pedagogy. Mezirow's (1978, 1981) transformative learning theory articulates a process by which meaning perspectives within the adult mind can be critically examined and changed. Pentecostal epistemology and the learner-centered adult learning theories of andragogy and transformative learning provide a theoretical framework for a Pentecostal educational theory of learner-centered instruction.

## **Andragogy**

Andragogy, developed by Malcolm Knowles (1977), builds on the premise that learning is best driven by the knowledge and desire of the learner, with the teacher operating as a guide and facilitator of learning for the student (Knowles, 1977). This self-directed learning system presents the student with a guided inquiry process driven by the students' desire to learn. When andragogy drives the educational process, the student moves from dependence upon the teacher to independence in learning and knowledge acquisition (Knowles, 1977).

This principle separates andragogy from pedagogy, a theory that best applies to the education of children, even though pedagogy is commonly applied to the education of children and adults (Knowles, 1978). Building on the work of Lindeman (1926), Knowles (1978) posed that pedagogy depends on the teacher-selected curriculum, and andragogy depends on the interests and desires of the student. Students in andragogical educational settings allow their experiences to drive their inquiry (Knowles, 1978; Mezirow, 1981), while teachers guide and facilitate the learning process (King, 1993; Knowles, 1978). This move toward teachers as guides represents the broader move within the educational world from the sage on the stage to the guide on the side (King, 1993). Henschke (2019) noted that the choice between a pedagogical and andragogical approach might have more to do with the student's familiarity with the material, regardless of age. Andragogy recognizes the role of personal experiences in the educational process and the increasing independence of the student, something rooted in the free agency of humanity (Van der Walt, 2019).

Sumule (2018) highlighted some physical aspects of learner-centered andragogical environments, including table fellowship, five to six adults, and a bright and colorful room. Further, he listed the seven characteristics identified by Knowles and associates as an appropriate



psychological environment for learner-centered formation: mutual respect, collaboration, trust, support, authenticity, pleasure, and humanness (Sumule, 2018).

Several scholars have taken up the application of andragogy to Christian life and ministry. M. Brewer (1990) takes up the issue of adult learning theory in relation to the continuing education of missionaries. The framework of andragogy as a self-directed, problem-based journey provided a theoretical framework for missionaries to embrace continuous learning that remains relevant to their everyday lives. M. Brewer found eight practical reasons why missionaries' andragogical approach to continuous learning proved applicable: contextual development, organizational growth, institutional needs, missiological research, human potential, geographic limitations, modeling for followers, and doxological worship of God (M. Brewer, 1990).

Beard (2015, 2017), noting the lack of literature applying andragogy to Christian discipleship, connected the principles of andragogy and those of spiritual formation. Based on those connections, Beard examined the application of adult learning theory to missional spiritual formation, an essential aspect of the discipleship process. Budd and Freeman (2004) examined the Methodist class meeting, as practiced by John Wesley, against the principles of Knowles (1977, 1978), noting that the class meeting exhibited similarity with andragogy, specifically in the role of experience and problem-centered learning. Wesley's desire for experiential religion made the class meeting a place where theology interacted with personal experience and real-life problems. Andragogy relates well to Wesleyan epistemology and spirituality (Grimm, 2018, 2020). Spaude (2017) presents a qualitative study of pastors' utilization of adult learning methods in their Bible Information Class for seekers. Spaude was interested in how adult learning methods can encourage the assimilation of new members into the church. Research

indicated that only 38% of pastors utilized the Bible Information Course as an intentional assimilation tool. In comparison, 52% see assimilation as an outside event while a student is enrolled in the BIC. Spaude presents ways andragogical methods can aid assimilation during the BIC (Spaude, 2017).

Daramola (2020) ran an explanatory mixed research design. A pre-test and post-test design with an ANOVA test was used in the quantitative phase, while a case study design was employed in the qualitative phase. The study focused on Knowles' four guidelines for adult educators: "(a) give adults the reason for learning the lesson before the lesson begins, (b) take into account the great and diverse experiences that adults have, (c) realize that adults are ready and excited about learning which will help them deal with real life, and (d) understand that adult learners are primarily intrinsically motivated rather than extrinsically" (Daramola, 2020, p. 31). Implementing these andragogical principles in adult Sunday school effectively brought authentic learning and transformation. The study found that the use of andragogy in the Christian education of adults produced a statistically significant difference in their learning, as measured through the pretest and posttest quantitative measurement (Daramola, 2020). Andragogy's focus on experiential, student-directed learning provides a solid theoretical framework for spiritually formative education (Daramola, 2020). As overseers of people's faith formation, the clergy should long to foster transformative environments in their Christian education practices. Knowles' (1977, 1978) theory of andragogy provides a theoretical framework for spiritually transformative education.

### **Transformative Learning Theory**

As a subset of andragogy, transformative learning theory provides a unique insight into spiritually formative education. Mezirow (1978, 1981) first proposed this theory of adult

learning, related to what Habermas (1970, 1971) identified as the emancipatory learning domain. The emancipatory domain of learning moves one into self-knowledge that allows one to break free from various rational forces that hold sway in adult lives but are out of human control (Calleja, 2014). Transformative learning theory originated in a study of women reintegrating into schooling after a significant time away (Calleja, 2014). Transformative learning theory relates to how adults change the perspectives and thinking patterns engrained within their thinking. Every person comes to the table with particular “meaning perspectives,” or psychological and cultural grids, through which they interpret their experiences (Mezirow, 1981). Transformative learning recognizes, examines, and restructures these perspectives better to interpret life experiences (Mezirow, 1981). While all people have been shaped by the meaning perspectives of their natural world and context, through transformative learning, they can identify these perspectives and change them if necessary (Mezirow, 1978).

Calleja (2014) provided a solid overview of transformative learning theory, identifying the ten-step process by which adults examine the paradigms through which they see the world (See Table 1). Transformative learning begins with a disorienting dilemma. A person can identify the frames through which they look at the world, notice their paradigms, and restructure their meaning schemes better to see the world (Calleja, 2014).

Grimm (2018, 2020) simplified this 10-step transformative process, in application to Wesleyan discipleship, to three essential elements: (1) identification of a discrepant event, (2) critical reflection, and (3) rational dialogue. Grimm further identified the Wesleyan band meeting as a place for communal spiritual formation through perspective transformation (Grimm, 2020). Mwangi (2018) ran a qualitative study on 16 small group participants to examine the effectiveness of transformative learning theory on their spiritual growth. Findings revealed that

participants experienced spiritual growth through greater engagement in ministry and spiritual disciplines, transformative teaching methods, and transformed peer relationships (Mwangi, 2018).

**Table 1**

*Mezirow's Ten Steps to Perspective Transformation*

Step	Description
1	A disorienting dilemma
2	Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3	A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
4	Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6	Planning of a course of action
7	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan
8	Provisional trying of new roles
9	Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships.
10	A reintegration into one's life based on conditions dictated by one's perspective

*Source:* Calleja, 2014.

Nelson (2021) took Mezirow's theories and critiqued them within a Christian redemptive framework of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. While Mezirow builds on an epistemology of self-knowledge and meaning-making within the self, Nelson notes the foundational role of truth in the Christian faith, making meaning something objectively true outside of the self (Nelson, 2021). He proposes a redemptive transformational learning theory (RTL), defined as "processes that give rise to enduring changes that conform to the image of Jesus Christ in the way redeemed people experience, conceptualize, and interact with God's

world” (Nelson, 2021, p. 394). Nelson’s work builds on a biblical, theological framework for redemptive transformation into the image of Christ, the goal of all Christian formation and discipleship. Nelson proposes six core elements of redemptively transformative teaching: valuing individual student experience, promoting critical reflection, incorporating dialogical education, having a holistic orientation to teaching (relational and affectionate), awareness of context, and cultivating authentic relationships with students (Nelson, 2022).

### **Pentecostal Epistemology**

Pentecostalism connects distinctly to the epistemology of Wesley, which included experience as a significant contributor to the development of theological knowledge. According to Josefsson and Nowachek (2022), experience, pragmatism, and action are paramount to the international Pentecostal community. Josefsson and Nowachek’s instructional environment, the Pastor and Leader Program of the Academy for Leadership and Theology (ALT) in Sweden, is rooted in a unique understanding of learning based on Pentecostal epistemology (Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022). Every student learns in the context of school and a local church, so that experience joins with theory in the learning process (Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022). The program's goal is that the interaction of doing, experience, and reflection work together in their Pentecostal educational program. In this way, the Pentecostal values of experience, pragmatism, and action are upheld in a formal educational environment, reflecting a Pentecostal epistemology (Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022).

### ***Role of Experience in Biblical, Theological Education***

J. D. Johns and C. B. Johns (1992) put forth a distinctive Pentecostal epistemology based on an understanding of praxis but rooted in a Hebrew perspective of knowledge. The linguistic basis for learning in Hebrew is *yada*, which describes experiential learning where “to know is to

encounter” (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992, p. 124) within a relationship between the knower and the known. Praxis seeks to unite theory and experience, while in a *yada* approach to knowing, the theory is the One experienced. Pentecostal epistemology brings the ultimate fusion between theory and practice within theological and biblical education because the theory studied is directly connected to the God experienced (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022). The study of biblical truth and theological knowledge is the study of a Personal God presently experienced while learning about Him.

Lewis (2000) and Keener (2016) bring a Spirit-empowered, Pentecostal epistemology and understanding to biblical hermeneutics, an important step when preparing to teach in a biblical or theological classroom. Nel (2021) notes how a Pentecostal hermeneutic differs from that of Calvin and other reformers. The Reformers value the illuminating work of the Spirit in the hermeneutical process of professional clergy. At the same time, Pentecostals believe in the Spirit’s illuminating work within the heart of every listener during the preaching moment (Nel, 2021). The experience of the Spirit is intrinsic to biblical and theological study for the Pentecostal (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Keener, 2016; Lewis, 2000; Nel, 2021).

Frestadius (2016) highlights the contributions of Yong (2002) and Smith (2010) in the development of Pentecostal epistemology, noting their unique differences. Yong (2002) emphasizes pneumatological imagination in knowledge acquisition, while Smith (2010) proposes that Pentecostal epistemology involves embodied, affective, and narrative elements (Frestadius, 2016). For Yong, imagination is where beliefs about God and the world develop through experience with the world. Yong sees the Spirit of God as the bond of love within the Trinitarian God, the Spirit of creation as maintaining God’s relationship with creation, and the Spirit of Pentecost as God’s presence among all people (Frestadius, 2016). God can only be known

through the Holy Spirit, making knowledge acquisition of the divine a pneumatological act (Frestadius, 2016). Within the imagination, images form through the interaction of the mind, the will, the emotions, and the spirit (Frestadius, 2016). Because the Spirit of God is at work in the broader world, this imagination can be formed by the Spirit at any time, creating space for the development of the pneumatological imagination throughout one's experience in the world. "The pneumatological world in its fullness is the source for theological knowledge" (Frestadius, 2016, p. 98). Smith (2010) challenges this approach, believing that it negates the exclusive experience of the Spirit that is unique to the covenant community of believers and thus takes a different perspective on Pentecostal epistemology. Yong (2002, 2014) and Smith (2010) would differ on the context of learning within the framework of Pentecostal epistemology. Yong (2002, 2014) believes that transformative learning can occur in the world at large, while Smith (2010) restricts transformative learning, in a Pentecostal sense, to the gathered community of believers (Smith, 2010).

Pentecostal knowledge involves a bodily, emotional experience, not simply a cognitive, rational one (Frestadius, 2016). For Smith (2010), knowledge and images of the world form through embodied activity. "Embodied knowing" (p. 106) is learning through the experiences of our bodies in their interaction and experience with the world (Frestadius, 2016). This makes room for the liturgies and rituals of the faith community in the development of embodied knowledge. Some might take issue with entirely experiential, affective knowledge. Bingham (2021) does so when speaking into the broader evangelical world about the need to align the cognitive and affective in developing knowledge of God. Practicing faith habits allows for a new world perspective (Frestadius, 2016). Pentecostal epistemology proposes that theological

education should focus on orthodoxy (the cognitive), orthopathy (the experiential), and orthopraxy (the practical) (Yong, 2020).

These aspects highlight the Pentecostal rationale flowing from Pentecostalism's experiential nature (Eriksen, 2015). Pentecostal epistemology moves beyond the cognitive emphasis of traditional philosophers toward its unique approach to knowledge (Eriksen, 2015). Lewis (2000) calls Pentecostal epistemology a non-enlightenment epistemology that overcomes many of the inherent dualisms of such thinking, including “the mind/body problem, the quest for certainty...and the objective/subjective problem” (p. 122). It does so by overcoming individualism with community, narcissistic hedonism with missiological self-sacrifice, naturalism with present experience of God's presence, moral relativism with the holiness standards of God, and chauvinism with respect for biblical teachings that arise in theologians through the centuries (Lewis, 2000). A unique, non-enlightenment dynamic at work in Pentecostal epistemology necessitates a unique learning environment, open to experiencing the Holy Spirit during the educational experience.

### ***Distinctives of a Pentecostal Learning Environment***

O'Keefe (2018) proposed distinctives of a Pentecostal learning environment. Three core elements emerge: embody, engage, and expect. Embody speaks of a personal formation that forms the core from which one teaches, engage the interactive dialogue that characterizes a transformative classroom, and expect the openness to the Holy Spirit to interact and interrupt the learning moment whenever He wants (O'Keefe, 2018). This does not mean He is absent if He is not interrupting the teacher. A teacher must maintain a submissive openness to His freedom to interrupt learning whenever He desires. One can see the principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1977, 1978) and transformational learning (Mezirow, 1978, 1981) within this distinctly Pentecostal



approach. Andragogy and transformative learning theory both involve interactive environments where personal experience and social dialogue interact as a part of the learning process, something seen in the personal embodiment and interactive engagement of Pentecostal pedagogy (Knowles, 1977, 1978; Mezirow, 1978, 1981). Pentecostal epistemology, emphasizing experiencing God, is also seen in the expectation for the Holy Spirit to move in learning (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022).

J. D. Johns (2012), in an interdisciplinary descriptive analysis of historical theology and Christian education, highlights the incredible disparity between the language and literature of the Early Church and modern Christian education. J. D. Johns (2012) examines the works of Sherrill (1944), Zuck (1963), and Henderlite (1964), the predominate published works devoted to the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian education and compares their work against the historical understanding of the church. Significant disparities emerge between Christian educators' presentation and the Early Church's understanding. A paradigm of Christian instruction is presented, building on the early church's understanding of the pedagogical role of the Holy Spirit. In summary, the paradigm builds on the personal presence of the Holy Spirit in the teaching process, the social-spatial environment of the church community, and the personal, experiential, and relational knowledge of God that enhances understanding of the Bible.

Objectives in this paradigm revolved around encountering God and living for Him. The learner was expected to desire to know God, pursue that knowledge, resolve to be conformed to His image, and exercise faith in this process (J. D. Johns, 2012). Teachers fell into two specific roles: pastor-teachers and prophet-teachers. Pastor-teachers oversaw the community, presided over church gatherings and rituals, and served as a resource for the community (J. D. Johns, 2012). Prophet-teachers spoke prophetically to the body as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Content

should include the scriptures but incorporate other means of communication by the Spirit, including church tradition and charismatic gifts (J. D. Johns, 2012). All of this should be done in the environment of the Spirit-filled community, the body of Christ. J. D. Johns' (2012) study contributes an understanding of the unique, Spirit-filled, Pentecostal paradigm that permeated the educational and transformational life of the Early Church.

C. B. Johns (2010) dialogued with Freire's (1970) theories of conscientization to propose a model of Pentecostal catechesis that embraces some of the unique characteristics of Pentecostalism, including oral theology and liturgy. Based on Pentecostal epistemology, where learning about God and knowing God involves experiencing Him (C. B. Johns, 2010; J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992), Pentecostalism is presented as a movement of conscientization that moves beyond praxis. "Pentecostal theology is an ongoing exercise in praxis within the larger epistemological structure of divine-human encounter" (C. B. Johns, 2010, p. 100). Within a Pentecostal catechesis, the Bible serves as a guide in an action/reflection process. The teacher works alongside students in a position of equality and support toward transforming reality. The student brings the current realities of the world into conversation with the story of Scripture and the Kingdom of God (C. B. Johns, 2010). Pentecostal catechesis aims at the lived Christian faith. Content involves the literature of Scripture alongside the oral content of songs, testimonies, and stories, all contributing to the educational process. Learning occurs among all the various liturgical rituals of the Pentecostal community, including baptism, communion, testimony services, baptisms in the Holy Spirit, musical worship, and healing practices (C. B. Johns, 2010).

The unique ways the practices of the Pentecostal community contribute to the learning process also describe an andragogical environment where the learner directs learning. C. B. Johns (2010) notes that an essential dynamic of Pentecostal worship is the participation of every

member in the service, breaking down the typical clergy/laity divide. J. D. Johns (2012) highlights this participatory nature of early church worship, something recognized by some Christian educational scholars (Sherrill, 1944) but not actualized in practice. Nel (2018) reveals the same in a study of early Pentecostal history in South Africa. Teaching and preaching within the early church depended upon the Spirit-inspired participation of every church member rather than a centralized dependence on the pastor (Nel, 2018). The current focus on the centralized authority of the pulpit is an evangelical accommodation and a departure from the essential, Pentecostal nature of the church (C. B. Johns, 2010; Nel, 2018). Within this dependence on the Spirit-empowered contributions of the laity, one can see the learner-centered, learner-driven principles of andragogy at work (Knowles, 1977, 1978), though with a qualification for the inspiration of the Spirit in that process. Pentecostal andragogy, where the Spirit-empowered contributions of the laity contribute to the learning and educational process, best modifies Knowles' theory.

According to Yong (2020), the Pentecostal approach to education is also attentive to the perspectives of people of other customs, cultures, and ethnicities, mirroring the diversity of the Day of Pentecost in the book of Acts, something best accomplished through culturally sensitive andragogy (Livingston-Galloway & George, 2020). Culturally sensitive andragogy requires teachers to plan lessons inclusive of non-English speaking students. This can only be done after examining their biases prohibiting non-English speaking students from being seen as equals (Livingston-Galloway & George, 2020). Deng (2021) proposes a uniquely Pentecostal approach to critical thinking, a communal, culturally informed, and dialectically formed process. Deng's language describes a learner-centered, andragogical environment where individual learners contribute in a dialogical environment and allow their culturally diverse experiences to inform

the learning process. This emphasis on multicultural perspectives is essential to a thoroughly Pentecostal environment (Deng, 2021; Yong, 2020). This environment is best served by andragogy because of its movement away from teacher-controlled learning toward student-directed learning experiences (Livingston-Galloway & George, 2020). Part of the attention to diverse perspectives includes moving toward what Deng (2021) identifies as post-monolingual critical thinking. Often, monolingual perspectives dominate critical thinking in theology. Post-monolingual critical thinking requires students to think critically and develop theology in their home cultural context and communicate that theology in their language (Deng, 2021). Pentecostal, post-monolingual thinking makes space for the input and scholarship of non-English speaking and non-Western thinkers by seeking to eradicate biases against non-English scholarship.

Saylor (2020) wrote about the necessity for community in a transformative educational environment, a community that should include mentoring relationships between generations (Tsekpoe, 2021). Topf (2020) poses ten characteristics for the future in looking toward the future of Pentecostal education: accessible, Spirit-filled, missional, contextual, practical, personal, accredited, current, interdisciplinary, and transformative. Andragogy (Knowles, 1977, 1978) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978, 1981) provide a theoretical framework for a Pentecostal instructional environment by incorporating relationship, dialogue, diversity, and experience into the learning process. Andragogy and transformative learning theory provide an educational framework to work with a Pentecostal epistemology, given its experiential, interactive nature.

## **Conclusions: A Pentecostal Andragogy**

Pentecostal epistemology involves an experiential dimension due to biblical and theological study (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Keener, 2016; Lewis, 2000; Nel, 2021). Indeed, the study of the Bible is experiential for Pentecostals. Further, Pentecostal epistemology emphasizes the experience of the Spirit in the development of meaning perspectives (Frestadius, 2016; Mezirow, 1978, 1981). The universal work of the Spirit in the world, per Yong (2002, 2014), along with His work in the believing community through bodily experiences, per Smith (2010), offers a pneumatological approach to knowing that is unique to Pentecostalism (Frestadius, 2016). To grow in the knowledge of God through scriptural and theological study in a Pentecostal environment, then, is to experience the Holy Spirit (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Lewis, 2000). C. B. Johns (2010) and J. D. Johns (2012) both present educational models which define learning in a Pentecostal environment, empowered and superintended by the Holy Spirit as the ultimate Divine Teacher, involving the charismatic dimensions contributing to educational growth and learning. Further, embracing the perspectives of other ethnicities (Deng, 2021; Yong, 2020) and other generations (Tsekpoe, 2021) requires an environment of interaction and mutual contribution that characterizes andragogical theory (Livingston-Galloway & George, 2020). Further, engagement of the Pneumatological imagination links well with Mezirow's (1978, 1981) transformative learning theory. As meaning perspectives and schemas change by experiencing the Spirit in both the Word (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992) and the world (Frestadius, 2016), the minds and hearts of individuals are transformed.

Knowles' (1977, 1978) andragogy theories are particularly appropriate for approaching Pentecostal education. Through interactive, student-directed learning that allows for human experience to contribute to the educational process, andragogy provides an educational

framework for Pentecostals to teach biblical and theological truth in a genuinely Pentecostal way. When Pentecostals become guides (King, 1993) to their students in their study and experience of God through the biblical text (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Keener, 2016; Lewis, 2000; Nel, 2021), they embrace an educational journey that is particularly andragogical. There are times when Pentecostal teachers may need to embrace a more teacher-centered, pedagogical perspective depending on the knowledge of their students (Henschke, 2019), but Pentecostal epistemology, with its unique emphasis on personal experience of the Holy Spirit, best merits an andragogical educational approach.

Borrowing from Knowles (1977, 1978) and Mezirow (1978, 1981) and infusing adult learning theory with a Pentecostal epistemology (Frestadius, 2016; J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022) provides a theory of Pentecostal adult learning theory that accounts for the experiential dimensions of education and faith formation that is uniquely Pentecostal.

### **Related Literature**

A literature survey on clergy teaching was conducted based on the understanding of Pentecostal andragogy. Literature was examined regarding the context and content of clergy teaching and the content and context of clergy learning, with a specific eye on ministerial education. Literature regarding learner-centeredness among the clergy was also reviewed, examining educational preparedness among ministers in general and the Assemblies of God in particular. Educational requirements of Assemblies of God clergy are examined, as are recent calls in the literature for learner-centered instruction methods.

### **Teaching Context: Where Clergy Teach**

A survey of the literature regarding the role of pastors highlights their essential educational role as they lead the flock of God. The teaching ministry (Anderson, 2018; Brown, 2021; Ming, 2012; Wilson, 2018) is an essential element in an overall educational vision essential to healthy, growing churches (Bingham, 2021; Francis et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2019; Siew, 2013; Todd, 2017). Pastors are educational leaders who teach in small groups and classes, corporate worship gatherings, and missional service opportunities (Dever & Alexander, 2005; Francis et al., 2021; Siew, 2013, 2021).

### ***Pastor-Teachers as Educational Leaders***

The role of clergy within the Christian congregation is incredibly educational, with teaching and instruction foundational to the ministry of the church (Anderson, 2018; Brown, 2021; Ming, 2012; Wilson, 2018). Yount (1996) highlights the essential task of all ministerial leadership gifts in equipping the saints for works of service in Ephesians 4:11-16. Unique in this text is the merger of the concept of pastor and teacher within one distinct pastoral function (Yount, 1996). Anderson (2018) traces the teaching ministry throughout the literature of the New Testament, demonstrating the essential role teaching played in the early church's work. A qualitative examination of the New Testament texts revealed that the words teaching or teacher appeared over 300 times while learning or disciple appeared twice that much (Markowski, 2008). The New Testament authors expected pastor-teachers to know the truth, teach the truth, and be able to refute theological error, all while passing on this body of truth to others who would share in the work (Brown, 2021). Dever and Alexander (2005) consider these three teaching tasks of the pastor under the titles graze, guide, and guard—all with biblical truth. The teaching task of the church was a shared responsibility among church leaders (Brown, 2021; Yount, 1996), with

different, specific expressions of teaching found in descriptions of the early church's work (Markowski, 2008).

Beyond biblical witness, historic theologians also view the church through the lens of education. John Calvin, leader of the reformation, envisioned the church as a school, the “school of God,” where God teaches all through His Word and Spirit for a lifetime, and “education meant illumination” (Todd, 2017, p. 315). A theological understanding of spiritual conversion standard in Christian theology, the beginning of the Christian life, and the renewal of the mind that Christian growth requires involves experiential learning and perspective transformation in an environment conducive to experiencing the Holy Spirit. According to Todd (2017), Calvin held the mind as the primary faculty of conversion, with sin darkening the mind and understanding of humanity. Knowledge took a primary role in Calvin’s understanding of conversion while he still held the bondage of the will with sin. Conversion to Christ required a work of the Holy Spirit in the mind, and the role of the mind in conversion superseded the role of the will for Calvin (Todd, 2017).

Bingham (2021) noted how some had challenged this mind-centered approach to spiritual growth for more embodied experiences in other liturgical forms of worship, including the Lord’s Supper, as Smith (2010) has proposed in his Pentecostal epistemology (Frestadius, 2016). In doing so, however, some have downplayed the role of teaching, instruction, and the mind in spiritual formation. One must wonder how an embrace of andragogical learning might shape Christian learning in a way that still touches the mind but also engages the bodies of worshippers, especially in a Spirit-empowered, Pentecostal environment. Bingham (2021) calls for this dual engagement, not forgetting the role of the mind in spiritual formation. Thus, the transformation of the mind in the school of God by the power of the Holy Spirit (Todd, 2017)



requires interactive environments (Bingham, 2021) and atmospheres of learning open to the Holy Spirit (Frestadius, 2016; Smith, 2010).

Despite the prevalence of teaching in the early church's work and its role in conversion and spiritual growth, the role of teaching in the work of pastoral theology is lacking (Siew, 2013). Siew (2013) utilized a qualitative, ethnographic study of one congregation under a shepherd teacher to highlight the role of educational imagination in an authentic pastoral ministry aimed at helping congregants learn and grow in their faith. Findings indicated that the core ministries at a congregation shaped by educational imagination included worship, community, learning, sharing faith, and serving (Siew, 2013). Budijanto (2020), in a quantitative study of churches in Indonesia, noted that intentional educational vision, fleshed out in congregational discipleship, characterizes growing churches, a fact confirmed by the quantitative research of Powell et al. (2019). In a quantitative study of growing churches, the themes of “discipleship,” “maturation,” “intentional faith development,” “learning and growing in community,” “reflection or discernment,” and “holistic small groups” emerged (Powell et al., 2019, p. 13). Each of these elements represents an intentional educational pursuit that incorporates reflection on experience in community, essential elements in andragogical education (Knowles, 1977, 1978; Mezirow, 1978, 1981). Data revealing the connection between church growth (Budijanto, 2020) and member growth (Powell et al., 2019) stands in contrast to current church culture, where churches have made intentional Christian education optional for the average congregant (McKnight, 2016; Reinhardt, 2018) and lack an intentional plan of discipleship for members (Cox & Peck, 2018).

Dever and Alexander (2005) have highlighted the role of different church gatherings, similar to these ministries identified by Siew (2013): adult education hour, Sunday morning

service, Sunday evening service, and Wednesday evening service or Bible study. The education hour is the primary equipping time, Sunday morning is the primary feeding time, Sunday evening is the central family time, and Wednesday's gatherings are the primary study time (Dever & Alexander, 2005). Notice within these descriptions the role of teaching (equipping, study, feeding) and community (family) as a part of these gatherings, essential elements of an adult learning environment (Knowles, 1977, 1978; Mezirow, 1978, 1981).

In another case study, Siew (2021) found an Anglican church utilizing small groups, interactive classes on Christian basics, prayer, and service. According to this church, growth happened through interactive educational experiences, prayer, and service. Similar themes emerged in quantitative research on Canadian Baptists by Francis et al. (2021) regarding the spiritual growth of young adults: group activities, a church discipleship vision, church worship, and individual experiences. The role of group experiences and church worship in forming young adults emerges (Francis et al., 2021). Group experiences included small groups, Bible studies, outreach and service projects, and significant events like conferences. The themes of worship, group study and experience, and service emerge in the experience of these growing young adults (Francis et al., 2021). Synthesizing the literature, then, provides a framework for the teaching role of pastors in three significant areas: educational classes and small groups, corporate worship, and service opportunities (Dever & Alexander, 2005; Francis et al., 2021; Siew, 2013, 2021). All of these learning opportunities are guided by an overarching educational vision (Francis et al., 2021; Siew, 2013) of the pastor-teacher that drives transformational learning within the congregation (Anderson, 2018; Brown, 2021; Markowski, 2008; Ming, 2012; Wilson, 2018; Yount, 1996). The formal educational environments of classes/small groups and gathered worship experiences are of particular interest in this study.

### *Educational Classes and Small Groups*

Pastors provide educational leadership through the prevalence of educational classes and small groups within the church's ministries. One would think the vision of pastor-teachers as educational leaders would shape these educational experiences, but a review of 40 years of the literature revealed otherwise (Atkinson & Rose, 2020; Budd & Bergen, 2020). Regarding Christian education curriculum, scholars found that adult learning theory had little to no influence on curriculum development, despite the increasing development of andragogy and other adult learning theories (Budd & Bergen, 2020). Instead of relying on education theory, most church leaders utilized psychology and organizational leadership theories to develop classes and small groups (Atkinson & Rose, 2020).

Despite recent gaps in applying educational theory, small groups of study proved to be a vital element of Christianity for hundreds of years, as Hindmarsh (2021) chronicles in a historical summary. Mikaelian (2018) notes that Luther theorized about small groups but never implemented the theory. When discouraged Lutheran pastors saw their sermons failing to bring transformation, they began organizing small gatherings of believers for spiritual fellowship and interaction. Transformation began taking place, giving small groups a vital role in the evangelical awakenings of the Moravians and the Wesleyans. Noted elements of these small life-giving groups included interactive lived Christian experience, shared Spiritual life, communal Bible study, missional outreach, and mutually shared ministry as people ministered to one another (Hindmarsh, 2021). Themes identified by Hindmarsh are distinctly andragogical, including the role of experience, collaborative study, and shared learning (Knowles, 1977, 1978; Mezirow, 1978, 1981). J. Butler (2020) found this environment precisely what congregants desired in two Methodist churches through qualitative, action research. Participatory learning in

an environment of risk-taking that included deep reflection provided the context of growth for these Methodists (J. Butler, 2020). Mikaelian's (2018) qualitative, grounded-theory study of transformative small groups coded dominant themes as relationships, Bible, and God. Here, one can see elements of andragogy and transformative learning, where transformation takes place within the context of relationships (Knowles, 1977, 1978; Mezirow, 1978, 1981), alongside the emphasis of Pentecostal epistemology, with the reality of the presence of God, being foundational in the learning environment. Gold et al. (2021) found that interactive learning environments do not need to be face-to-face in a qualitative study of online scriptural study in the Jewish tradition. Qualitative analysis of teaching sessions, post-session feedback forms, and selected participant interviews indicated that transformation also happened in congregants' lives through online, interactive study (Gold et al., 2021).

Beyond interactive environments, spiritual growth content is also of utmost importance. Neil (2015) identified an essential aspect of fostering spiritual growth in breaking down the clergy/laity divide regarding theology and education. Neil conducted semi-structured interviews with participants in a local church's higher education program using hermeneutics and phenomenology. The study demonstrated that the laity long for a more profound knowledge of their faith. Further, participation in such experiences led to a sense of calling, confidence in their faith, and a desire to keep learning and growing (Neil, 2015). Frederickson-Laouini (2021) demonstrated that interaction with other faiths and belief systems strengthens students' development, an interesting observation in light of the multicultural, multilingual, and multigenerational perspective of Pentecostal epistemology (Deng, 2021; Tsekpoe, 2021; Yong, 2020). The theological depth and discussion fuel spiritual growth, and interactive environments that engage with complex ideas provide a greenhouse for people's perspective transformation

(Mezirow, 1978, 1981). Neil (2015) identified ordered theological education as a missing element of local church practice, with few churches offering theological depth to their congregation, related to the general lack of organized educational experiences (Cox & Peck, 2018; McKnight, 2016; Reinhardt, 2018). Congregants must interact with theology and doctrine, learn other perspectives, and strengthen their spiritual development.

Dunaetz et al. (2021) found a lack of Bible knowledge to be a significant barrier to finding new leaders for participatory small groups, something remedied by Bible-school-level training at the local church level, a need identified by Neil (2015) in findings about the need for theological content and depth. Yong (2020) posed that as long as congregation members are involved in the mission, they will seek theological knowledge that supports that work, something the church needs to be ready to provide through ordered theological education. Such insights explain the phenomena described by Perry (2020) involving many laypeople enrolling in graduate theological education. Their thirst for theological depth and biblical understanding led them to pursue seminary, despite their lack of vocational ministry intentions. Discipleship, not vocation, drove them to the seminary classroom. This is because pastors are not providing theological education (Neil, 2015) or even intentional discipleship (Cox & Peck, 2018; McKnight, 2016; Reinhardt, 2018) at the local church level, failing to meet the educational needs of congregants. Mambo (2019) found that spiritual growth was the primary motivation for engagement in local church educational programs. People are hungry to be formed and grow spiritually. The solution in this situation requires a robust vision of theological education within the discipleship practices of the local church that involves deep theological study. Perhaps a more robust system of ordered theological education (Neil, 2015) would satisfy the hunger in

people's lives (Perry, 2020; Yong, 2020) and help multiply the educational impact of class and small group ministries in the church (Dunaetz et al., 2021).

### ***Gathered Worship and Preaching***

Beyond small groups and classes, the teaching of pastors in gathered worship tends to be one of the most educational moments in the church's work (Dever & Alexander, 2005; Francis et al., 2021; Siew, 2013, 2021). Even within pastoral preaching, principles of andragogy and transformative learning play a significant role. As the pastor preaches the Bible, meaning perspectives are shifted (Brueggemann, 1995, 1998; Pembroke, 2021) in a way that often mirrors the transformative learning process (Mezirow, 1978, 1981), as well as the involvement of pneumatological imagination (Frestadius, 2016; Smith, 2010; Yong, 2002, 2014).

Brueggemann (1995, 1998) offers a vision of preaching that involves both subversion and reimagination. According to Brueggemann, as the pastors preach, they set a reimagination of life according to God's Word before the congregation. In preaching, pastors put forth God's narrative story of life in this world and enable their congregants to change their story, reimagining their world according to God's Word (Brueggemann, 1995). This happens through subversion. According to Brueggemann (1998), life in this world is dominated by a version and vision put forth by the systems of this world around us. Preaching involves subversion of this dominant narrative with God's narrative as found in the scriptures and proclaimed by the preacher (Brueggemann, 1998). Pembroke (2021) highlights how Brueggemann (1995, 1998) borrowed the creating of a "poetic imitation or creative representation of life" through which their world can be reimagined using prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration (Pembroke, 2021, p. 1). In Brueggemann's view, Pembroke challenges the role of the Spirit in guiding the interpretive process of preachers, positing that it is the role of scripture, Spirit, and community to

do so (Pembroke, 2021). Pembroke states, “In reimagining the world, the preacher needs to work within the tension arc of Spirit-Word-Community. The twofold act of the Spirit speaking through community and the preacher listening well ensures that she or he remains aligned with the Word” (Pembroke, 2021, p. 2). Pembroke’s appropriation of the Spirit-Word-Community dynamic of Pentecostal epistemology, first proposed by Yong (2002, 2014), serves as a link for the study of the Bible in an andragogical setting. Interpretation takes place, even for the preacher, in an interactive environment where the truth of the text, the guidance of the Spirit, and the voice of the community guide the preacher in reimagining the world by God’s Word (Brueggemann, 1995, 1998; Pembroke, 2021; Yong, 2002, 2014). This reimagination calls for collaborative study and dependence on the Holy Spirit in meaning-making moments over which the preacher is but one contributor. This does not accord with current preaching practices within churches.

Hannan (2020) illustrated how the Greek term *homileo*, from which the term homiletics is derived, carries the idea of a conversation and suggested that even the homiletical process should occur in community. From this, it is posed that the sermon development process, from which the preacher prepares their message to help people reimagine their world (Brueggemann, 1995, 1998; Pembroke, 2021), is developed through conversation. For Hannan (2020), three steps should be a part of preaching: feedforward, feed, and feedback. In feedforward, the preacher engages a community of others during the exegetical and preparation process to better arrive at God’s words through the text. In feed, the preacher declares the message to feed the people of God, helping them reimagine their world (Brueggemann, 1995, 1998; Pembroke, 2021). After the sermon, the preacher again engages the conversational community in feedback on the sermon (Hannan, 2020). One can see how conversational homiletics, utilizing Hannan’s feeding process, engages in interactive, communal interpretation, exemplifying the Spirit-Word-Community

hermeneutic (Pembroke, 2021; Yong, 2002, 2014) in sermon preparation. Hannan's (2020) model represents a way that principles of learner-centered instruction can better be practiced by bringing learners into the preparation process and helping them guide the learning process, a foundational principle of andragogy and adult learning theory (Knowles, 1977, 1978). One of the most beneficial aspects of this feedforward sermon preparation model is that it trains others in the practices of biblical exegesis and homiletics, preparing them for service in preaching the Word of God. Such depth in preparation may be another way that pastors can meet the growing hunger in their congregation for ordered theological education and multiply ministry and impact (Dunaetz et al., 2021; Neil, 2015; Perry, 2020; Yong, 2020). It also allows for the contributions of the laity in an area where they are often excluded, bringing learner direction into the homiletical process, a value of andragogy (Knowles, 1977, 1978).

Pentecostals have a history of involving congregants in preaching that predates Hannan's process. Nel (2018), in a case study of the earliest Pentecostals, reveals that they adopted a communal homiletical model in which congregants, inspired by the Spirit, would share whatever utterance they were given. Such democratization of the pulpit was even reflected in church architecture, where Pentecostals shunned the term sanctuary because of its religious formalism and the centralized authority of a pastor's pulpit (Nel, 2018). Services often included messages from the Word of God, with multiple preachers from among the congregation (Nel, 2018). Early Pentecostals' democratic, participatory services represent African American culture's influence on the Pentecostal movement, as Hollenweger (1984) and C. B. Johns (2010) noted. Other elements included: the orality of liturgy, narrative of theology and witness, and the inclusion of spiritual experiences, such as dreams and visions, in the process of spiritual formation (Hollenweger, 1984; C. B. Johns, 2010). Such a democratic environment sounds similar to the



ideals of Knowles (1977, 1978), where the experiences of individuals in the learning community contribute to a dialogical, shared instructional environment guided by the teacher.

In addition to a communal, conversational, and democratic homiletic, Gaarden (2016, 2019) has written on learner-centered principles in the homiletical moment. The preaching moment is described by Gaarden as a learner-centered, meaning-making moment, despite the learner-centered goals that most clergy and congregants believe it to have. Gaarden (2016) poses that listeners in the pew do not transfer the preacher's understanding to their understanding but instead create meaning through interaction with the spoken words of the preacher.

Communication theory understands communication as creating meaning rather than depositing understanding (Gaarden, 2016). It is posed that the role of the preacher in delivering a sermon is that of a carpenter of what Gaarden (2019) calls the third room of preaching. In this third room, the preacher's words and the listener's perspectives interact under the influence of the Holy Spirit to create meaning perspectives in the listener's mind. Here in the third room, ways of seeing and thinking about the world are created that were not present in the preachers' intentions or the listeners' imagination (Gaarden, 2016), thus allowing for the creation of new perspectives through the pneumatological imagination (Yong, 2002, 2014).

Such an educational environment is decidedly learner-centered, where the congregants' experiences, the preachers' words, and the work of the Holy Spirit interact to bring perspective transformation in the lives and hearts of God's people (Gaarden, 2016, 2019; Knowles, 1977, 1978; Mezirow, 1978, 1981). The unity between the Spirit and the preached word brings the dynamic of Pentecostal epistemology (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022) and Pentecostal hermeneutics (Keener, 2016; Nel, 2021) into this sermonic moment. Preachers become servants of the third room in a learner-centered educational experience

(Gaarden, 2019), despite aiming for more teacher-centered goals. Gaarden (2016) argues that preachers often teach and preach how they are taught, necessitating learner-centered instruction to move beyond sermon formation in homiletics courses to preacher formation, where the personal formation of the minister takes precedence.

Preaching in a Pentecostal, Spirit-filled context occurs in a learner-centered environment where the experience of the listener, the words of the preacher, and the power of the Holy Spirit interact in a meaning-making moment (Gaarden, 2016, 2019), despite what may be the intention of the preacher. In this place of learner-centered instruction, preachers challenge their people's dominant perspectives, setting forth an alternative reality (Brueggemann, 1995, 1998) and transforming their meaning perspectives through pneumatological imagination (Frestadius, 2016; Mezirow, 1978, 1981; Yong, 2002, 2014). Mezirow's (1978, 1981) transformative learning theory of adult learning describes how such perspective transformation takes place in an experiential, communal, and interactive environment (Gaarden, 2016, 2019; Knowles, 1977, 1978) as meaning perspectives are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit (Yong, 2002, 2014).

### **Learning Context: Where Clergy Learn**

Pastoral ministry involves a robust, educational vision for the spiritual formation of congregants (Dever & Alexander, 2005; Francis et al., 2021; Siew, 2013, 2021). Pentecostal dynamics within the educational processes in both groups and gatherings tend toward learner-centered, andragogical environments (Knowles, 1977, 1978), leading to perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1978, 1981). Given the necessity of pastors to provide andragogical educational leadership for the spiritual growth of their congregations, one must ask whether or not they are prepared for such leadership. Both Gaarden (2016) and Lu (2020) highlight the

impact of pastors' educational experiences on their instructional practices. Their learning contexts shape their teaching contexts (Gaarden, 2016; Lu, 2020). Unfortunately, Pentecostal epistemology, a non-Enlightenment form of experiential learning (Lewis, 2000), has not always impacted theological and ministerial formation in Pentecostal circles. Instead, Pentecostals have approached the educational process using the methodology of their fundamentalist and evangelical brothers and sisters (Frestadius, 2021).

### ***Historical Pentecostal Theological Education***

Nel (2016) clarifies the historical position of Pentecostals regarding education in a historical survey of educational perspectives among early Pentecostals. For the first 50 years of the movement, a general anti-intellectualism existed that drove a hesitancy towards any formal education for three main reasons: their lower-class status, their evangelistic urgency, and their dichotomizing of the Spirit and the intellect (Nel, 2016). Deep theological study was believed to be a quencher of the Spirit, something antithetical to Pentecostalism. At the same time, Pentecostals, influenced by men like A. B. Simpson and his missionary training institute, joined the Bible institute movement, offering short-term, practical training for their people. Frestadius (2021) noted that Pentecostalism's origin story begins at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, illustrating educational institutions' place in Pentecostalism. However, as these Bible institutes formed, they began borrowing the instructional methodology and vision of evangelicalism and fundamentalism rather than their Pentecostal spirituality (Frestadius, 2021). At the same time, early Pentecostals shied away from deep theological study, they founded Bible schools for practical training in Christian living and witness (Frestadius, 2021; Nel, 2016). They adopted a worldview separating theology and practice, a deep divide plagues today's theological

education (Naidoo, 2021; Ott, 2021). These Bible schools, founded with this divide, became today's Bible colleges and universities, where Pentecostal clergy are trained.

### ***Traditional Educational Practice***

Experiential learning environments have not always categorized the atmosphere of clergy training, despite Jesus' example. Nehrbass and Rhoades (2021) highlighted the reflective, experiential elements of Jesus' training of the disciples in ministry practices. His methods displayed practices exemplify learner-centered andragogical instructional practices. A passing reference to the implementation of andragogy in the MDiv program at the Toronto School of Theology (Sumule, 2018) gives evidence of at least one school using learner-centered instruction in their theological education program. Unfortunately, the study of theology has often been approached from a theory-to-application approach that separates the formal study of theology from practical application in ministry (Naidoo, 2021). Such a division produces ministers who struggle with fragmentation, struggling to integrate theological study with ministerial application (Ott, 2021). Often, theology has been approached from such a theoretical basis that experience has had no bearing on the theological education process. This follows the modern educational system that has tended to undervalue the emotional aspect of students' humanity, focusing on the cognitive instead (Adams, 2021), a significant struggle in non-Western contexts (Yong, 2020). Such a bifurcation between theory and practice trickles down to the place of ministerial studies at theological institutions, where professors of practical ministry never receive tenure, and their courses are considered add-ons to the real work of theoretical scholarship (Heath, 2019).

Rather than upholding the theoretical-practical division within theological education (Naidoo, 2021; Ott, 2021), Ott (2021) poses that there must be an embrace of praxis within theological and ministerial education. Praxis involves action and reflection to transform the

world (Ott, 2021). Action and reflection interact to produce actual praxis (Ott, 2021). While practices are individual actions, praxis is seen as a way of life within the action-reflection cycle that produces transformational living. The embrace of praxis liberated one scholar from the theoretical-practical divide, which characterized their instructional practices (Johnson-Miller & Pazmino, 2020). Through praxis, they no longer had to choose between “information acquisition and experiential self-development, or some confusing mix of the two” (Johnson-Miller & Pazmino, 2020, p. 566). Theological education can overcome the theoretical-practical divide by embracing a learner-centered, praxis-based learning program (Naidoo, 2021), a Pentecostal epistemology (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022) seems best poised to do concerning biblical and theological education.

### *Underlying Theological Foundations*

Learner-centeredness may depend, in part, on the theological tradition of the minister and congregation. Cosgrove (2015) noted that different theological traditions approach Christian education through different avenues. Those from a more Reformed tradition approach education much more cerebrally (Bingham, 2021; Cosgrove, 2015; Todd, 2017), while those from more Wesleyan and Anabaptist traditions embrace a more holistic approach (Cosgrove, 2015). Specifically, Cosgrove highlights the Wesleyan quadrilateral, which incorporates scripture, reason, tradition, and experience as elements of spiritual formation. Wesleyan discipleship, with its incorporation of experience, aligns well with the driving principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1977, 1978), as Grimm (2018, 2020) and others (Budd & Freeman, 2004) have pointed out. Pentecostal epistemology is closely related to the epistemology of Wesleyan spirituality (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992). It involves experiential elements in acquiring knowledge (Frestadius, 2016), making andragogical approaches to Pentecostal education highly relevant.

### *Pentecostal Educational Practice*

Despite a practical emphasis within Pentecostalism (Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022) and the relevance of an andragogical approach due to the epistemological roots of Pentecostalism (Cosgrove, 2015; Frestadius, 2016; J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992), Pentecostal educators have not fully embraced their non-Enlightenment epistemology (Lewis, 2000) that overcomes the theoretical/practical divide within theological and ministerial training (Frestadius, 2021; Nel, 2016). Instead, Pentecostal educators often continue the theory/practice divide of modern educational theory (Heath, 2019; Naidoo, 2021; Ott, 2021), something that a Pentecostal view of knowledge, based on a Hebraic understanding, can overcome (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992). Nel (2016) highlights that Pentecostals have taken their place in the academy in the last 50 years, with many Pentecostal scholars contributing to the intellectual dialogs across many disciplines.

Indeed, as Pentecostals have participated in traditional theological education, it has not dampened their spiritual practices. Stewart et al. (2017) demonstrated that over the past 30 years, the influence of graduate theological education has shifted within their denomination. A comparative, quantitative study of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada measured the impact of graduate theological education on ministers within their denomination from 1986 to 2014 (Stewart et al., 2017). Whereas theological education once decreased commitment to traditional Pentecostal theology and practice, the quantitative analysis demonstrated that those clergy with graduate degrees are more committed to Pentecostal theology than their undergraduate counterparts. The same increase held when the study shifted from theology to practice, as those with graduate degrees expressed more Pentecostal practice than their undergraduate counterparts. They note that most seminaries are now more open to Pentecostalism than they were in the past, resulting in the deeper Pentecostal commitments of their students (Stewart et al., 2017). Rather

than simply leading ministers towards a more cerebral, intellectual faith as early Pentecostals feared regarding theological education (Nel, 2016), Stewart et al. (2017) found that it enhanced their belief and practice of a more experiential, Pentecostal spirituality.

Recent shifts in education from sage to guide (King, 1993), from pedagogy to andragogy (Knowles, 1977), and more student-directed learning (Knowles, 1977, 1978; Mezirow, 1978, 1981) may have fostered openness to experiential spirituality in graduate theological education (Stewart et al., 2017). Deepening their education led Pentecostal students to deeper levels in their theology and practice, perhaps embracing an authentic Pentecostal praxis (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Naidoo, 2021; Ott, 2021). Education formed them more deeply within their experiential spiritual tradition rather than pulling them away. Pentecostal students may instinctively embrace Pentecostal epistemology, whether or not their particular instructional environment is intentionally structured for such. Despite this, early Pentecostals' strong anti-intellectualism seems still to influence Pentecostal imagination (Nel, 2016). Moreover, research indicates that the theoretical/practical divide intrinsic to the educational world continues to plague theological education (Adams, 2021; Naidoo, 2021; Ott, 2021). Either through anti-intellectualism or educational bifurcation, Pentecostals lack training in learner-centered, experiential learning environments and thus are unprepared, through their experience, to lead them in their congregations (Gaarden, 2016; Lu, 2020).

### **Learner-Centeredness Among Clergy**

Gaarden (2016) and Lu (2020) found that the atmosphere of ministerial education often impacted their instructional methodologies and understandings. As clergy prepare to teach, they are often taught a very teacher-centered, theory-based approach to conveying information (Heath, 2019; Naidoo, 2021; Ott, 2021). Their instructional environments continue modern

education's theory/practice divide (Adams, 2021). Mohler-Seib and Rude (2019) noted that sometimes explicit connections in formative environments need to be made for leadership formation, perhaps illustrative of why many clergy remain teacher-centered in their instruction (Jones, 2021).

Jones (2021) ran a mixed methods study of Anglican clergy to study the relationship between educational preparedness in adult learning theory and clergy's instructional practices in church discipleship classes. A survey first gathered demographic data and proceeded to a qualitative inquiry into educational preparedness and perceived teaching style (Jones, 2021). Next, participants took a modified version of the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (Conti, 1985), which measured their application of adult learning principles (learner-centeredness) in classroom settings. Data revealed a correlation between instruction in adult learning theory and its application in church classrooms (Jones, 2021). However, a Pearson correlation between PALS scores and five variables: age, gender, years in ministry, teaching experience, and formal education in instructional methods revealed no statistically significant correlation between PALS scores in any variable except gender (Jones, 2021). Jones notes that in the Anglican tradition, women most often fill the office of deacon, while men the office of pastor, perhaps rooting this relationship in the unique responsibility of the Anglican diaconate. A small relationship between age and teaching experience was shown, but neither was statistically significant. Clergy expressed a desire to be learner-centered despite their teacher-centered tendencies. Jones concluded that training does not adequately prepare pastors to teach adults and that andragogy needs to be adopted in theological training to equip clergy to implement andragogical instruction in their ministries, according to Gaarden (2016) and Lu (2020). In a suggestion for further



research, Jones (2021) noted more research into the correlations between learner-centeredness and gender, classification of ordination, and terminal degrees.

Many clergy still approach teaching from a teacher-centered perspective (Jones, 2021), even though Schunk (2020) noted that learner-centered principles work best when deeper learning and doing are desired. Interestingly, a recent resource for ministers of the evangelical Pentecostal faith called for a learner-centered approach to Christian education and discipleship (Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, 2021).

In a book entitled *How to Disciple Well*, a chapter was titled “Learner-Centered Teaching” (Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, 2021). The chapter began by highlighting the audience-centered approach taught in most communication courses. Teachers are encouraged to get to know their audience through relationships and studying demographics, psychographics, and situational context. They are also encouraged to evaluate learning styles and adapt accordingly. The chapter concludes with a section explaining how to put learning styles into practice: outlines, lectures, discussion, music, video-based curriculum, playing games, corporate prayer, outreach projects, and modeling. There are correlations to learner-centered practices, especially in the call for discussion (Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, 2021). This subsection recommends the think-pair-share strategy, storytelling, expert panels, and roundtable discussions as teaching methods. Other elements harmonize with experiential learning and relationship building (outreach projects, praying together, games, and music). However, a broader vision and understanding of the role of these in a learner-centered educational environment is needed. This proves especially true because of the tendency among clergy to be teacher-centered (Jones, 2021).

Given that Pentecostal ministry and epistemology necessitate learner-centered instruction, alongside the explicit call for such in Assemblies of God literature, further study is needed into the instructional practices of Assemblies of God clergy.

### *Levels of Ordination and Learner-Centeredness in the Assemblies of God*

As noted above, the Assemblies of God recently called for a learner-centered approach to discipleship formation (Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, 2021), appropriate to learning in a Pentecostal learning environment embracing a fully Pentecostal epistemology (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022). Literature in official publications of the Assemblies of God has also begun calling for dialogical learning environments (Davis, 2022), a characteristic of the learner-centered principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1977, 1978) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978, 1981).

The Assemblies of God comprises 67 regional and language districts covering ministers in the United States, with 38,200 clergy credentialed with the Assemblies of God, 18,620 of whom are pastors (Kansiewicz et al., 2022). The Assemblies of God recognizes official clergy at three levels: certified, licensed, and ordained (E. D. Brewer, 2016; C. D. Butler, 2020; Kansiewicz et al., 2022). Most complete some education, with requirements increasing with credential level (E. D. Brewer, 2016). Research within other organizations has demonstrated that clergy preparation often lacks education theory (Jones, 2021). Many Pentecostals have adopted the curricula of their evangelical and fundamentalist extended family (Frestadius, 2021) rather than embracing their experiential epistemology (Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022). As a result, Jones' (2021) findings that most clergy approach instruction from a decidedly teacher-centered modality apply to Assemblies of God clergy as well, despite calls for more learner-centered

practices within the organization (Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, 2021; Davis, 2022).

### ***Educational Preparedness of Assemblies of God Clergy***

Jones' (2021) findings that educational preparedness had a direct bearing on the learner-centeredness of the clergy, together with Gaarden's (2016) and Lu's (2020) research regarding the impact of a clergy's training environment on their instructional practice, necessitate a look into the educational preparedness of Assemblies of God clergy. It should be noted that no specific academic degree from an educational institution is required for credentialing in the Assemblies of God. However, a minimum level of training is requested (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2021). Correspondence courses made available through Global University's Berean School of the Bible govern training minimums. Tables 2 and 3 list the courses required for each credential. These courses represent the minimum training required for each respective credential level in the Assemblies of God (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2021; Global University, 2022). Each level builds upon the previous, from certified to ordained levels (Global University, 2022).

These requirements can either be met through the Berean School of the Bible correspondence program, an endorsed Assemblies of God school, another approved seminary, college, Bible college, or school, or by passing the final exams of Berean's coursework (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2021). Several other pathways and online programs have arisen recently within the Assemblies of God—schools of ministry operated by AG regional districts and local churches, all meeting the minimum requirements for credentialing outlined by the Global University (2022) program.

**Table 2***Berean School of the Bible Ministerial Studies Program: Certified and Licensed Levels*

Certified Level	Licensed Level
Christ in the Synoptic Gospels	Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers
Introduction to Hermeneutics: How to Interpret the Bible	Prison Epistles
New Testament Survey	Romans: Justification by Faith
Old Testament Survey	The Local Church in Evangelism
A Spirit-Empowered Church: An Acts 2 Ministry Model	Introduction to Homiletics
Relationships and Ethics in Ministry	Effective Leadership
Beginning Ministerial Internship	Introduction to Assemblies of God Missions
Introduction to Pentecostal Doctrine	Conflict Management for Church Leaders
Assemblies of God History, Missions, & Governance	Intermediate Ministerial Internship
Introduction to Theology	Eschatology: A Study of Things to Come

*Source:* Global University (2022).

**Table 3***Berean School of the Bible Ministerial Studies Program: Ordained Level*

Ordained Level
The Corinthian Correspondence
The Pentateuch
The Poetic Books
Preaching in the Contemporary World
Church, Administration, and Finance
Pastoral Ministry
Advanced Ministerial Internship
Prayer and Worship

*Source:* Global University (2022).

Even within these requirements, a provision is made for the district to recognize extensive ministerial experience and self-study as equivalent training for credentials. Examining

these courses reveals that no courses in teaching or educational methodology are required for credentialing within the Assemblies of God. One can be ordained and never have a course in principles and methods of teaching.

Sadly, an examination of ministerial studies programs at colleges of the Assemblies of God revealed the same lack of training for the teaching task. For example, an examination of the academic catalog of the University of Valley Forge, the Northeastern regional university of the Assemblies of God, revealed that their ministerial leadership programs have no teaching methodology courses. One course, “PST 443 Discipleship Making and Equipping Ministry” (University of Valley Forge, 2021), appears throughout the degree programs, but the course description does not mention equipping for teaching. One course, “CRE 113 Introduction to Christian Education,” appears as a requirement in only one degree program: intercultural studies—deaf focus (University of Valley Forge, 2021).

At Southwestern Assemblies of God University (2019), Biblical and Theological Studies majors must take a CMN 3113 The Ministry of Teaching. However, the course was absent from any other degree program, including Church Leadership degrees (Southwestern Assemblies of God University, 2019). Southeastern University (2022) has no apparent courses in teaching, nor does North Central University (2021). Northwest University (2021) has no requirement for teaching courses as a part of its pastoral degree program, though students can take education courses as a part of their social science electives.

One can see how easily someone can become an ordained minister in the Assemblies of God without training in instructional methodologies, particularly those necessary to facilitate learner-centered andragogical instruction. A survey of regional colleges (North Central University, 2021; Northwest University, 2021; Southeastern University, 2022; University of

Valley Forge, 2021) reveals a severe lack of educational courses in pastoral studies tracks, with minimal teaching courses required in some corollary degrees, such as Biblical or Theological Studies (Southwestern Assemblies of God University, 2019) or Intercultural Ministries- Deaf Studies (University of Valley Forge, 2021). Given, in addition, that no courses are required as a part of the minimal requirements for Assemblies of God credentials (Global University, 2022), there exists a severe lack of instruction in educational theory for ministers in the Assemblies of God.

### **Conclusion**

The literature reveals a significant educational role for those who serve in pastoral ministry (Anderson, 2018; Bingham, 2021; Brown, 2021; Francis et al., 2021; Ming, 2012; Powell et al., 2019; Siew, 2013; Todd, 2017; Wilson, 2018). Some primary language describing the work of the New Testament church biblically relates to the teacher/student relationship (Markowski, 2008), clearly framing pastoral leadership as educational leadership.

Despite this, the literature demonstrates significant gaps in the application of educational theory to the instructional practices of Christian clergy (Beard, 2015, 2017; Budd & Bergen, 2020; Jones, 2021), especially within the Assemblies of God. Theological education is still battling a division between theory and practice (Naidoo, 2021; Ott, 2021; Yong, 2020). This results in training environments that are decidedly more theory-based and teacher-centered for clergy, environments that often greatly influence the said clergy's instructional practices (Gaarden, 2016; Lu, 2020).

Scholars (J. D. Johns & C. B. Johns, 1992; Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022; Keener, 2016) have noted the unity a Pentecostal understanding brings to knowledge acquisition, particularly in theological and biblical education. Learner-centered environments driven by adult learning

theory, incorporating experience in the learning process, best frame a Pentecostal environment of transformative learning, echoed by current publications of the Assemblies of God (Assemblies of God Christian Education and Discipleship, 2021; Davis, 2022). When trained in educational theory and andragogy, clergy exhibit a more learner-centered approach to education (Jones, 2021), a method much more fitting for spiritually transformative education (Beard, 2017; Grimm, 2018, 2020). Surveying basic educational requirements of the Assemblies of God, including some of their regional schools, revealed a lack of training in any educational theory or instructional methodology (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2021; Global University, 2022; North Central University, 2021; Northwest University, 2021; Southeastern University, 2022; University of Valley Forge, 2021).

Jones (2021) has identified the learner-centeredness of the clergy as an area for research by contributing information regarding learner-centeredness and educational preparedness among Anglican clergy. The relationship between learner-centeredness and the level of clergy ordination was among several areas identified for further research within that study (Jones, 2021).

This literature review finds a gap relating Pentecostal epistemology, andragogical instructional methods, and clergy preparedness to facilitate andragogical learning. Clergy provide educational leadership to their congregations, and often their practices are shaped by their experience. Given the bifurcated nature of modern theological education, Pentecostal clergy find themselves ill-equipped to facilitate interactive andragogical learning. Pentecostal epistemology lends towards using learner-centered andragogical principles in the learning process, revealing a significant gap in the literature related to Pentecostal clergy's instructional practices. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the relationship between the level of

ordination among Assemblies of God ministers and their learner-centered instructional practice.

This builds on the work done by Jones (2021) in the Anglican tradition and expands the literature

by extending the conversation of clergy and adult learning theory into the Pentecostal tradition.

Further, it seeks to offer Pentecostals an educational model fit for their theological and

epistemological tradition, making room for the experience of the Spirit in the educational

process.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

This quantitative, causal-comparative study aimed to examine learner-centeredness differences among Assembly of God clergy by ministerial credential level. This chapter introduces the study's design, including full definitions of all variables. The research questions and null hypotheses follow. Finally, the participants, setting, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis are presented.

### **Design**

This study utilized a quantitative non-experimental causal-comparative design. Causal-comparative designs are used in exploratory research to understand the relationship between two variables when the researcher cannot manipulate the independent variable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gall et al., 2007). Studies utilizing a causal-comparative design are not suited for determining the cause-and-effect relationship; they merely allow exploring it (Gall et al., 2007). Groups are formed based on the independent variable, with relationships studied against a dependent variable (Gall et al., 2007); the presumed cause of the difference in these relationships serve as the independent variable, while the effect serves as the dependent variable. Such research is built on an understanding of determinism that allows the study of relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Working from a postpositive worldview, determinism embraces the idea that causes influence outcomes or effects, thus allowing a study of relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Utilizing a non-experimental or survey design allows one to research the associations of variables among a given population and answer questions about their relationship (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The non-experimental

design also allows the study of variables in naturally occurring groups, where the researcher does not create the groups and subject them to an experimental intervention (Warner, 2021).

### **Research Question**

**RQ1:** Is there a statistically significant difference in *learner-centeredness* among Assembly of God clergy by ministerial credential level (certified, licensed, and ordained)?

### **Hypothesis**

The null hypothesis for this study is:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no statistically significant difference in *learner-centeredness* among Assembly of God clergy by ministerial credential level (certified, licensed, and ordained) as measured by the Principles of Adult Learning Scale.

### **Participants and Setting**

The participants of this study were ministers in an Evangelical Pentecostal fellowship, the Assemblies of God. In the following paragraphs, the researcher describes the population, the participants, the sampling technique, and the sample size. The section concludes with a description of the setting.

#### **Population**

The participants for the study were drawn from a single-stage, convenience sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) of credentialed ministers within the Assemblies of God in early 2023. The Assemblies of God comprises 67 regional and language districts covering ministers in the United States and 38,200 clergy, including 18,620 pastors, credentialed with the Assemblies of God (Kansiewicz et al., 2022). Clergy who are not pastoring fill other roles, such as missionary or leader of a para-church ministry (Kansiewicz et al., 2022). Clergy are credentialed at three levels: certified, licensed, or ordained (C. D. Butler, 2020). Recent statistics indicate

21,395 ordained ministers, 10,387 licensed ministries, and 5,775 certified ministers nationally (General Secretary's Office, 2022). Permission was obtained from district leadership in the Arkansas, Northern New England, Pennsylvania-Delaware, and Northwest districts to distribute the survey via email the survey information to all credential holders within the district with email access. All districts except the researcher's home district distributed the survey on the researcher's behalf.

### **Participants**

In this study, the number of sampled participants was 164, which exceeded the minimum sample size when assuming a medium effect size. According to Gall et al. (2007), 126 participants is the required minimum for a one-way ANOVA, with the participants evenly divided among three groups when assuming a medium effect size with a statistical power of 0.7 at the 0.05 alpha level. The convenience sample came from credentialed ministers within participating regional districts of the Assemblies of God USA. The sample included 126 males and 40 females, along with eight certified ministers, three male and five female; 37 licensed ministers, 22 male and 15 female; and 121 ordained ministers, 101 male and 20 female.

Grouping was based on credentials held. Credentialing depends upon minimum coursework requirements for each level, though no formal degree is required (E. D. Brewer, 2016). Ministers are granted the appropriate credential based on coursework, educational requirements, and ministerial experience (E. D. Brewer, 2016). Clergy can move forward from certification to ordination, with ordination representing the highest level of credential (E. D. Brewer, 2016; C. D. Butler, 2020). Ministers who move forward from the previous level do not retain their previous credentials.

**Table 4***Demographics of the Participants*

	Male	Female	Total
Certified	3	5	8
Licensed	22	15	37
Ordained	101	20	121
Total	126	40	166

**Setting**

The setting for this study was found in the United States of America. The Assemblies of God is divided into eight regions: Northwest, Southwest, North Central, South Central, Great Lakes, Gulf Coast, Northeast, and Southeast (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2022). Within each of these regions, there are numerous geographic districts. Four districts agreed to participate in the study and allowed their ministers to be surveyed. These included the Northern New England District, the Arkansas District, the PennDel Ministry Network, and the Northwest Ministry Network. Combined, these districts are home to 3,809 ministers. Each person credentialed by the Assemblies of God is expected to hold to the organization's theology, thus embracing a Pentecostal theology and experience. Ministers within these districts fill numerous roles, including lead pastors, staff pastors, missionaries, and volunteers at Assemblies of God churches, non-Assemblies of God ministries, and other parachurch ministries. The instructional roles of these clergy will vary from person to person.

**Instrumentation**

In this study, the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS) was used to measure the

application of learner-centered instructional practices among credentialed clergy (see Appendix A). PALS was developed by Conti (1985). The instrument is a 44-question assessment using a modified Likert scale for scoring (Conti, 1985). Initial uses of the survey examined the teaching styles of adult education instructors in Texas; later uses examined the teaching style of health professionals taking nontraditional courses and was also utilized at Native American colleges in Montana (Conti, 1989). Scores on the instrument range from 0 to 220, with a mean of 146 and a standard deviation of 20 (Conti, 1985). Scores indicate the practices of instruction that align with learner-centered, collaborative instruction, with both positive and negative items scored so that the participant's total score indicates their teaching orientation (Conti, 1989). Low scores indicate a teacher-centered orientation, while higher scores indicate a learner-centered focus (Conti, 1985). Participants scoring within 20 points on either side of the mean would be judged moderate in their teaching orientation. The scores can also be broken down into factors that relate directly to learner-centered instruction: learner-centered activities (twelve negative items), personalizing instruction (six positive items and three negative items), relating to experience (six positive items), assessing student needs (four positive items), climate building (four positive items), participation in the learning process (four positive items), and flexibility (five negative items) (Conti, 1985, 1989).

Users completed the instrument in 10-15 minutes. Validity for the instrument was found through two segments of field testing, with construct and content validity demonstrated through a Pearson correlation (Conti, 1982). Construct validity tests revealed a 78% affirmation of a juror, affirming its representation of adult learning principles. For content validity, results indicated that of the 44 items, “25 were significant at the .001 level, eight at the .01 level, seven at the .05 level, and four at the .10 level” (Conti, 1982, p. 141). Criterion validity was demonstrated with a

Pearson correlation of 0.85 for teacher response ratio, 0.79 for teacher question ratio, and 0.82 for pupil initiation ratio, respectively (Conti, 1982). PALS demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.92 after a test-retest. While the instrument has been used predominately in English-speaking countries, a modified version has been developed in Japan (Yoshida et al., 2014). Over 100 research studies have used PALS (Yoshida et al., 2014), including some as recent as the last three years (Aksoy & Aksu, 2020; Jones, 2021; Walzer, 2020). PALS produces a continuous variable where scores vary on a scale from 0 to 220 (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Conti (2004) permits PALS to be used by researchers and practitioners in their work (See Appendix B).

### **Procedures**

The researcher began this study by obtaining permission from the leadership of the regional districts of the Assemblies of God fellowship to conduct research in their districts. A copy of consent from the participating districts can be found in Appendix C. Then, permission was sought from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct research using human subjects (see Appendix D) for information about IRB approval.

Once approval was granted, credentialed ministers within the respective districts were emailed an invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix E). Within this email, the research problem was explained, and the purpose of the study was indicated. The email included a link to an online survey of their credentialing level, gender, and the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (Conti, 1985). Instructions asked them to fill out the basic information survey and complete the Principles of Adult Learning Scale. Those who followed the instructions and submitted the survey indicated consent to participate in the study.

Two weeks were given to complete the survey, ensuring adequate time for busy pastors to complete the survey. Initial emails were sent out near the end of February. Reminder emails

were sent a week later to follow up and remind invitees of the opportunity to participate in the researcher's home district. Since the researcher did not have access to email directories of other districts, the researcher utilized social media groups to point ministers to the email they received from their district, along with a link to the survey in case they missed the email. Data collection ended during the first week of March. Once research and writing were completed, data was stored securely on a password-protected external drive, and only the researcher could access records. When not being utilized, the external drive is stored in a filing cabinet in the researcher's office. The data will be retained for five years after the completion of this research study. After this, the data will be wiped from the external hard drive.

Once data collection ended, the researcher collected the data and categorized the variables accordingly. Information was entered into SPSS software for analysis. Descriptive statistics were run on the data set and published as a part of the study. The specific data analysis procedures are described in the next section.

### **Data Analysis**

The data in this study was analyzed using an ANOVA. Gall et al. (2007) indicate that an ANOVA measures the variance within and between groups in a research study. The one-way ANOVA is particularly appropriate for this study because there is one dependent, continuous variable (scores on the PALS) and one categorical variable related to the level of clergy ordination, certified, licensed, or ordained (E. D. Brewer, 2016; C. D. Butler, 2020). When the ratio between the groups and the variance within the groups is significantly high, it indicates a significant variance between the groups on the independent variable (Gall et al., 2007).

Before running any analyses, data was screened for inconsistencies and extreme outliers using a Box and Whisker plot. Outliers are those scores that differ significantly from the other

scores within the sample (Gall et al., 2007). This tests the first of three assumptions that the one-way ANOVA is built upon: "the dependent variable is equally distributed for each of the populations" (Green & Salkind, 2014, p. 164). With outliers identified, the researcher could better account for the equal distribution of scores across populations. After identifying outliers, the researcher ran the descriptive statistics for the data set. Next, descriptive statistics were computed to include the mean (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*). Using a one-way ANOVA required a set of assumption tests to be run alongside the ANOVA, including testing for the assumption of normality with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov ( $n > 50$ ) and testing for the assumption of equal variance with a Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance. These assumptions must be tested because of their foundation for the one-way ANOVA. The one-way ANOVA assumes that the dependent variable is usually distributed within the research population (assumption of normality) and that the variances are the same for all populations (assumption of equal variance), according to Green and Salkind (2014). In this study, the homogeneity of variance was not met. Because of this, a shift was made in data analysis from a one-way ANOVA to a Welch's ANOVA.

After the assumption tests were run, the next step in data analysis was conducting the ANOVA, with the respective data produced through the SPSS software. Because the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not met, a one-way ANOVA could no longer be used. Instead, the data was analyzed using Welch's ANOVA. The analysis described the variance of PALS scores among certified, licensed, and ordained Assemblies of God clergy. Thus, learner-centeredness was measured against the level of ordination (Jones, 2021) or credentialing. The data rejected the null hypothesis and revealed a significant difference in the distribution of scores among certified, licensed, and ordained ministers. The data demonstrated significance at the 0.05 level. Because



the researcher rejected the null hypothesis, post-hoc tests were run to examine the relationships between variables. In this case, a Games-Howell post-hoc test was conducted. Post-hoc testing revealed a significant score difference between certified and licensed ministers and licensed and ordained ministers. Interestingly, no significant relationship was demonstrated between certified and ordained ministers. The findings of the study will be discussed in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

This study aimed to see if there was a significant difference in learner-centeredness among certified, licensed, and ordained Assemblies of God clergy. The independent variable was the level of clergy credentials, and the dependent variable was scores on the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS). A one-way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis. Because the data failed assumption tests, a Welch's ANOVA was required. This findings Section includes the research question, null hypothesis, data screening, descriptive statistics, assumption testing, and results.

### Research Question

**RQ:** Is there a statistically significant difference in *learner-centeredness* among Assembly of God clergy by ministerial credential level (certified, licensed, and ordained)?

### Null Hypothesis

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no statistically significant difference in *learner-centeredness* among Assembly of God clergy by ministerial credential level (certified, licensed, and ordained) as measured by the PALS.

### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were obtained on the dependent variable for each group (see Table 5). The sample consisted of 164 participants. For certified clergy, the means was  $M = 147.19$  ( $SD = 16.71$ ). For licensed clergy, the means was  $M = 125.36$  ( $SD = 11.69$ ). For ordained clergy, the means was  $M = 133.52$  ( $SD = 17.88$ ).

**Table 5***One-Way ANOVA Descriptive Statistics*

Code		<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Certified	Score	8	115.00	168.50	147.1875	16.70744
	Valid N (listwise)	8				
Licensed	Score	35	100.00	147.00	125.3571	11.69060
	Valid N (listwise)	35				
Ordained	Score	121	93.00	184.50	133.5248	17.87909
	Valid N (listwise)	121				

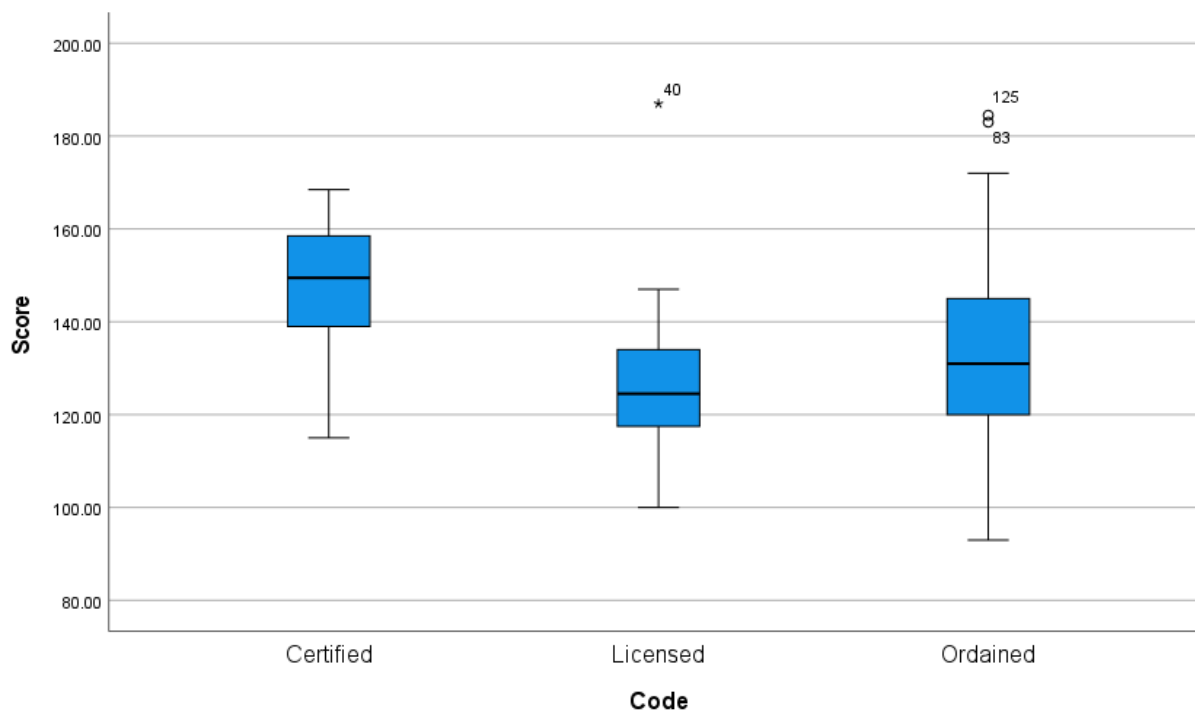
## Results

### Hypothesis

There was no statistically significant difference in *learner-centeredness* among Assembly of God clergy by ministerial credential level (certified, licensed, and ordained) as measured by the PALS.

### Data Screening

Data screening was conducted on each group's dependent variable. The researcher sorted the data on each variable and scanned for inconsistencies. No data errors or inconsistencies were identified. Box and Whiskers plots were used to detect outliers on each dependent variable. One extreme outlier was identified and removed from the licensed group (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1***Box and Whisker Plots***Assumption of Normality**

The ANOVA requires that the assumption of normality be met. Normality was examined using Kolmogorov-Smirnov because the sample size was greater than 50 ( $N = 164$ ). The assumption of normality was met (see Table 6).

**Table 6***Tests of Normality*

Score	Code	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
	Certified	.174	8	.200*	.947	8	.679
	Licensed	.078	35	.200*	.982	35	.829
	Ordained	.066	121	.200*	.977	121	.039

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

### Assumption of Homogeneity of Variance

The ANOVA requires that the assumption of homogeneity of variance be met. In Table 7, the Levene's test shows the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not met ( $p = 0.025$ ). Because the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not tenable, data analysis shifted to a Welch ANOVA. The unequal variance likely was due to unequal standard deviations in learner-centeredness among the levels of credential and the Welch ANOVA is unaffected by unequal variances because it does not assume that the variances are equal (Laerd Statistics, n.d.).

**Table 7**

*Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances<sup>a,b</sup>*

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Score	Based on Mean	3.762	2	161	.025
	Based on Median	3.514	2	161	.032
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	3.514	2	150.641	.032
	Based on trimmed mean	3.681	2	161	.027

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.<sup>a,b</sup>

a. Dependent variable: Score

b. Design: Intercept + Code

Due to the failure to meet the homogeneity of variance, the analysis switched to a Welch's ANOVA. Because of this switch on analysis, descriptive statistics were rerun. The Welch's ANOVA Descriptive Statistics are found in Table 8.

**Table 8***Welch's ANOVA Descriptive Statistics*

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Certified	8	147.1875	16.70744	5.90697	133.2197	161.1553	115.00	168.50
Licensed	35	125.3571	11.69060	1.97607	1231.3413	129.3730	100.00	147.00
Ordained	121	133.5248	17.87909	1.62537	130.3067	136.7429	93.00	184.50
Total	164	132.4482	17.26700	1.34833	129.7857	135.1106	93.00	184.50

**Results for Null Hypothesis**

The null hypothesis for this study stated that there was no statistically significant difference in *learner-centeredness* among Assembly of God clergy by ministerial credential level (certified, licensed, and ordained) as measured by the PALS. Because the data failed to meet the assumption of the homogeneity of variance, a change in statistical analysis was required. Rather than running a one-way ANOVA, a Welch ANOVA was run as an alternative to the one-way ANOVA. The results of the Welch ANOVA can be found in Table 9. The learner-centeredness among Assemblies of God clergy was statistically significant for the different levels of ministerial credential, Welch's  $F(2, 18.596) = 8.752, p = 0.002$ . As such, the researcher rejected the null.

**Table 9***Robust Tests of Equality of Means*

	Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Welch	8.725	2	18.596	.002

Due to significant findings with the Welch's ANOVA, a Games-Howell post-hoc test was run to analyze the multiple comparisons among certified, licensed, and ordained ministers. The Welch's ANOVA requires the Games-Howell post-hoc test instead of a Tukey HSD. Results of the multiple comparisons post-hoc test can be found in Table 10. Post-hoc testing revealed statistically significant differences between certified and licensed ministers ( $p = 0.18$ ) and between licensed and ordained ministers ( $p = 0.006$ ). Interestingly, there was no significant difference indicated between ordained and certified ministers.

**Table 10**

*Games-Howell Multiple Comparisons Post-Hoc Test*

		Mean		95% Confidence Interval			
	Credential Level	Credential Level	Difference	SE	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Games-Howell	Certified	Licensed	21.83036*	6.22874	.018	4.3024	39.3584
		Ordained	13.66271	6.12651	.125	-3.7994	31.1248
	Licensed	Certified	-21.83036*	6.22874	.018	-39.3584	-4.3024
		Ordained	-8.16765*	2.55865	.006	-14.2717	-2.0636
	Ordained	Certified	-13.66271	6.12651	.125	-31.1248	3.7994
		Licensed	8.16765*				

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

In summary, a Welch ANOVA was conducted to determine if *learner-centeredness* differed among clergy credentialing levels. Participants were classified into three groups: certified, licensed, and ordained. There was one significant outlier that was removed. The data was normally distributed for each group, as assessed by boxplot and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests ( $p > 0.05$ ), respectively. Homogeneity of variances was violated, as assessed by Levene's Test of

Homogeneity of Variance ( $p = 0.025$ ). The learner-centeredness score significantly differed between different credentialing groups, Welch's  $F(2, 18.596) = 8.752, p = 0.002$ . The *learner-centeredness* score decreased from the certified level ( $147.195 \pm 16.71$ ) to the ordained level ( $133.52 \pm 17.88$ ), to the licensed level ( $125.36 \pm 11.69$ ), in that order. Games-Howell post-hoc analysis revealed that the decrease from certified to licensed (21.83, 95% CI (-4.30 to 39.36)) was statistically significant ( $p = 0.018$ ), as well as the decrease from licensed to ordained (8.17, 95% CI (-14.27 to -2.03),  $p = 0.006$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the researcher accepted the alternate hypothesis that credential level does make a difference in learner-centeredness between certified and licensed clergy and licensed and ordained clergy.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS**

### **Overview**

This chapter synthesizes the study results in relation to prior literature and draws conclusions and implications for Pentecostal education within local churches and educational institutions. The chapter will begin by discussing the data related to the null hypothesis relating learner-centeredness to clergy level of ordination. It will then relate the implications of the data and discuss the current study's limitations. The section will conclude with recommendations for future research.

### **Discussion**

This study examined the relationship between learner-centeredness and the level of clergy credentials among ministers in the Assemblies of God USA, an Evangelical Pentecostal fellowship in the United States. The research question asked whether a statistically significant relationship existed between learner-centeredness clergy credentials among certified, licensed, and ordained Assemblies of God ministers.

Jones (2021) examined learner-centeredness among Anglican ministers and their educational preparedness and called for further investigation of the level of clergy credentials. Research into Pentecostal epistemology highlighted its unique connections with adult learning theory and recent calls in Assemblies of God literature (Assemblies of God Christian Education & Discipleship, 2021; Davis, 2022) for the use of learner-centered methods necessitated an investigation into the preparedness of Assemblies of God ministers to teach in accord with their foundational epistemology and their office of discipleship. No study, up to this point, had united Pentecostal epistemology and andragogy.

Results of this current studied yielded a statistically significant relationship between

Assemblies of God credential levels, indicated by the results of a Welch's ANOVA (Welch's  $F(2, 18.596) = 8.752, p = 0.002$ ), thus the researcher rejected the null hypothesis. Rejecting the null hypothesis allowed for post-hoc testing. The Games-Howell analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between certified and licensed ministers ( $p = .0018$ ), and licensed and ordained ministers ( $p = .006$ ). The relationship between certified ministers and ordained ministers was not statistically significant ( $p = .125$ ).

Conti (1985) noted that scores within 20 points on either side of 146 on the PALS indicated a moderate orientation towards learner-centeredness or teacher-centeredness. Moderate scores fall between 126 and 166 on the PALS. Interestingly, all means of Assemblies of God Ministers, including certified ( $M = 147.19$ ), licensed ( $M = 125.36$ ), and ordained ( $M = 133.52$ ), fell within or close to this moderate window. Only licensed ministers scored slightly lower than the 20-point window. These scores are similar to the mean of 139.69 Jones (2021) found among Anglican clergy.

Notably, the average scores among certified ministers demonstrate a slightly more learner-centered approach than their licensed and ordained counterparts. Certification is an entry-level credential in the Assemblies of God, often held by leaders who have not had the classes recommended for licensure and ordination or do not engage in full-time vocational ministry. It could be that the other roles held by certified ministers foster a more learner-centered orientation in their approach to the instructional task. Licensed and Ordained ministers have usually completed more training and are often more engaged in vocational ministry, perhaps leading to a more teacher-centered orientation in their teaching methods.

The research revealed a significant difference in PALS scores between certified and licensed ministers ( $p = 0.018$ ) and licensed and ordained ministers ( $p = 0.006$ ). In contrast, the

scores of certified and ordained ministers were not significantly related. The lowest and highest levels of credentials shared no significant relationship.

Perhaps the move from certified to licensed, or licensed to ordination, which requires more training and ministerial experience (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2021; Global University, 2022), explains the change in the relationship as ministers move from one level of credential to another. According to Barrett (2022), certified ministers show promise for gospel ministry, licensed ministers are preparing for greater effectiveness in ministry, and ordained ministers have proven effectiveness in ministry. All certified ministers who take on official pastoral duties are required to progress to licensure within two years and all ordained ministers are required to have been licensed for at least two years, and (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2021). Barrett (2022) notes that progression in credentials indicates a move into new “levels of preparation, authority, and responsibility in ministry” (p. 1). The period of licensure, as a middle credential, may represent the point at which the most methodological development occurs within the minister's life and ministry, explaining the significant relationship between certified and licensed ministers, and licensed and ordained ministers, aptly fitting Barrett's description of the credentialing progression.

### **Implications**

In rejecting the null hypothesis, this study made a valid contribution to the literature in its research regarding Pentecostal epistemology and learner-centered instruction. Significant gaps in the literature relating andragogy and Pentecostal epistemology and significant applications of adult learning theory to Pentecostal education necessitated the academic investigation initiated in this study. The study revealed significant differences in the teaching methodologies of ministers based on their level of ministerial credentials, opening the door for further explorations into the

teaching methods of Assemblies of God ministers.

One of the significant gaps found within the literature related to the integration of Pentecostal epistemology and andragogy. The relationship between Pentecostal epistemology and andragogy, with their value of experience, student participation, and diverse perspectives (C. B. Johns & J. D. Johns, 1992; Josefsson & Nowachek, 2022; Keener, 2016; Knowles, 1977, 1978; Yong, 2020) would suggest a stronger learner-centered orientation among Pentecostal ministers. Research regarding Pentecostal educational institutions adopting the educational philosophy of their evangelical and fundamentalist counterparts (Frestadius, 2021; Nel, 2016) reveals the lack of development of a genuinely andragogical, Pentecostal educational theory that would allow the unique epistemology of Pentecostalism to flourish. The results of this study would confirm this lack within Pentecostal education, as the scores of Pentecostal ministers differed little from those in the Anglican tradition (Jones, 2021). The epistemological foundations of Pentecostal ministers may not be firmly rooted in Pentecostal epistemology (Frestadius, 2021). Further, the lack of these foundations may indicate a gap in ministry practice, as ministers are not prepared to teach in accord with Pentecostal epistemology.

Also identified was a lack of Pentecostal educational preparedness when it comes to training in teaching and instructional methodology. The lack of preparation for teaching within Pentecostal ministry training hinders Pentecostal pastors from fulfilling their role as educational leaders within their congregations from a truly Pentecostal foundation. With little training in learner-centered instruction and little difference in their training environments, the preaching and teaching of clergy lacks the robust learner-centered approach necessitated by Pentecostal epistemology. Rather than taking their place as guides on the side (King, 1993), Pentecostals have moved towards the central authority of the pulpit (Nel, 2021), following the example of

their Evangelical brothers and sisters. Perhaps training in the methods and practices of learner-centered instruction would help Pentecostal pastors cast Pentecostal educational vision for their congregations in accord with their God-given role as educational leaders (Anderson, 2018; Brown, 2021; Dever & Alexander, 2005; Francis et al., 2021; Markowski, 2008; Ming, 2012; Siew, 2013, 2021; Wilson, 2018; Yount, 1996).

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study primarily related to its population. One of the assumptions of the one-way ANOVA is the homogeneity of variance, which is the variance being equal between the sub-groups (Green & Salkind, 2014). This assumption was unmet, prompting a switch to Welch's ANOVA. The populations did not demonstrate equal variance, perhaps due to the wide variance in size, but definitely due to the difference in standard deviations in learner-centered scores. Very few certified ministers, and a limited number of licensed ministers, participated compared to the number of ordained participants. This wide, uneven distribution of the independent variable would impact the study's statistics. This lopsidedness to the response may have to do with wider availability of ordained ministers, as many of them are employed full-time at the church and would have more time to participate in such a research study.

Limitations also related to the sample. For this survey, a convenience sample was drawn from four districts within the Assemblies of God. Participants were drawn from a minimal sample of the 38,000 ministers credentialed within the Assemblies of God and from limited geographical districts within the national fellowship. Among potential participants, there was also a limited response rate, possibly do to issues related to compassion fatigue among minister navigating a global pandemic over the past few years. The statistics of this survey, then, provide a small window into the instructional methods of the ministers that encompass a much larger

population. It is hoped that this window will provide an opening for future developments and research into Pentecostal educational and instructional practices.

Limitations also concern the use of self-reports in research. McDevitt and Ormrod (2020) have highlighted both the advantages and disadvantages of self-reports in educational research. While self-reports give greater insight into the minds and hearts of individuals, there are limitations. Particularly in terms of assessments, the issue of social desirability presents itself when respondents may give answers that they deem desirable rather than honestly answering based in their own practice (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2020).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The connections made within this research have opened the door for further investigations into the instructional practices of Pentecostal clergy. Much more work is needed to examine the applications of andragogy to Pentecostal education. Investigations into the differences revealed in this study, the instructional practices of Pentecostal educators and educational institutions, and the instructional practices of Pentecostal clergy in other denominations provide ground for future scholarship.

First, a deeper investigation into the instructional practices of Assemblies of God clergy might involve structured populations with equal representation of each credentialing level. Mixed-methods studies might be conducted, pairing statistical studies of ministers' learner-centeredness with interviews researching their life experiences, non-ministerial educational background, and outside influences that might affect their instructional methods within the classroom. Many ministers work jobs outside of the church, including roles in education, that might significantly impact their instructional practices within the church. Exploring these outside influences might further illumine and build upon this research.

Second, the study of learner-centeredness among Pentecostal clergy could be done among other Pentecostal denominations such as the Church of God International (Cleveland, TN), the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, and the Foursquare Church. This would greatly expand the literature related to Pentecostal clergy from different denominations. Each of these denominations carries unique theological influences and governmental structures that might influence how their ministers relate to and instruct their congregants.

Third, an investigation could be made into the learner-centeredness of Pentecostal educators in ministerial training colleges. Given that training atmospheres often influence ministerial instruction (Gaarden, 2016; Lu, 2020), it seems fitting that the instructional practices within Pentecostal Bible colleges, universities, and theological seminaries be studied. A quantitative and qualitative inquiry into the learner-centeredness of Pentecostal educators in these settings might give insight into the root influences of the instructional practices of clergy.

Fourth, and finally, future studies might engage in the lack of response rate among certified, licensed, and ordained clergy of the Assemblies of God. Using qualitative methods, one might explore how each of these credential levels engages with survey invitations and participating in research studies.

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## **APPENDIX A: ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CLERGY SURVEY**

### **Learner-Centeredness Among Assemblies of God Ministers**

The following assessment is a measure of learner-centeredness among Pentecostal clergy in the Assemblies of God. What follows are a few demographic questions, along with the Principles of Adult Learning Scale. After giving consent and answering the first few demographic questions, please follow the instructions for completing the PALS assessment. If you would like a copy of the results of this study, please email [REDACTED]

### **Consent**

**Title of the Project:** Learner-Centeredness Among Assemblies of God Clergy

**Principal Investigator:** George R True, III, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

### **Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a credentialed Assemblies of God Minister from the Northern New England, Pennsylvania-Delaware, Arkansas, or Northwest Districts/Ministry Networks of the Assemblies of God. 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 the study is to examine the teaching methods of Assemblies of God ministers to examine whether or not they are teacher-centered or learner-centered in their teaching ministries. Given the uniqueness of Pentecostal epistemology, learner-centered instructional methods are preferable for Pentecostal ministers.

### **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:

1. Complete the online survey, collecting demographic information regarding participants' connection with the Assemblies of God and the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (10-15 Minutes).

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

Benefits to society include transforming the way in which Assemblies of God clergy teach by encouraging a learner-centered methodology. Such a transition would facilitate a learning

environment that encourages student participation, diverse perspectives, and other core values of Pentecostalism. It would also facilitate an approach to teaching that incorporates the perspectives and experiences of adult learners.

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

The expected risks from participating 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. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Participant responses will be anonymous.

Data will be stored as a password-protected file on an external hard drive in a drawer when not in use. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted.

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

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, the Assemblies of God, or your regional ministry network. 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 exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is George R. True, III, "Jake." You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Roger Erdvig, at [REDACTED].

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is [irb@liberty.edu](mailto: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**

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

**Do you agree and consent to participate in the study described above?**

Yes

No

### **Demographic Information**

What is your level of credentials with the Assemblies of God?

Certified Minister

Licensed Minister

Ordained Minister

### **Gender**

Male

Female

**How long have you been credentialed with the Assemblies of God?**

0-5 Years

5-10 Years

10-15 Years

15+ Years

### **Principles of Adult Learning Scale**

**Directions:** The following survey contains several things that a teacher of adults might do in a classroom. You may personally find some of them desirable and find others undesirable. For each item, please respond to the way you most frequently practice the action described in the item. Your choices are Always, Almost Always, Often, Seldom, Almost Never, and Never. On your answer sheet, circle 0 if you always do the event; circle number 1 if you almost always do the event; circle number 2 if you often do the event; circle number 3 if you seldom do the event; circle number 4 if you almost never do the event; and circle number 5 if you never do the event. If the item does not apply to you, circle number 5 for never.

Always	Almost Always	Often	Seldom	Almost Never	Never
0	1	2	3	4	5

1. I allow students to participate in developing the criteria for evaluating their performance in class.
2. I use disciplinary action when it is needed.
3. I allow older students more time to complete assignments when they need it.
4. I encourage students to adopt middle-class values.
5. I help students diagnose the gaps between their goals and their present level of performance.
6. I provide knowledge rather than serve as a resource person.
7. I stick to the instructional objectives that I write at the beginning of a program.
8. I participate in the informal counseling of students.
9. I use lecturing as the best method for presenting my subject material to adult students.
10. I arrange the classroom so that it is easy for students to interact.
11. I determine the educational objectives for each of my students.
12. I plan units which differ as widely as possible from my students' socio-economic backgrounds.
13. I get a student to motivate himself/herself by confronting him/her in the presence of classmates during group discussions.
14. I plan learning episodes to take into account my students' prior experiences.
15. I allow students to participate in making decisions about the topics that will be covered in class.
16. I use one basic teaching method because I have found that most adults have a similar style of learning.
17. I use different techniques depending on the students being taught.
18. I encourage dialogue among my students.
19. I use written tests to assess the degree of academic growth in learning rather than to indicate new directions for learning.
20. I utilize the many competencies that most adults already possess to achieve educational objectives.
21. I use what history has proven that adults need to learn as my chief criteria for planning learning episodes.
22. I accept errors as a natural part of the learning process.
23. I have individual conferences to help students identify their educational needs.
24. I let each student work at his/her own rate regardless of the amount of time it takes him/her to learn a new concept.
25. I help my students develop short-range as well as long-range objectives.
26. I maintain a well-disciplined classroom to reduce interferences to learning.
27. I avoid discussion of controversial subjects that involve value judgements.
28. I allow my students to take periodic breaks during the class.
29. I use methods that foster quiet, productive, deskwork.
30. I use tests as my chief method of evaluating students.

31. I plan activities that will encourage each student's growth from dependence on others to greater independence.
32. I gear my instructional objectives to match the individual abilities and needs of the students.
33. I avoid issues that relate to the student's concept of himself/herself.
34. I encourage my students to ask questions about the nature of their society.
35. I allow a student's motives for participating in continuing education to be a major determinant in the planning of learning objectives.
36. I have my students identify their own problems that need to be solved.
37. I give all students in my class the same assignment on a given topic.
38. I use materials that were originally designed for students in elementary and secondary schools.
39. I organize adult learning episodes according to the problems that my students encounter in everyday life.
40. I measure a student's long-term educational growth by comparing his/her total achievement in class to his/her expected performance as measured by national norms from standardized tests.
41. I encourage competition among my students.
42. I use different materials with different students.
43. I help students relate new learning to their prior experiences.
44. I teach units about problems of everyday living.

## APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO USE PALS

### *Identifying Your Teaching Style* 91

#### *Factor 3 Relating to Experience*

Factor 3 contains items 14, 31, 34, 39, 43, and 44.

#### *Factor 4 Assessing Student Needs*

Factor 4 contains items 5, 8, 23, and 25.

#### *Factor 5 Climate Building*

Factor 5 contains items 18, 20, 22, and 28.

#### *Factor 6 Participation in the Learning Process*

Factor 6 contains items 1, 10, 15, and 36.

#### *Factor 7 Flexibility for Personal Development*

Factor 7 contains items 6, 7, 26, 27, and 33.

#### **Computing Scores**

An individual's total score on the instrument is calculated by summing the value of the responses to all items. Factor scores are calculated by summing the value of the responses for each item in the factor.

#### Factor Score Values

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	38	8.3
2	31	6.8
3	21	4.9
4	14	3.6
5	16	3.0
6	13	3.5
7	13	3.9

Note: Dr. Gary J. Conti hereby grants permission for practioners and researchers to reproduce and use the Principles of Adult Learning Scale in their work.

## APPENDIX C: DISTRICT PERMISSION LETTERS

11/21/22, 9:59 PM

Mail - True, George - Outlook

Re: [External] RE: Study of Teaching Methods of Assemblies of God Ministers

True, George [REDACTED]

Thu 11/17/2022 3:56 AM

To: Ronnie Morris [REDACTED]

Ok, sounds good!

Sent from my U.S.Cellular® Smartphone

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

**From:** Ronnie Morris [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 16, 2022 2:20:08 PM

**To:** True, George [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Re: [External] RE: Study of Teaching Methods of Assemblies of God Ministers

We too have restrictions so we would want to submit them ourselves as well.

Sent from my iPhone

On Nov 16, 2022, at 12:21 PM, True, George [REDACTED] wrote:

Awesome, thank you so much Rev. Morris! I really appreciate it. I realize that the next few months will be very busy for ministers, so my thought has been to distribute the survey sometime after the first of the year, once the busyness of the holidays has subsided. I will be submitting my permission emails/letters for IRB approval at Liberty and aim for that early January/February 2023 survey. I will keep in touch and get back to you to set up a time to send off the surveys and the letter of invitation to participate.

I know that many districts have restrictions on access to their email directory, so I have a few that are going to distribute the survey to their ministers directly on my behalf. Would Arkansas grant me access to their email directory, or would the district be able to disseminate the survey for me?

Again, thank you so much.

<Outlook-cagvr2nb.png>

**From:** Ronnie Morris [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 16, 2022 11:27 AM

**To:** True, George [REDACTED]

**Subject:** [External] RE: Study of Teaching Methods of Assemblies of God Ministers

[ EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content. ]

We would participate.

**From:** True, George [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Tuesday, November 8, 2022 6:56 PM

**To:** Ronnie Morris [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Study of Teaching Methods of Assemblies of God Ministers

Dear Rev. Morris,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The title of my research project is Learner-Centeredness Among Certified, Licensed, and Ordained Assemblies of God Clergy, and the purpose of my research is to examine the relationship of credential level to learner-centered instructional practice among Assemblies of God ministers.

Rev. Dan Abbatiello, my district superintendent, has given his approval for my study, and I am writing to invite your district to be a part of this as well.

[External] RE: Request to Conduct Research Among Assemblies of God Ministers

Tue 11/8/2022 4:24 PM

To: True, George [REDACTED]

[ EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content. ]

Hi Jake,  
You have my permission.  
Blessings,  
Pastor Dan

**From:** True, George [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 1, 2022 9:00 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Request to Conduct Research Among Assemblies of God Ministers

Hello Pastor Dan,  
It was great seeing you at the Listening Tour. This is the email I mentioned to you, requesting permission to conduct my study on AG Ministers. Below is some more information about what I am requesting in order to conduct my study, the letter I am sending to district superintendents around the east coast. Thank you for your support in this. I'm intrigued to see what I find with this study.

Blessings,

Jake

Dear District Superintendent,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The title of my research project is Learner-Centeredness Among Certified, Licensed, and Ordained Assemblies of God Clergy and the purpose of my research is to examine the relationship of credential level to learner-centered instructional practice among Assemblies of God ministers.

I am writing to request your permission to request access to your ministerial email directory to recruit participants for my study.

Participants will be asked to complete [the Principles of Adult Learning Scale](#), provide their level of credential, their gender, and their length of time in ministry with the Assemblies of God. The data will be used to examine the relationship between their level of credential and their instructional practices. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

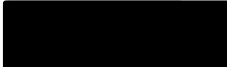
Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval and your districts email directory by email to [REDACTED]. Thank you in advanced.

Sincerely,



**Rev. George True, MDiv**

Ed.D. Candidate, Liberty University  
Adjunct Faculty, Faith Bible College International





RE: [External] RE: Study of Teaching Methods of Assemblies of God Ministers

Don Detrick [REDACTED]

Wed 11/9/2022 12:52 PM

To: True, George [REDACTED]

Cc: Kim Wigstrand <[REDACTED]> Greg Stern [REDACTED] Don Ross [REDACTED]

Thanks, George. We just discussed this, and will look favorably on helping you with this, and send an email to all of our ministers during a time when we don't have anything else scheduled. I have copied Don Ross on this and he can confirm.



**DON DETRICK, D.MIN.**  
ASSOCIATE NETWORK LEADER | SECRETARY-TREASURER

BRINGING THE HOPE OF JESUS TO OUR COMMUNITIES

NWMN is a provider of ministry resources and as such the information, opinions, and materials provided are of this nature and are not intended to replace the advice of an attorney or accountant. The information in this email message is privileged and confidential. It is intended only for the use of the recipient named above or the employee or agent responsible to deliver it to the intended recipient. If you receive this in error, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this message in error, please notify us by telephone immediately. Thank you.

From: True, George [REDACTED]

Sent: Wednesday, November 9, 2022 9:49 AM

To: Don Detrick [REDACTED]

Cc: Kim Wigstrand [REDACTED] Greg Stern [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: [External] RE: Study of Teaching Methods of Assemblies of God Ministers

Hi Dr. Detrick,

I tried sending this to Supt. Ross, but did not have an accurate email address. I believe your email was the one listed in the national directory. I appreciate your interest and would love to make this study available to your ministers however is best. Please forward this information to Dr. Ross. I have attached a presentation that will give some more explanation of what I am doing. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to Zoom with me to hear more. If the network chooses to participate, I would simply need an email or letter of permission from Superintendent Ross to conduct research in the Northwest Ministry Network.

Thank you so much!

God Bless,



**Rev. George True, MDiv**

Ed.D. Candidate, Liberty University  
Adjunct Faculty, Faith Bible College International

From: Don Detrick <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Wednesday, November 9, 2022 8:26 AM

To: True, George [REDACTED]

Cc: Kim Wigstrand [REDACTED] Greg Stern [REDACTED]

Subject: [External] RE: Study of Teaching Methods of Assemblies of God Ministers

[ EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content. ]

Hi George – I'm not sure if you sent this to our Superintendent, Dr. Don Ross or not, but I received this and will check into it, and get back to you. We typically do not distribute our email list, but could possibly facilitate an email to our constituents via one of our methods, such as Constant Contact. Your project has merit and we'd be happy to help if we can.

Blessings,

DON DETRICK, D.MIN | ASSOCIATE NETWORK LEADER | SECRETARY-TREASURER  
Northwest Ministry Network

[nwministry.com](http://nwministry.com)

11/21/22, 10:00 PM

Mail - True, George - Outlook

RE: [External] Re: Request to Conduct Research Among Assemblies of God Ministers

Don Immel [REDACTED]

Wed 11/16/2022 2:01 PM

To: True, George [REDACTED]

Sounds good!

**Donald J. Immel, DMin.**

Superintendent

PennDel Ministry Network


[penndel.org](http://penndel.org) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#)

This message may contain confidential and/or proprietary information and is intended for the person/entity to whom it was originally addressed. Any use by others is strictly prohibited.

**From:** True, George [REDACTED]**Sent:** Wednesday, November 16, 2022 1:16 PM**To:** Don Immel <Don@PennDel.org>**Subject:** RE: [External] Re: Request to Conduct Research Among Assemblies of God Ministers

Awesome, thank you so much Dr. Immel! I really appreciate it. I realize that the next few months will be very busy for ministers, so my thought has been to distribute the survey sometime after the first of the year, once the busyness of the holidays has subsided. I will be submitting my permission emails/letters for IRB approval at Liberty and aim for that early January/February 2023 survey. I will keep in touch and get back to you to set up a time to send off the surveys and the letter of invitation to participate.

Again, thank you so much.

**Rev. George True, MDiv**Ed.D. Candidate, Liberty University  
Adjunct Faculty, Faith Bible College International**From:** Don Immel [REDACTED]**Sent:** Wednesday, November 16, 2022 10:59 AM**To:** True, George [REDACTED]**Subject:** RE: [External] Re: Request to Conduct Research Among Assemblies of God Ministers

Hello George,

Thanks for getting back to me. YES, we are happy to disseminate the request to our ministers. It is our policy not to share the mailing list outside of our office. However, we certainly value research and higher education. Please send me the script/letter and a link, and we will send it out on your behalf.

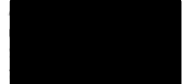
Let me know if there is any other way that we can assist you.

Blessings!

**Donald J. Immel, DMin.**

Superintendent

PennDel Ministry Network


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## APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL

[External] IRB-FY22-23-582 - Initial: Initial - Exempt

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>

Fri 2/10/2023 2:28 PM

To: True, George [REDACTED]; Erdvig, Roger (Doctor of Education) [REDACTED]

[ EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content. ]

### LIBERTY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 10, 2023

George True  
Roger Erdvig

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-582 LEARNER-CENTEREDNESS AMONG CERTIFIED, LICENSED, AND ORDAINED ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CLERGY

Dear George True, Roger Erdvig,

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

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46.104(d):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording). The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

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

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

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

Sincerely,

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

## APPENDIX E: LETTER INVITING PARTICIPANTS TO THE STUDY

Dear Recipient:

As a student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to study the relationship between credential level and learner-centered instructional practices, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study. Learner-centered instruction is characterized by a respect for the diverse perspectives, democratic participation of learners in the classroom, and the incorporation of experience into the learning process. Such principles align well with the core ideals of Pentecostalism with its emphasis on global perspectives, the democratization of the Spirit, and personal experiences of the Holy Spirit.

These connections have prompted me to research the instructional practices of Pentecostal clergy. Are Pentecostal clergy equipped to lead learner-centered instructional environments that encourage diverse perspectives, Spiritual experience, and democratic participation among students? This study seeks to examine the relationship between a minister's level of credentials and their instructional practices.

Participants must be certified, licensed or ordained ministers of the Assemblies of God. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete an online survey of basic demographic information and the Principles of Adult Learning Scale. It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete the provided survey. Results of the study, including the email and demographic information of participants, will be protected.

To participate, please [click here](#).

Submission of a survey will indicate consent to participate in the study. If a participant would like to obtain a copy of the finalized research project, they may indicate so on the survey. Once data analysis is completed, a copy of the final dissertation will be mailed to those who desire a copy.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Rev. George "Jake" True  
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University  
Licensed Minister, Northern New England Assemblies of God  
Faculty Member, Faith Bible College International