LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

PERCEPTIONS OF PAID PASTORAL STAFF OF VOLUNTEER

ENGAGEMENT IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Glorielba Orta Meléndez

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2024

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ABSTRACT

Volunteers play a critical role in churches, and successful collaboration between paid pastoral staff and volunteers is essential for achieving the church's mission. However, conflicts can arise when defining the roles and responsibilities of volunteers and paid pastoral staff. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the perceptions of paid pastoral staff regarding volunteer engagement in the Assembly of God's (AG's) church mission. The research drew from Harold Kelley and John Thibaut's interdependence theory, which shed light on human interactions and their influences. Utilizing semi-structured interviews with 10 AG pastors in paid staff positions, the findings described the volunteer manager role that pastors perform. The findings suggested that staff-volunteer collaborative relationships derived from the paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteerism as discipleship. The role of volunteer managers in a church contributes significantly to volunteer engagement through leadership modeling, ministry-based training, and spiritual gift identification. Therefore, the successful engagement of volunteers in the church's mission depends on the willingness of paid pastoral staff to provide training and collaborate with volunteers. Finally, the study presented some suggestions for future research and exploration.

Keywords: volunteer engagement, spiritual gifts, staff-volunteer relationships, interdependence theory, discipleship, volunteer manager

Dedication

This endeavor was for the glory of God, who had called me to such adventure. May this effort glorify Him and contribute to the conversation on church volunteerism and the importance of collaborative staff-volunteer relationships as people of God.

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I am incredibly grateful for my husband, Fermín, who has always believed in me and given me unwavering support. I am blessed to have such a supportive partner in my life. I want to thank my kids—Yanine, Fermín José, Daniel, and Caleb—for their unwavering love, support, and understanding during this challenging journey. Their belief in me has been my source of strength.

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Thank you, my Lord, for the gift of academia. Bless these efforts: "May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands" (*New International Version*, 2011, Psalm 90:17).

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Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM)

Assemblies of God (AG)

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)

External Hard Drive (EHD)

High-Commitment Work System (HCWS)

Human Resources Management (HRM)

Inadvertent volunteer managers (IVMs)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

U.S. Congregational Life Survey (USCLS)

Volunteer Management Practices (VMP)

Volunteer Manager (VM)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

The universal church's mission is to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). This mission requires collaborative paid pastoral staff and volunteer relationships. Paid pastoral staff often seek the participation of its congregants for an event or ministerial help (Cnaan & Amrofell, 1994; Graham, 2017; Harrison, 1960). While this participation denotes a specific time and place for congregants' engagement (i.e., episodic volunteering), such engagement does not reflect the effective use of church volunteers in missional ecclesiology. The nature of the church mission implies a lifelong commitment to follow Christ and a willful heart for others to do the same, calling for volunteer engagement as "crucial to the well-being of churches" (Dunlow, 2017, p. 302). The mission of the universal church denotes a continual effort of the church to reach the lost—an effort that requires the participation of all believers, not merely the paid pastoral staff (Cnaan & Scott, 2021; DeVries, 2016; Fettke, 2011).

Previous studies on staff-volunteer relationships have focused on volunteer motivation and satisfaction as factors for volunteer engagement and retention (Garland et al., 2009; Løvaas et al., 2020; Niebuur, 2020; Oostlander et al., 2014). Little-to-no research has examined role ambiguity's effect on the church's collaborative staff-volunteer relationship. Thus, more exploration was needed about the paid pastoral staff's perceptions of volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology. Therefore, further research was needed to address assumptions about the role of paid pastoral staff as a manager of volunteers.

This study explored the paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology. The background problem of volunteer-staff relationships in the church setting was addressed, followed by the emergent themes in the literature that led to the research

problem and the formulation of the research questions. Then, a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach was used to describe "the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018, p. 13).

Background to the Problem

All believers, not just the clergy, are needed in the ongoing effort of the church to reach the lost, as indicated by the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). Two categories of Christ followers carry out this mission. One is professional ministers who received pastoral ordination to lead and equip the congregation spiritually to do ministry (Forster & Oosterbrink, 2015; Lose et al., 2015; van Aarde, 2017; Wong et al., 2019), while the other is lay ministers. The professional minister indicates the formal education that differentiates them from the rest of the congregation (Fettke, 2011; Harrison, 1960; Ogden, 2003) and the authority conferred by God through their respective denominational structures in response to a divine calling (Jones & Gordon, 2023; Rudolph & Landman, 2019; Wright & Arterbury, 2022), resulting in a clergy-laity dichotomy. The term clergy (i.e., professional ministers) dates back to the Roman Church, which adopted Latin as the official language around year 250 (Zatel, 2013). A clergy with a different language and superior understanding of theological matters contributes to an intellectual development that is different from those with only an experiential knowledge of God (Ogden, 2003; Zatel, 2013). This intellectual superiority was the reality in the times of Constantine and prevalent in the Catholic Church, where the role of the laity was defined in terms of its relation to the hierarchy (Zatel, 2013). The clergy-laity divide is still present across denominations, although the use of the laity varies (Hjort & Skræddergaard, 2022; Hoge et al., 1998).

The problem of having a clergy-laity dichotomy was that the role of both groups becomes ambiguous, hampering the collaborative relationship needed to fulfill the Great Commission. Lovett (2022) explained the commonality of both groups as "people of God" in the concept of *diakonoi* (Greek word for minister), indicating that in the New Testament, "all members of the church" are God's people and "that recognizes their distinctive roles, whether laity or clergy, male or female, as 'diakonoi'" (p. 85). In praxis, the focus has been on clergy leadership (Jenssen, 2018; Jentile, 2021; Wong et al., 2019). The clergy no longer feel supported by their congregations and often struggle to get volunteers (Chavez, 2021; Copeland, 2012; Moltmann, 1975). The role overload and lack of helping hands lead to clergy burnout (Buratti et al., 2020; Chan & Chen, 2019; Chavez, 2021; Jones & Gordon, 2023; Plante, 2023; Visker et al., 2017; White Smith, 2020). Jones and Gordon (2023) reported that "pastors in the United States experience job burnout, with 80% of pastors feeling discouraged and 50% of pastors across all denominations considering a job change" (p. 278). The need for collaborative clergy-laity relationships is critical for ministerial longevity leading to effective missional ecclesiology to take place.

The other group that carries out the Great Commission is the congregation. The Christian literature has referred to church congregants as the laity. According to Christian scholars, the role of the laity in the church's mission needs serious consideration (Coetzee et al., 2023; Copeland, 2012; Graham, 2017; Harrison, 1960; Kärkkäinen, 2000; Lovett, 2022; Obiorah, 2020; Zatel, 2013) because "the commission is not complete until they have played their role" (Wright & Arterbury, 2022, p. 5). Zatel (2013) pointed out that "the ritualization of the clerical career marginalizes the layperson and imbues clerics with professionalism, let alone 'perfection' and powers," increasing the clergy-laity divide (p. 134). In a study conducted by Berry et al. (2012),

clergy exclusivity showed to be detrimental to the clergy well-being and to the clergy-laity

collaboration, due to clergy reluctance to accept help, illustrated in the following statements:

- I think at the moment many clergy may feel that asking for help may be seen as a sign of weakness.
- Clergy are reluctant to make use of pastoral care provision.
- Clergy are very proud and seeking help seems like confessing spiritual failure. Clergy have a tendency to isolate themselves.
- Clerics have a tendency to be loners. (p. 174)

Clergy stress can lead to physical and mental health issues, such as major depression,

which is made worse by social isolation (Chavez, 2021; Robbins & Hancock, 2015). Jones and

Gordon (2023) conducted a study to analyze job burnout in Lutheran pastors. Their findings

unearthed the symptoms of burnout as extreme fatigue to the point of incapacity for further

functioning; stress; rage; bitterness; difficulty falling asleep; and a general lack of enjoyment

from one's work (Jones & Gordon, 2023). The clergy's well-being has a ripple effect on the

congregants' spiritual health and participation (Cafferata, 2017; Son & Wilson, 2021). As a

result, there is a decline in church attendance (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021; Lotter & Van Aarde,

2017), and more Christians disregard the urgency of the biblical mandate to make disciples

(Barna, 2017, 2022a, 2022b). In order to foster collaborative clergy-laity relationships to fulfill

the Great Commission, clergy must tap into the laity's skills, spiritual giftedness, and influence

in the marketplace (Byerly et al., 2022; Obiorah, 2020). The perception of the clergy of laity

participation in ministry is vital in this regard. Fettke (2011) encouraged clergy to regard the laity

as equal partners in God's affairs. He stated that "the professional minister who is truly called by

God has a vital role in training laity for 'works of service' (Ephesians 4:12)" and "release" them

to avoid burning out (Fettke, 2011, p. 3).

Researchers have found a correlation between religiosity and volunteering (Mollidor et

al., 2015; Petrovic et al., 2021; Son & Wilson, 2021). The volunteerism literature has provided

the human resources management (HRM) practices informing the volunteer satisfaction and motivation to aid leaders in nonprofit organizations in better managing their volunteer personnel. The collaborative clergy-laity relationship could be better understood from an HRM perspective, and according to the Christian literature, clergy and volunteers share in the ministry of making disciples, also known as the priesthood of all believers (Belcher & Hadley, 2021; Hobbs, 1990; Lotter & Van Aarde, 2017; Ogden, 2003). For this research, the term clergy was used interchangeably with the term paid pastoral staff, and the laity was called volunteers. Paid pastoral staff and church volunteers are the same resource (Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013) with different functions in the church organization—the people of God. In this sense, the significant differences between these two groups are remuneration and training. The assumption of various functions did not undermine the person's contribution, as depicted in Apostle Paul's metaphor of the body of Christ:

> There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body. It is the same with Christ. We were all baptized by one Holy Spirit. And so we are formed into one body. It didn't matter whether we were Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free people. We were all given the same Spirit to drink. So the body is not made up of just one part. It has many parts… If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honored, every part shares in its joy. You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it. (*New International Version,* 2011, 1 Corinthians 12:12–14, 26–27)

Paid pastoral staff is paid as church administrators (including managing volunteers) and as spiritual leaders (Cnaan & Scott, 2021; Jones & Gordon, 2023), while church volunteers are expected to do ministry and share their faith without proper training, except for the preaching they receive on Sunday (Cuadra-Martínez et al., 2019; Embalsado et al., 2022; Ramaekers et al., 2022). The complexity of staff-volunteer relationships and conflictual views hampering collaborative relationships between the paid pastoral staff and church volunteers are addressed next.

Complexities of the Staff-Volunteer Relationships

Paid pastoral staff and church volunteer relationships are multidimensional (Nesbit et al., 2018). The staff-volunteer relationships depend on the paid pastoral receptivity to work with church volunteers. The host organization initiated and fostered this work (Botha, 2021; van Overbeeke et al., 2022). Studies have shown that volunteers who are invited to serve by church leadership increase volunteer engagement (Lee et al., 2019; Nesbit et al., 2018; Tierney et al., 2022; van Overbeeke et al., 2022). Hence, paid pastoral staff needs effective volunteer management skills to articulate and equip volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology. Niemandt (2012) defined missional ecclesiology as "the point of view where the Church is understood as a community of witness, called into being and equipped by God, and sent into the world to testify to and participate in Christ's work" (p. 1). For volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology, the paid pastoral staff must equip volunteers on how to share and live the gospel as well as to provide opportunities to practice their faith (e.g., community engagement through prosocial behaviors, Espinoza, 2017; Lose et al., 2015; York, 2017).

The staff-volunteer relationships depend on volunteer engagement—the volunteer's decision to participate in the organization's mission. Positive interpersonal interactions increase volunteer satisfaction, frequency, and commitment (Nesbit et al., 2018). Volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology has been studied regarding the laity's financial support to professional ministry (Fettke, 2011; Harrison, 1960; Ilyas et al., 2020; Sweeney, 2020). The church is a nonprofit organization that depends heavily on volunteer support to achieve its goals (Cnaan & Scott, 2021; Morrison et al., 2019; Verster, 2022). Volunteers are essential to the church's mission, but paid pastoral staff does not always use volunteers' skills to their full potential (Avlakeotes, 2016; Copeland, 2012; De Oliveira, 2008; Nesbit et al., 2018). Harrison (1960)

explained that in Protestant churches, "the ideal role of the laymen is to act as assistants to the clergy" (p. 44). This view undermines the volunteer contribution as a necessary church member in missional ecclesiology. Watson (2021) pointed out that "when volunteers are placed into a position of ministry in which they are not gifted or called to serve, it can be a source of frustration and hinder the work of the ministry" (p. 7). Likewise, Mannion (2007) recognized the relational aspect of the missional ecclesiology by using the concept of "people of God" to describe church volunteers and paid pastoral staff as "equal, though people have different charisms (callings and gifts) and therefore different roles" (p. 201).

The paid pastoral staff has a dual function: spiritual leader (i.e., the equipper) and the administrator (Cnaan & Scott, 2021; Jones & Gordon, 2023). Jentile (2021) expanded on this dual functionality of the paid pastoral staff in terms of its relationship with congregants (i.e., church volunteers): "The pastor relates to the church as a biblical leader, who uses his or her authority to empower others as the pastor is also under the authority of Jesus Christ as a follower" (p. 9). Unfortunately, the unrealistic expectations of paid pastoral staff fulfilling this dual role are leading them to burnout (Chavez, 2021; Jones & Gordon, 2023; Plante, 2023; White Smith, 2020) and the consideration of quitting the ministry (Barna, 2022c; Jones & Gordon, 2023). The role of the equipper is vital for developing the collaborative relationship between paid pastoral staff and volunteers. Additionally, there is a need for a renewed emphasis on the role of the laity, in which church volunteers are "more capable of assuming more ministry responsibilities" (Wong et al., 2019, p. 421). This transition from the ministry of the clergy (i.e., paid pastoral staff) to the ministry of the people (i.e., church volunteers included) has been suggested in the literature (Espinoza, 2017; Fettke, 2011; Lose et al., 2015; Wong et al., 2019; Zatel, 2013). Graham (2017) indicated that the theology of the laity must be rekindled if the

church believes in the priesthood of all believers. He described the priesthood concept as the believers' capacity to meditate, intercede, reconcile, and sacrifice as Jesus did. Graham (2017) emphasized the paid pastoral staff and volunteers' mutual responsibility, indicating that the priesthood of all believers is the "quality of the whole people as the Body of Christ and not just something conferred at or by ordination" (p. 331).

Conflictual Views Hampering the Staff-Volunteer Relationships Collaboration

For many generations, the ministerial responsibility of preaching, praying, visiting, and equipping has been delegated to the paid pastoral staff (Brooks, 2014; Fettke, 2011; Graham, 2017; Ogden, 2003). Since the paid pastoral staff is responsible not only for being the spiritual leaders (Cnaan & Scott, 2021; Copeland, 2012) but also for equipping and managing volunteers for ministry (Espinoza, 2017; Lose et al., 2015; Obiorah, 2020), the church literature has emphasized the development of clergy leadership (Graham, 2017; Harrison, 1960; Ogden, 2003) while neglecting the development of laity.

A negative perception of church volunteers has dichotomized collaborative staff-volunteer relationships as God's people. The tendency to delegate the ministerial responsibility to the paid pastoral staff has been embedded in church cultures where the pastor is regarded as the decision maker (Robinson, 2018) and superior to volunteers (Fettke, 2011; Ogden, 2003; Zatel, 2013), resulting in volunteer disengagement. Fettke (2011) defined *disengagement* as "the disempowerment of Spirit-empowered believers by the insistence of professional clergy control" (p. 9). Although church volunteers want to serve and glorify Jesus Christ, most have not attended Bible college or church ministry training (Watson, 2021), unlike paid pastoral staff, who have received formal training (i.e., professionalism) to minister to their congregations (Edge, 2022; Reed, 2021). Zatel (2013) explained that professionalism minimizes laity contributions. De

Oliveira (2008) clearly stated that when church volunteers are not equipped, they feel

"undervalued, unappreciated, taken for granted. They have been treated as though they were

expendable or have been given jobs that didn't match their skills or talents" (p. 70). Hence, the

church becomes "a separate enclave or refuge from the world" rather than a place where church

volunteers are equipped for ministry (Graham, 2017, p. 331). Paid pastoral staff should advise,

teach, and train volunteers on how to worship and be used by God (Brooks, 2014). In this way,

church volunteers can practice their faith in their daily lives through prosocial behaviors (Gagné,

2003; Kärkkäinen, 2000; Lose et al., 2015; Wright & Arterbury, 2022).

Conversely, paid pastoral staff need to gain the skill set to manage and equip volunteers

(Jones & Gordon, 2023; Wong et al., 2019). In a recent study, Wong and colleagues surveyed

100 Canadian pastors and religious leaders from different denominations to know "the

formational preparedness and ministry effectiveness of theological school graduates" (2019, p.

415). Findings showed four themes explaining the gap between their theological education and

pastoral practice: (1) Equipping the saints; (2) Practical discipleship training; (3) Spiritual

formation of seminary students; and (4) Missional and organizational training (Wong et al.,

2019, p. 419). These themes have been embedded in the paid pastoral staff role as spiritual

leaders of their congregations. If paid pastoral staff, who are trained to do ministry, feel ill-

equipped to disciple others, they cannot expect church volunteers to minister to their

communities without being equipped.

Statement of the Problem

For collaborative staff-volunteer relationships, volunteers should feel vital to the

organization's success (Skoglund, 2006). If one considers volunteer professional development,

one must go to the head of the church, Christ. The apostles modeled this dependency on the head

of the church as the provider of the church's needs (Acts:1–9). Jesus commanded them to ask the "Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (*New International Version*, 2011, Matthew 9:38). Understanding who assists with critical responsibilities in the church may help manage expectations and establish stronger working relationships inside and beyond the faith community (Cnaan & Scott, 2021).

The issue was how paid pastoral staff see church volunteers (Fettke, 2011). According to Fettke, the paid pastoral staff welcomes the volunteer's financial support without providing other opportunities for meaningful contributions. To this end, he informed that "some laypeople have said, cynically, that the only interest their pastor has in them is in reporting numbers of them to denominational headquarters as a sign of the pastor's success, or that he is only interested in their offerings" (Fettke, 2011, p. 3). Nesbit et al. (2016) expanded Fettke's statement by pointing out that volunteer management is pointless if volunteers are not important to the organization. Nesbit et al. (2016) stated that "this negative perception is compounded when the role of the volunteer manager and the role of volunteers are unclear or ambiguous" (p.171). Furthermore, HRM practices assist in retention and recruitment but lack the spiritual element required to fulfill the church mission. In addition, the theories relevant to volunteers neglect the organizational factors (Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013) affecting volunteers like the same-page approach: "about the collective purpose, not the hierarchy, becomes the integrating mechanism for the organization" (Solansky et al., 2008, p. 215). To manage church volunteers efficiently, paid pastoral staff must equip them to do ministry by properly selecting, training, and supervising church volunteers (Nesbit et al., 2016). From an HRM perspective, church volunteers are demotivated and discouraged by ambiguous roles, which lowers volunteer engagement and performance (Nesbit et al., 2016). In his book *God's Empowered People: A Pentecostal Theology of the Laity,* Fettke

posed the question concurring with the role ambiguity prevalent in church literature (Forster & Oosterbrink, 2015; Graham, 2017; Hang-yue et al., 2005; Lovett, 2022; Obiorah, 2020) and nonprofit organizations (López-Cabrera et al., 2020; Nesbit et al., 2016). His question remained unanswered: "Why does there seem to be a lack of clarity on the role of the laity in the local church and in the kingdom of God in North America Pentecostal churches?" (Fettke, 2011, p. 2). As an attempt to respond to this question, this study sought to understand the AG's paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology. Based on Niemandt's (2012) definition of missional ecclesiology, this term was used to refer to the Christian commitment to Christ's work, engagement in the faith community, and the capacity to witness in the marketplace. For this study, paid pastoral staff was defined as one who holds a formal leadership position as a pastoral staff in an AG's church in spiritual and organizational relationships with church volunteers. These interactions included Sunday services and daily living of spiritual values (Chester & Timmis, 2008; Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021; Hull, 2006). The theory guiding this study was the interdependence theory by Harold Kelley and John Thibaut, as it explains interactions and their influences. Collaborative relationships and interactions among paid pastoral staff and church volunteers change and grow over time. Because of this, interdependence was considered regarding the immediate results of certain combinations of actions (e.g., mutual edification) and the future actions (e.g., prosocial behavior), and results made possible (rather than taken away) by conflictual relationships (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What are the lived experiences of paid pastoral staff managing volunteers to partake in the Great Commission at the Assemblies of God?

RQ2. How do the Assemblies of God paid pastoral staff describe their staff-volunteer relationship?

RQ3. How do the Assemblies of God paid pastoral staff's perceptions of volunteers impact their level of investment in equipping volunteers to partake in the Great Commission at the Assemblies of God?

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

This study was designed to discover how paid pastoral staff view volunteer-staff relations within the AG churches. The volunteers were assumed to be equivalent to the church members (i.e., laity or laypeople). The volunteers' perceptions of their leaders' considerations, volunteer training, and professional development were beyond this research's scope. The unique dynamics of volunteer-staff relations permeated the decision-making process in the local church. Although this study did not factor in the volunteering motivations, it was assumed that the individual's faith was the common denominator to serving in the church context both as a volunteer or as paid pastoral staff (Coleman, 2017; Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Hager & Brudney, 2004; Penner, 2002). The paid pastoral staff affirmed a perception regarding the church volunteers as members of their congregations.

Delimitations of the Research Design

A few certain factors set the delimitations of this study. This study was limited to a geographically restricted sample of pastors from a single denomination in the Great Lakes Region (i.e., Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Appalachian). Location and selected denomination beliefs may diverge from other denominations and geographical regions. Lastly,

the study was restricted to paid pastoral staff with tacit or explicit volunteer management responsibilities. These responsibilities varied from episodic to recurrent volunteering, such as worship, Sunday school, and prayer teams. Demographic data (e.g., gender, age group, race, education level, and employment status) was collected to depict the study's participants precisely. Thus, the interview questions were limited to the participants' lived experiences as a volunteer manager and equipper as the primary staff-volunteer interactions initiator in the church context.

Definition of Terms

1. *Assemblies of God:* The Assemblies of God (AG) is the world's biggest Pentecostal church, started in 1914 by 300 people at a convention in Hot Springs, Arkansas. There are over three million members and followers of nearly 13,000 churches in the United States, with over 69 million members (AG, 2022).

2. *Ministry:* The "involvement in the church. Ministry describes the body of Christ functioning as God designed it" (Avlakeotes, 2016, p. 14).

3. *Missional Ecclesiology:* "The point of view where the Church is understood as a community of witness, called into being and equipped by God, and sent into the world to testify to and participate in Christ's work" (Niemandt, 2012, p. 1).

4. *Paid Pastoral Staff:* An ordained pastor, teacher, missionary, or evangelist who holds a formal leadership position as a pastoral staff in the church organization and receives a personal allowance (Cnaan & Scott, 2021). It includes the term church leadership. It is used interchangeably with the term clergy. Paid pastoral staff's responsibility is the "role of clergy to help people spiritually and to offer community welfare and health services" (Cnaan & Scott, 2021, p. 383).

5. *Spiritual Gifts:* Spiritual giftedness; "the possession of a tangible gift by an individual or an acquired ability of a person to perform certain functions… the Holy Spirit who empowers the believer for ministry in the church" (DeVries, 2016, p. 2).

6. *Universal Church:* The worldwide church's missiological function: to make disciples of all nations and ethnicities by demonstrating Jesus' sacrificial love through his body (i.e., local church).

7. *Volunteer:* Individual moved by personal belief who engages in unpaid productive labor in church organization believe they serve God (Musick & Wilson, 2015). It is equivalent to congregants, laity, or laypeople in the literature but is not limited to leadership positions (i.e., lay leaders).

8. *Volunteer Engagement:* The volunteer decision to participate in the organization's mission reflected in the interactions between volunteers and paid pastoral staff foster spiritual growth (Lowe & Lowe, 2018) through ministry opportunities in church and community. These interactions include Sunday services and daily living of spiritual values (Chester & Timmis, 2008; Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021; Hull, 2006). "The desire to immerse oneself in one's ministry" (Dunaetz & Bocock, 2020, p. 62).

9. *Volunteer Manager:* "An addendum to other roles and does not carry with it additional status or a new position in the organization" (Nesbit et al., 2016, p.170). Volunteer managers are responsible for planning, identifying, and developing the roles they want volunteers to perform (Nesbit et al., 2018).

10. *Volunteering:* "Working with others to make a meaningful contribution to better a community or organization" (Barfield, 2005, p. 6).

11. *Volunteerism:* "Long-term, planned, prosocial behaviors that benefit strangers and occur within an organizational setting" (Penner, 2002, p. 448).

Significance of the Study

This study related to other studies on volunteer involvement to prevent pastoral burnout (Cnaan & Scott, 2021; White Smith, 2020). The church's mission (i.e., missional ecclesiology) is collaborative in nature (Chester & Timmis, 2008). God provided spiritual gifts to achieve it as He did in constructing His dwelling places in the Old Testament like the tabernacle and temple, as well as the body of Christ in the New Testament (Cuadra-Martínez et al., 2019; Erickson, 2013; Levison, 2018; Verster, 2022). Paul explained to his fellow believers that "we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (*New International Version,* 2011, 2 Corinthians 6:16). Due to lack of laity involvement in contemporary church ministry, more research was needed. Studer and von Schnurbein's (2013) work "selectively focused on the relationship between the organization and volunteers as a unique resource" (p. 428) and revealed the conflictual relationship hindering volunteer participation in the organizational goals. Likewise, Nesbit et al. (2018) argued that inadvertent volunteer managers' (IVMs') "perceptions can affect

an IVM's level of role investment in the volunteer manager role, or the amount of time and effort put into the role" (p. 171).

Little has been known about how paid pastoral staff perceives volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology and how their perception affects volunteer engagement. The dynamics of the relationship between the paid pastoral staff and volunteers illuminated whether both groups are involved in collaborative endeavors leading to the fulfillment of the Great Commission and the dependence on the Holy Spirit as the equipper of the Body of Christ. This information integrated volunteer engagement in spiritual and leadership dimensions in a church setting. Integration was needed to avoid being led astray, to carry each other's burdens, to maintain unity, and grow spiritually into the likeness of Christ (Colossians 2:19; 2 Corinthians 11:13; Ephesians 4; Galatians 6:2; John 17:11). As a result, the kingdom of God would advance through a thriving, healthy church.

Summary of the Design

The methodological design for this study was a phenomenology approach. Eberle (2014) explained that "phenomenology provides an epistemological framework and has proved seminal for elucidating how sense and meaning are constituted in subjective consciousness and how they are constructed in everyday interaction and in scientific observations and interpretations" (p. 184). It is a unilateral approach since the method of research "involves researching the expectations only one of the partners to the contract"—in this case, it was the paid pastoral staff (Nichols, 2013, p. 990). Thus, this study sought to determine paid pastoral staff perceptions of their interactions with volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology.

The paid pastoral staff's perception creates the organizational environment required for volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology. Studies have shown that churches depend on

volunteers for administrative and clergy work (Einolf, 2011; Monahan, 1999). These studies

have defined the paid pastoral staff as clergy who should foster the cooperation of the volunteer

group. Therefore, this study followed the phenomenological approach that "looks to text as a tool

for generating knowledge, where the whole of human experience is to be read as text of one kind

or another" (Zeegers & Barron, 2015, p. 67).

The research participants from the population of interest were paid pastoral staff currently

employed in an AG church within the Great Lakes Region. Participants had to be 18 years of age

or older. According to the AG General Secretary's Office (2022), there were 1,300 registered

churches in the Great Lakes Region. Participants were selected in two phases to narrow down the

sampling. First, AG churches with an organizational infrastructure of 300–1,500 active members

(i.e., large churches) were identified by email, contacting the Indiana District Office as a starting

point and requesting information for a church meeting this criterion. The suggested candidates

were contacted via email communication (see Appendix A). The church size was not significant

for this study, but it did assist in the recruitment process. The AG church directory provided

information about affiliated churches by region. This source was also accessed to identify the

target population. Only listed churches with website links were accessed. Churches not listing

pastoral staff emails were not considered in this study. The goal was to identify 10 pastors in

paid pastoral staff positions who had at least one year of experience managing volunteers and

were available to participate in this study. This purposive sampling was feasible, followed by

snowball sampling, which was the second selection phase. As Yin (2014) explained, snowball

sampling is when "in the course of an interview, you might learn of other persons who can be

interviewed" (p. 95). Snowball sampling suited the proposed phenomenological design since the

paid pastoral staff is a hard-to-reach population (Brooks, 2014; Chavez, 2021; De Oliveira,

2008). The objective was to recruit 10 participants with volunteer management experience who were representatives of AG churches.

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to respond to open-ended research questions. The instrumentations for data collection were obtained in two phases. The first phase focused on semi-structured interviews with paid pastoral staff. The second was a follow-up email to confirm the accuracy of the interview's transcriptions and ask possible follow-up questions. The data collection included open-ended questions in a qualitative interview. Adams (2015) explained that "the semi-structured interview (SSI) employs a blend of closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions" and could be accomplished in one hour (p. 502). It allows the researcher to collect data in the participants' terms. Yin (2014) described it as "a researcher tries to understand a participant's world, which is likely to include concentrated efforts at mastering the meanings of the participant's words and phrases" (p. 143). Yin further explained the difference between a protocol and a structured interview. The first was suited for qualitative interviews, where the researcher focuses on understanding the subject without directing the interview. The latter focused on close-ended questions. The participants in this study were interviewed with open-ended questions via virtual interview.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Paid pastoral staff are expected to manage the church volunteers and equip congregants for ministry work (Jentile, 2021; Jones & Gordon, 2023; Stevens, 2012). If the congregants need to be disciples, and volunteers are the congregants, then paid pastoral staff have the responsibility to equip volunteers to make disciples in their volunteering area. This equipping is the ability to share their faith and use their spiritual gifts in the ministry they perform in the church and community (Anderson & Skinner, 2019; Edge, 2022). Although not all volunteering tasks are the same (e.g., episodic, operational support, singing in the worship team), church volunteers should be capable of presenting a reason for their hope and sharing the gospel with others (Hebrews 5:12; 1 Peter 3:15–16).

Recent studies have determined that paid staff are assigned roles of volunteer managers without adequate training or experience (López-Cabrera et al., 2020; Nesbit et al., 2018). The management of volunteers has been identified as being a major stressor leading to pastoral burnout (Buratti et al., 2020; Chavez, 2021; Plante, 2023), followed by the lack of knowledge on how to equip others for ministry (Van Aarde, 2017; Wong et al., 2019). In addition, Studer and von Schnurbein (2013) described the paid staff behavior towards volunteers as having a conflictual nature affecting the staff-volunteer relationships. Various sources of conflict have included: role ambiguity (Hang-yue et al., 2005; López-Cabrera et al., 2020; Netting et al., 2005; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013), role overload (Hang-yue et al., 2005; Jones & Gordon, 2023), and a failure to recognize volunteers' contributions to the organization's goals (Kreutzer & Jäger, 2011; Musick & Wilson, 2008; Netting et al., 2004, 2005; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013). For collaborative staff-volunteer relationships in church settings, it was

necessary to understand the differences and the nature of the relationship between paid pastoral staff and church volunteers "as well as how these are perceived and actively (de)constructed" (Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013, p. 414). Verster (2022) clearly stated that as the people of God, the church—consisting of paid pastoral staff and church volunteers—is "the missional community that proclaims and emphasises [*sic*] that we have to belong to God" (p. 3). Jesus commanded his church to spread this gospel and convert people everywhere. The church is where his majesty dwells and is being built according to the plans he established. To accomplish this mission requires a sizable group of people filled with the Holy Spirit willing to work together in love and unity for the benefit of others. According to Netting et al. (2018), volunteers' role perceptions, expectations, and conflicts influence the success and dynamics of managing valuable unpaid human resources such as volunteers. Therefore, the relational nature of the Great Commission requires collaborative staff-volunteer relationships.

Theological Framework for the Study

Volunteers contribute toward the mission of the organization they serve. From a Catholic view, Obiorah (2020) identified the trifold church's mission. The first mission was "missio and gentes," as it reaches the unbeliever with the good news. Pentecostals called it evangelism. The second was "missio ad intra," where there is already a robust ecclesiastical organization. The church concentrates mainly on the strategic pastoral care of the believers, including church members, to preserve a Christian life. This inward focus is what the Apostle Paul called unity of the body, where "…the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love" (*New International Version*, 2011, Ephesians 4:16). The third mission was the "missio ad extra." It was "new evangelisation or re-evangelisation of the baptized Catholics, who have lost

their faith or are experiencing tepidity" (Obiorah, 2020, p. 3). This mission is called discipleship—mutual edification to become Christlike (Ephesians 4:12–13). Paid pastoral staff and church volunteers share the responsibility of teaching others to come to a complete and perfect comprehension of the Bible (i.e., disciple-making) to help them live under God's word, which challenges their thinking and actions (i.e., priesthood; Chester & Timmis, 2008). The collaborative staff-volunteer relationship in church settings emerges from "the overflowing communal nature of God draws us into communion with God, with one another" (Niemandt, 2012, p. 5). As a result, discipleship occurs in a social context where paid pastoral staff and volunteers are working together for a common goal (Cnaan & Scott, 2021; Epitropaki et al., 2017; Kelley, 1988; Lapierre & Carsten, 2014; Musick & Wilson, 2008; Solansky et al., 2008; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014; Zboja et al., 2020): the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Anizor & Voss, 2016; Barna, 2013; Dever, 2016; Yount & Barnett, 2007). This spiritual dimension was fundamental to understanding the collaboration between paid pastoral staff and church volunteers underpinning the volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers provided theological justification for this.

Priesthood of All Believers

As believers in Christ, volunteers possess a spiritual dimension critical in discipleship processes. This spiritual dimension is the priesthood of all believers. Priesthood (from the Greek word ἱεράτευμα) means the office of a priest. It implies spiritual access to the presence of God. The priests were responsible for making sacrifices on behalf of the people of God and for their own sins (Hebrews 7:27; Hughes, 2014). They were also teachers of God's law (Gentry & Wellum, 2015), a function that Ezra took to heart. He decided to follow God's will; thus, he studied and taught God's Law to the Israelites after rebuilding the temple (Ezra 7:10; Nehemiah

8:1–7). The study of God's Law was more than just an academic discipline for him; it was also a personal study of his own life and the training of his congregation (Barker & Kohlenberge, 2004). The dual role of the priest is fulfilled in Christ as he is "our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for he is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises" (*New International Version*, 2011, Hebrews 8:6).

Jesus modeled the study of God's Law (Luke 2:52), and he was the fulfillment of the law (Barker & Kohlenberge, 2004; du Toit, 2018; Trout, 2015). His mission was to preach the good news about the kingdom of God (Luke 4:43). The apostles were commissioned to follow Christ's footsteps and preach the good news, as well as teach all that Jesus taught them to all the nations (Matthew 28:19). Christ established the new law-covenant priesthood (Gentry & Wellum, 2015). Participation in Christ's royal priesthood was based on redemption, particularly the crucifixion (Anizor & Voss, 2016). Anizor and Voss (2016) contended that only those who have been reconciled to Christ by faith and baptism are priests to God the Father (Revelations 1:5–6). Believers' priesthood is a practical, lived-out theology that promotes stronger and deeper church and inter-denominational partnerships as a conduit of God's presence (Lotter & van Aarde, 2017; Ogden, 2003). Lovegrove (2003) named it collective priesthood because it describes the new identity of believers; they are not individual priests. The collective priesthood implied the dual responsibility of the priest. They served to reveal the ways of God to the world (i.e., teach) and to bring the nations into a proper relationship with God (i.e., making disciples; Gentry & Wellum, 2015). Anizor and Voss (2016) warned against the wrongful thinking of individualistic priesthood and the exclusivist thinking of collective priesthood. They explained:

> This collective understanding of the priesthood of all believers is just as inadequate as an overly individualistic and atomistic one. Our baptism commissions each of us to

membership in the royal priesthood; however, the only valid exercise of this priesthood is from within the membership of a local church. (Anizor & Voss, 2016, p. 108)

Organizational Identity

The organizational identity of the church as a faith-based organization sets it apart from other nonprofit organizations. The church must be a school of discipleship, which requires that its assemblies be places for learning to love one another—especially when church members celebrate a God who loves even the unlovable (Allen, 2018). God's Word is preached in the church to inspire saving faith, and the sacraments are rightly administered (Ogden, 2003). Fite (2020) clarified what it meant to recognize the church as being of God, meaning that "the church should not be of any person, any practice, or any doctrine (e.g., Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist), much less any culture, region, or nationality (e.g., African, American, Anglican, Greek, Roman)" (p. 75). The body metaphor described in the Pauline epistles (1 Corinthians 12:4–29; Ephesians 1:22–23; Romans 12:4–6) captured the organic nature of the church (Fite, 2020). Hence, the church must find its unity again and function as an adaptable, dynamic, and Holy Spirit-powered community (van Aarde, 2017).

After the reformation initiated by Martin Luther in the early 1500s, divisions within the church related to the clergy-laity division continued (Hobbs, 1990; Lovegrove, 2003; Ogden, 2003; van Aarde, 2017). Ogden contended that institutionalism and an exalted view of preaching prevented the Reformation from delivering the priesthood of all Christians. The clergy is the paid pastoral staff, also called the ordained minister (Cnaan & Scott, 2021). As such, they are perceived as the professionals in charge of administering the sacraments, preaching, and doing missions (Hobbs, 1990; Ogden, 2003; van Aarde, 2017). Van Aarde (2017) even declared that the strict separation of the institutional church from the organic church was evident in "the dualistic view of function"; thus, "the Gospel rarely changes society" (p. 4).

Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) argued that the religious identity of the faith-based organization is crucial for volunteers and paid staff to continue collaboration to not succumb to social pressures. One distinguishing feature of churches is their conviction that they are the Body of Christ bearing witness to the world (Shenk, 2005). Their spiritual calling (i.e., Missio Dei) contributes to their persevering work. Effectiveness measurements are tied to an organization's mission (Mbacham-Enow et al., 2019). Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) indicated that the church maintains its religious identity to attract and retain staff and volunteers. As people of God, the church, paid pastoral staff, and volunteers need "the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers to shape their identity and guide their practice" (Anizor & Voss, 2016, p. 154).

The literature employed social identity to describe organizational attachment and identity (Gray & Stevenson, 2020; Katayama, 2022). Social identity is based on comparisons between groups that try to confirm or establish evaluative differences that favor the ingroup (i.e., believers) over the outgroup (i.e., nonbelievers). It is driven by a need for self-esteem (Hogg & Terry, 2000). At a group level, social identity is a person's perception of themselves based on the group affiliations that give them a sense of "we" (Epitropaki et al., 2017, p. 114).

Like every institution, the church needs a holistic strategy to improve volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology. The church must continually examine its actions and volunteers to ensure that they are on God's plan and to improve results (Mbacham-Enow et al., 2019). For example, Moses sat as a judge of Israel post-liberation from Egypt (Exodus 18:13). At the time, Moses and the Israelites thought that Moses was the only one who could reveal God's will (Exodus 18:15–16). Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, offered some sage advice:

> You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands,

hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. (*New International Version,* 2011, Exodus 18:19–22)

Moses' role was twofold: being an advocate for the people and an interpreter for God to teach the people (Barker & Kohlenberge, 2004). Similarly, in the early church, the distribution of labor required the participation of its members. The apostles resolved the situation by allowing the members to voice their concerns, evaluating role fit and priorities, and making them part of the decision-making process (Acts 6:9–10). Both scenarios illustrated the relational aspect of leadership and the practicality of the priesthood of all believers (i.e., preaching and teaching).

Church as an Organism

For Verster (2022), the church as the Body of Christ "means that there is a direct relation between the living Christ and the people living as community and congregation" (p. 5). In light of this metaphor, Ogden (2003) added that the church is "the whole people of God in whom Christ dwells" (p.76). The church is not the building but the people of God (Barna, 2013; Fite, 2020; Ogden, 2003; van Aarde, 2017; Verster, 2022). Their relationship with God sets them apart, as Peter described: "And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God" (*New International Version*, 2011, 1 Peter 2:5). As adopted sons (Ephesians1:5; Romans 8:15) with priesthood service (Hobbs, 1990; Ogden, 2003; 1 Peter 5:9; van Aarde, 2017), the people of God ("laos" in Greek, from which one got the word laity) are responsible for continuing Christ's mission and teaching (Baker & Kohlenberger, 2017). The process for carrying on this endeavor is known as discipleship (Barna, 2013). Powell et al. (2020) stated that "discipleship occurs in community, and this community includes the church— the community of fellow-disciples" (p. 18). As a result, it requires the participation of all church

members. Suppose volunteers would and must be involved in missional ecclesiology. In that case, the church should have an organic structure to support it (Shenk, 2005). To be a volunteer is to be a part of the body of Christ, and because of this connection with Christ and with one another, every volunteer has something to offer (Obiorah, 2020; Robinson, 2018). As noted by Ogden (2003), "all ministry is lay ministry" (p. 76). To better understand volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology is vital to discuss three distinctive callings characterizing the people of God: call to relation, call to follow, and call to serve.

Call to Relation. In the Old Testament, the call to a relationship was evident in Abraham's covenant (Genesis 12:13, 17:1–8) and confirmed in Moses' times (Exodus 3:4–15, 6:6–8). The entire nation of Israel, and not just Moses, had a calling from God to enter into a special relationship with Him and not simply called to follow a code of conduct (Block, 2005). Moses was called to a relationship with God first, and through Him, God revealed His will to Abraham's descendants. Moses' leadership role was interdependent with his brother, Aaron's, priestly role. Aaron functioned as a prophet complementing Moses' speech impairment. Together, they served in different capacities and responsibilities but were mutually dependent on God, reconciling Israel's people to God. In the New Testament, the concept of reconciliation was understood by Paul, who explained it as the ministry of those who have been saved through Christ: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (*New International Version*, 2011, 2 Corinthians 5:20). Thus, Christ's disciples preached reconciliation on Christ's behalf as his messengers and agents.

A similar collaboration between paid pastoral staff and church volunteers is necessary for missional ecclesiology. This collaboration emerges from an understanding of the primary calling of God's people, as Pettit (2008) clearly stated:

> We are called first and foremost to God, not to just role, career, or a location. Our call to salvation and sanctification is paramount to any talk about the specifics of our life. The primary call to all believers is to God. The functional call (which follows) is how we live out our primary calling. (p. 198)

While it is true that God uses the church to help those in need, the church's primary purpose is, like Christ's, to bring glory to the Father (as cited in Swinton & Mowat, 2006). God is glorified when His people bear fruit (John 15). However, to produce fruit depends on the individual's relationship with Christ and participation in the faith community (Pettit, 2008; Randolph, 2017). Prosocial behaviors (e.g., volunteering) emerge from this union, as Barker and Kohlenberger (2004) plainly stated, "Continued production depends on constant union with the source of fruitfulness" (p. 351).

Call to Follow. The primary calling of all people of God is salvation (Pettit, 2008). As a result, the saved gain a new identity called to follow Christ (Barna, 2013; Copeland, 2012). Although the term calling is ambiguous (Kärkkäinen, 2000; Wright & Arterbury, 2022), Jun (2022) explained the implications of the call to follow Christ as "God's call for one's ultimate reason for existence as a believer. Because of this fact, missional discipleship is not based on volunteerism in which people appoint themselves to participate in social actions and public services" (p. 114). Jun's description of the call to follow underlined the importance of abiding in Christ as the reason to engage in prosocial behaviors. In this regard, volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology will embody Christ's love through acts of service like "bringing salvation to those separated from God. It is also concerned with issues of justice, the marginalised [*sic*] in society, stewardship of the earth's resources" (Jun, 2022, p. 117). Actions like sharing the faith

and engaging in secular volunteering to meet the needs of the community (i.e., citizen's initiative; AbouAssi et al., 2019; Denning, 2021) are the faith embodiment suggested by Botha (2021).

The divine calling of following Jesus entailed "a broader context of constant movement" (Botha, 2021, p. 7). This concept was expressed in James 2:17, stating that faith without works was dead (*New International Version*, 2011). Deeds are voluntary actions to meet other people's needs. Barker and Kohlenberger (2004) clearly explained the implications of James' statement: "Action is the proper fruit of living faith. Because life is dynamic and productive, faith that lives will surely produce the fruit of good deeds" (p. 1027). When someone is engaged in spiritual growth (i.e., constant movement), true spirituality becomes a guiding force in all facets of their life, impacting relationships, jobs, vocation, and community (Neal, 2000). Scholars have concurred that the individualistic Western culture takes a toll on the covenant community dynamics (Chester & Timmis, 2008; Gentry & Wellum, 2015; Katayama, 2022; Mulholland & Barton, 2016). To overcome the cultural gap—a diverse church implying a different worldview and the reliance on self rather than God—requires intentional discipleship, allowing for accountability, repentance, confession, forgiveness, love, and restoration (Chester & Timmis, 2008; Falwell, 2008). As a result, paid pastoral staff must learn to trust volunteers and work together for kingdom advancement, knowing that Jesus is the one who leads (Hirsch et al., 2012; Hull, 2006).

As an organism and institution, the church requires a unifying dynamic among paid pastoral staff and volunteers. Since the organization's mission is to make disciples by teaching the biblical truths of Jesus, both parties must coordinate efforts to fulfill the Great Commission. As Hull (2006) clearly stated, "Without discipleship, Christianity doesn't exist, because Jesus

activates the Christian faith." The discipleship process is voluntary because the individual "positions himself to follow Jesus" first (Hull, 2006, p. 17). Second, it is communal because, through reciprocal interactions in the faith community, the believer obtains the whole person transformation (i.e., holistic spirituality; Grimm, 2020; Lowe & Lowe, 2010; Mulholland & Barton, 2016; Shinohara, 2002).

Call to Serve. As followers of Christ, church volunteers engage in Christ's work, taking ownership of the Great Commission as a shared obligation of divine calling (Pettit, 2008; Wright & Arterbury, 2022). Since a congregation is a volunteer organization, paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteers is essential (Jentile, 2021). Conflict arises when the call to serve is perceived as the privilege of the few (Copeland, 2012; Fettke, 2011; Obiorah, 2020; Ogden, 2003). In the church, where the clergy-laity dichotomy is still present (Cho, 2013; Fettke, 2011; Graham, 2017; Mbacham-Enow et al., 2019), emphasizing the pastoral calling may result in a greater divide, undermining the priesthood of all believers. Robinson (2018) argued that the priesthood of all Christians was another sign that God never intended to centralize power but rather to distribute it throughout His church. The calling in this regard can explain the diversity of spiritual gifts as functions allowing God's people to function as needed, "dependent upon God's care" (Wright & Arterbury, 2022, p. 8). Thus, the vocation was a divine mandate to approach one's work in any field with the same degree of devotion and reverence for God as a pastoral calling (as cited in Barnes, 2013). Pettit (2008) described this as: "Functional calling is how you love and serve others" (p. 210).

Berg et al. (2010) described calling as that which "an individual (1) feels drawn to pursue, (2) expects to be intrinsically enjoyable and meaningful, and (3) sees as a central part of his or her identity" (p. 973). Thus, calling is not always associated with pastoral occupation (Barnes,

2013). McKenna et al. (2015) studied the individual understanding of calling in a relationship with God, indicating that calling is multidimensional. They used a purposive sample of leaders in different fields, including pastors from different denominations. They interviewed their population sample through open-ended questions, reporting that calling presumes a transcendence caller since "one cannot call oneself. A caller must therefore exist outside of oneself" (McKenna et al., 2015, p. 295). Their findings determined that calling was related to the role participants felt to fill, but it was not limited to something to do. Calling also included something to be. In this regard, the collaborative staff-volunteer relationship was understood as people of God (i.e., call to be) engaging voluntarily in ministry (i.e., call to do).

Pastoral Ministry

Pastoral calling (Ball, 2019; Barnes, 2013; Masenya, 2021) was a common denominator among paid pastoral staff having "an understanding of Church leadership as a response to God's call to service" (Udomah, 2016, p. 84). Translated from the Latin, "pastor" means "shepherd" (ποιμαίνω), meaning to act as a shepherd (poimainó; Brand et al., 2003, p. 2327). Throughout the Scriptures, the term shepherd has different usages, mainly to tend (poimén), to feed (John 21:16; 1 Peter 5:2), and to rule or govern (e.g., King David as shepherd-king of Israel). According to Strong Concordance, a shepherd is responsible for feeding and protecting the flock. The shepherd also performs ruler responsibilities in guiding and directing the flock to places of nourishment (Psalm 23). As Horton (2011) contended, "the congregation needs shepherds who lead them and keep them in the rich pastures of God's Word" (p. 135). The shepherd imagery pointed to Jesus as the ruler of the church (Kinnison, 2010), and pastoral ministry emerges and develops under Jesus' rulership. To this end, Kinnison (2010) emphasized the caring and loving aspect underpinning the shepherd role in Jesus' conversation with Peter in John 21:15–17:

> When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." (*New International Version*, 2011)

In the New Testament, the pastor (i.e., shepherd) depicted overseer and elder roles (Brand et al., 2003). The office of bishops (i.e., overseer) and elder (i.e., presbyter) were used interchangeably in the Pastoral letters (1 Timothy 5:19; Titus 1:5). The bishop's (episkopos in Greek) principal role was to oversee the congregation's spiritual life. The other office established in local churches when the Pastoral Epistles were written was deacons (diákonos), meaning servant or ministry (Brand et al., 2003). Therefore, these terms described the complex role of a pastoral ministry.

Overseer. Brand et al. (2003) stated that an overseer is a superintendent or supervisor. The first thing they must supervise is their conduct (1 Proverbs 16:32; 1 Timothy 3:12). The Apostle Paul instructed on the character of the overseers as a moral example for fellow believers (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7). The overseer, who is a leader figure in their community (Briles, 2012; Chester & Timmis, 2008) should supervise their moral conduct, as this is directly connected to their call to relation with and call to follow Christ, who is "the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (*New International Version*, 2011, 1 Peter 2:25). Horton (2011) contended that the primary role of pastors (i.e., shepherds) is to devote to "the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching" as Paul instructed Timothy (p. 135). He opposed the current view of pastors, stating that "ministers are not called to be CEOs, marketing directors, or life coaches" (Horton, 2011, p. 135). However, pastoral ministry is complex and ambiguous, merging the spiritual (e.g., teaching the Word and caring for the souls) with the practical

dimension (e.g., administration and equipping) of church leadership (Kessler & Kretzschmar, 2015; Masenya, 2021).

Understanding the call to serve as shepherd overseeing the spiritual wellness of fellow believers, paid pastoral staff has an administrative function to develop. Olabamiji (2022) argued that a "pastor need[s] to acquaint himself or herself with the knowledge of administration" since the volunteer engagement in the missional ecclesiology depends on "effective church administration" (p. 1). Furthermore, volunteer engagement in the local church is essential for the growth of the ministry (Briles, 2012). However, studies have shown a lack of management training among pastors (Anderson, 2019; Jones & Gordon, 2023; Masenya, 2021; Olabamiji, 2022). Coordinating the organization's human resources (i.e., church volunteers) is challenging (Chavez, 2021; Netting et al., 2004). Nevertheless, it must be done for the sake of volunteer spiritual growth (Briles, 2012) and the well-being of paid pastoral staff (Chan & Chen, 2019; Chavez, 2021; Visker et al., 2017).

Servant. Strong Concordance defined deacons (from the Greek word diákonos) as a waiter, a servant referring to anyone who performs any service, and an administrator. It implied obedience since the servant should carry out the master's plan. God's plan was that none should perish (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9) and that all creatures come to the knowledge of Christ (Colossians 1:9–10; Luke 1:77; 2 Peter 3:9) through the priesthood of all believers. The servant recognizes the task of partnering with God to accomplish the Great Commission as a collaborative task. Paul clearly stated, "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task" (*New International Version*, 2011, 1 Corinthians 3:5). Paid pastoral staff collaboration with church volunteers is necessary to carry on the Great Commission. Harris (1996) articulated the shepherds' tending, caring, and feeding

duties as the church's responsibility "to affirm the call of believers to serve God through their spiritual gifts" (n. p.). Without the gospel, baptism, the Lord's supper, assembling, and helping others (i.e., volunteerism), the church cannot fulfill the Great Commission (Moltmann, 1993). Since every believer has been called to serve, the paid pastoral staff must discern the tasks that church volunteers will perform within the church and equip them accordingly. Equipping the church volunteer for ministry extends beyond the church participation since faith embodiment occurs in daily interactions (e.g., workplace, home, community; Denning, 2021; Griesinger, 2010; Jun, 2022; Young & Firmin, 2014). There are six main skills central to a pastoral ministry role: managing, teaching, managing performance, listening, recruiting, and selecting (Stevens, 2012). These skills are congruent with the skills that volunteer managers need to foster collaboration and volunteer engagement in nonprofit organizations like the church (Brewster & Cerdin, 2018; Nesbit et al., 2018; Stevens, 2012; Wulandari, 2023). Thus, the paid pastoral staff, as administrators who oversee the congregants' spiritual growth, minister them by communicating the church's mission (Kreutzer & Jäger, 2011; Lowe & Lowe, 2010) and equipping them to do ministry.

Spiritual Dimension of Volunteer Engagement

Volunteers are the one group that serves the local church without pay. At the same time, paid pastoral staff constitutes the other group, the God-given leadership, to serve and are paid to do so. Both groups are members of the family of God (Ephesians 1:5) and, as such, must work together to fulfill the Great Commission (Mathew 28:19) and serve the community. Both groups comprise the people of God with unique characteristics discussed in the priesthood of all believers. Verster (2022) emphasized the spiritual dimension of volunteer engagement in terms of the mutual obligation both groups have to God and one another: "They are called to be the

One, Holy Church of Christ" (p. 4). Understanding volunteer engagement as an obedient response to God's mandate to make disciples is to live in alignment with the trifold calling believers have: call to relation, call to follow, and call to serve. These callings have individual and collective implications, in which the individual response to these callings affects interactions with others.

The paid pastoral staff and volunteers engage in collaborative relationships to exercise their priesthood in the church organization. However, their priesthood role of Word proclamation reaches beyond the community and workplaces. For church volunteers, volunteering allows them to perform their faith, although the need for equipping them in ministry is still present (Jentile, 2021; Lovett, 2022; Obiorah, 2020). Volunteer understanding of the biblical narrative (i.e., ordinary theology; Edge, 2022) informs their prosocial behavior (Denning, 2021; García-Vázquez et al., 2022), like helping people in need (Verster, 2022). They also give their time, expertise, and energy, as Hoge et al. (1998) identified: "(a) volunteering to help run the program of the church, (b) volunteering for church-sponsored social programs in the community, and (c) volunteering for secular community projects" (p. 480). Likewise, Griesinger (2010) described: "The community of believers is His preferred instrument of grace" (p. 302). Moreover, religious community members may influence one another's views via social interaction (Meagher, 2015). Christian scholars have been reclaiming the full participation of the laity due to the impact that volunteers have in their community (Belcher & Hadley, 2021; Graham, 2017; Lotter & Van Aarde, 2017; Obiorah, 2020). Additionally, Lovett (2022) proposed "for a theological 'educating' of the laity in a new way—not so much academic, but practical" (p. 84).

The collaborative participation of paid pastoral staff and volunteers is foundational to advancing the kingdom of God. The spiritual aspect of the church as a nonprofit organization

requires volunteer participation not only because they can do more together but also because it is a covenantal community in which their interactions create the spiritual ecosystem for its members to mature into Christlikeness (Chester & Timmis, 2008; Lowe & Lowe, 2018). From an economic standpoint, the organization chooses volunteer work if it contributes more to the result than paid labor alone (Handy, 2008).

Conclusion

The church is God's mission strategy (Chester & Timmis, 2008, p. 102). The church teaches and reconciles others to Jesus (Mathew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 5:18–20). The church's work is carried out in the dual function of the priesthood of all believers, both paid pastoral staff and church volunteers working together toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Inward focus means that paid pastoral staff equips the believers (i.e., volunteers) through biblical teaching and relational leadership. In this way, they grow into Christ's likeness and discern God's will by obeying Him rather than their selfish desires (1 Corinthians 10:23). Outward focus implies evangelical endeavors to reach the world that does not know Jesus (John 3). The world is hostile toward God. They need to be reached with the truth (John 14:6). The priesthood of all believers is the conduit of God's presence to a falling world. Thus, the ones appointed to equip others (Ephesians 4:11) nurture the collaborative relationship that invites volunteer engagement in the priesthood role needed for a healthy church. Hirsch et al. (2012) clearly stated, "Each ministry brings its own unique contribution to the task of the church; it can also be said that each brings out the different qualities of the other" (p. 56). The relational nature of staff-volunteer collaboration calls for a theory explaining the implications of their cooperative relationships. For this reason, one must consider the interdependence theory as the theoretical framework for this study.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Anizor and Voss (2016) contended that "all believers have a priestly ministry to fulfill" (p. 150). The ministry happens within the church context (Barna, 2013; Chester & Timmis; Ogden, 2003). Unfortunately, many volunteers (i.e., believers) do not fulfill their priesthood due to insufficient instruction (Ilyas et al., 2020; Mbacham-Enow et al., 2019; Obiorah, 2020). The teaching of God's Word, a vital aspect of the priesthood of all believers, is relevant today to equip and train volunteers in discipleship efforts (2 Timothy 3:16–17; Mbennah, 2016; Ogden, 2003). Hobbs (1990) explained the interconnectedness of the priesthood ministry this way: "the priesthood of the believer involves the responsibility of ministering to fellow believers and of sharing with nonbelievers" (p. 28). However, it is impossible to teach what one does not know. The pastors—paid staff and ordained ministers who received higher education in biblical interpretation (hermeneutics)—are adept at communicating biblical truths for daily living (Dever, 2016; Hobbs, 1990; Ogden, 2003; van Aarde, 2017). In contrast, church volunteers feel ill-equipped to share their faith and make disciples (Barna, 2017; Harrison, 1960; Jentile, 2021; Lovett, 2022). The church body constitutes the mutual dependency of the paid pastoral staff and volunteers (i.e., believers). In this sense, they form one body (1 Corinthians 10:17, 12:13; Ephesians 2:16, 4:4) with one mission: go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19).

The paid pastoral staff and church volunteer relationships are complex. The interdependence theory provides "the concepts, logic, and tools, for analyzing, predicting, and explaining interactions and relationships" (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003, p. 369). It addresses the interconnectedness of the staff-volunteer relationship in the church setting as a framework for understanding the church's organizational identity as an organism. Positive interactions between

paid pastoral staff and volunteers depend on a healthy organizational culture (Davenport et al., 2021; Driskill & Brenton, 2011; Neal, 2000; Netting et al., 2004).

Understanding the interplay between paid pastoral staff and volunteers is necessary as a biblical strategy for making disciples, utilizing spiritual gifts to serve others (Deluccia, 2022; Obiorah, 2020). The theological literature highlighted two critical elements informing the paid pastoral staff and volunteer relationship (Bradley, 2021; Worrell-Maik, 2020). One was the spiritual element consisting of the organic nature of individuals' interactions within the covenant community led by one invisible head, Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23). The church as an organism implies vision alignment with God's reconciliatory intent (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021). Harris (1996) explained:

> To say that the church is an organism means that the church is a people in whom Jesus invests His life. The members then constitute the body of Christ, a people who are connected and receive signals from its Head, Jesus Christ. Also, the members of the body of Christ are people through whom divine life is transmitted to one another. (p. 31)

The other critical element was the institutional element consisting of labor and role differentiation. In nonprofit organizations, human resources practices have informed the theoretical development of volunteerism in conjunction with psychological discipline. A significant emphasis on volunteer retention, commitment, and satisfaction from a volunteer's perspective has been empirically studied (Handy et al., 2008; Hustinx & Meijs, 2011; Wilson, 2012). The role identity theory has often been used to explain volunteer commitment better than their motivation to volunteer (Wilson, 2012). From a faith-based perspective, role identity is evaluated by "bearing witness, a calling, expressing religiosity" (Wilson, 2012, p. 180). Studer and von Schnurbein (2013) pointed out that the lack of job expectations increases conflict among volunteers and paid staff. Also, the paid and volunteer leaders cannot simply merge their diverse frames of reference unless they share goals and practices (Solansky et al., 2008). Nichols (2013)

explained that even if there is a written contract of shared expectations between the volunteer and the organization, a substantial amount of the volunteer's expectations of the relationship will be acquired through informal discussions. Thus, the psychological contract theory illustrates the complex nature of staff-volunteer relationship in church settings. Understanding the contract as socially formed requires juxtaposing paid staff and volunteer expectations (Nichols, 2013).

Interdependence Theory

Interdependence theory dates back to Aristotle, who considered prosocial behaviors (e.g., goods or virtue) as opportunities to put one's skill into practice (Van Lange et al., 2013). Virtuosity (e.g., good works) occurs in the context from which an early idea about interdependence emerged: "I benefit by behaving virtuously toward you, and you benefit by behaving virtuously toward me" (Van Lange et al., 2013, p. 16). However, Thibaut and Kelley (1959) introduced the interdependence theory in their book, *The Social Psychology of Groups*. They indicated that it was possible to determine what the members of the collective should do for their relationship to be strong, stable, and as satisfying as possible when their objective interdependence has been described. The assumption was that the actors know the relationship expectations, can identify the problem, and are willing to develop a solution. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) explained that interpersonal settings are connected to interpersonally relevant human traits. The dual foundation for analyzing relationships was another effect. Their satisfaction-dissatisfaction reflects their activities in the given contexts and their affective reactions to their perceived dispositional motives (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Kelley and other colleagues expanded the interdependence theory with the formulation:

> An interaction (I) between person A and B can be conceptualized in terms of their needs, thoughts, and motives in relation to one another (A and B) in the context of the specific social situation (S) in which their interaction transpires… Expressed in an equation, I $= f$ (S, A, B). (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003, p. 352)

People spend about two-thirds of their waking hours in the presence of others, including family, friends, and coworkers (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008). During interactions, people tell each other their goals, values, and attitudes directly and indirectly (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008). Interdependence theory highlights the most critical features of interpersonal processes through a rigorous investigation of situation structure (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008). Social psychology focuses on individual behavior, but to better understand interpersonal phenomena, Rusbult and Van Lange (2003) proposed an interdependence-based analysis because thought and motivation are built into social situations.

Principles of Interdependence Structure

Rusbult and Van Lange (2003) described the taxonomy model of situations or a functional examination of social situations interacting people face. Matrices are excellent for describing social circumstances (i.e., situation structure) because they show how interaction partners impact with one another's well-being (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). Interdependence theory used two formal tools to represent the outcomes of interaction: matrices (i.e., a representation of interconnectedness at one point) and transition lists (i.e., changes in relational patterns) (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008). The impact of the individual's interactions (pleasurable or painful) on one another has an "immediate outcome" and, also, "in their pursuit of the temporally extended goals and in their movement from one situation to another" (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008, p. 354).

The four characteristics of situation structures included the level of dependence (reliance on a partner), mutuality of dependence (balance of power), the basis of dependence (joint control and adaptation), and the covariation of interests (conflicting situations). Rusbult and Van Lange (2008) explained that by examining how each person's possible actions would affect each other's

outcomes, one could figure out how a situation is set up in terms of the degree and type of dependence:

> (a) *actor control* – the impact of each person's actions on his or her own outcomes;
> (b) *partner control* – the impact of each person's actions on the partner's outcomes; and
> (c) *joint control* – the impact of the partners' joint actions on each person's outcomes. (p. 2051)

The interdependence process helps individuals to identify and modify behaviors (i.e., transformation) for the sake of the relationship. Transformation entails creating something of a given circumstance. It frees people from its control, allowing them to respond to strategic concerns, long-term objectives, or a partner's outcome (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). In this way, both parties increase their cooperation resulting in better outcomes. For example, the Apostle Paul's willingness to change behavior to gain others for Christ illustrates the sacrificial aspect interactions face (1 Corinthians 9:22–23). Although the literature showed the application of the interdependence theory in romantic and family relationships (Greenberger, 2021; Pippert et al., 2019), this theory also applied to the church as an organism and covenant community (Chester & Timmis, 2008; Li et al., 2022; Ogden, 2003; Wesselmann et al., 2016).

Actor-Partner Interdependence

Interdependence theory has been used to predict outcomes in dyadic interactions. Wickham and Knee (2012) explained that interdependence theory addresses "how people engage, interact, and influence one another." It is a valuable lens through which other theories (e.g., role identity and psychological contract theory) could be examined (Wickham & Knee, 2012). In their study, Wickham and Knee (2012) provided a conceptual integration of the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM) by "testing the hypothesis in terms of interdependence theory" (p. 375). Furthermore, according to Wickham and Knee, "the changes in the attributes or behavioral decisions of either dyad member may affect the outcome for both dyad members"

(2012, p. 376). Their study showed the complexity of relational interactions. They concluded that "the implications of one's own attributes or actions vary depending on the presence or absence of those same traits or behaviors in one's partner" (Wickham & Knee, 2012, p. 388). Wickham and Knee's (2012) study focused on close relationships where the level of satisfaction of one partner will directly affect the other's behavior; its findings attested to the usefulness of interdependence theory in predicting relationships and interactions.

The APIM proved to be helpful in a church context. Meagher (2015) examined the effects of congregational composition on the spiritual outcome of church members. Meagher (2015) examined "how individual-level outcomes are influenced by (a) the actor's characteristics, (b) the characteristics of other congregants, (c) the relational demography of the actor, and (d) the degree that other congregants differ among themselves" (p. 74). The population sample comprised 115,314 respondents in 412 congregations (172 Main Protestants, 136 Conservative Protestants, 96 Catholics, and eight other religions). He used the U.S. Congregational Life Survey (USCLS) random sample for data analysis. Findings showed that the spiritual well-being of a member is "tied to the relationships within the faith community of which the individual is part" (Meagher, 2015, p. 86). The supportive environment that the faith community offers allows for voluntary affiliations. Lee et al. (2019) identified two types of social support necessary for managing church volunteers. One type of support was providing information to assist with problem-solving, such as offering ideas and actions, reframing situations, and providing detailed facts, information, and resources (Lee et al., 2019). The other was the tangible support. It included offers of help in the form of goods, services, time, energy, money, or other resources (Lee et al., 2019). As a result, the diverse congregations meet the needs of its members and increases members' satisfaction. This association of relatedness and

level of satisfaction illustrates the importance of interdependence inferences in a church context, where the collaborative relationships between paid pastoral staff and church volunteers are vital for missional ecclesiology.

Although interdependence theory was mainly concerned with interpersonal relationships (Meagher, 2015; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008; Wickham & Knee, 2012), it may also be applied to studying other forms of relationships between different kinds of subjects. Interdependence theory can also be used to analyze interactions between autonomous groups since they operate with a unified mission and goal (Johnson & Johnson, 2005; Kim, 2018). Thus, the members of a group, such as the church organization, are treated as if they were a single entity (Kim, 2018). In the church context, the Great Commission serves as a unifying goal where all members (paid pastoral staff and church volunteers) serve, requiring an interdependence among group members. Johnson and Johnson (2005) mentioned the work of Kurt Lewin explaining the essence of the group as a dynamic whole,

> Group members are made interdependent through common goals. For interdependence to exist, there must be more than one person or entity involved and the people or entities must impact each other, in that a change in the state of one causes a change in the state of the others. This impact occurs in the immediate situation, as each person's behavior is determined by how the situation is perceived. (p. 288)

The Nature of Interdependence

Human beings' innate psychological mechanisms for perceiving and reacting to social experiences are remarkable. Biological perspectives on social behavior have suggested that interdependence can reveal how organisms adapt to social environments (Balliet et al., 2017). From evolutionary psychology, the interdependence theory offers essential context for how humans work together to accomplish tasks that require mutual dependencies, such as childcare, hunting, and coalitional aggression (Balliet et al., 2017). A study by Balliet et al. (2017) explained the psychological mechanism for inferring interdependence, elucidating how people

form and maintain cooperative relationships, choose allies, and identify social motives. The benefits of the interdependence inferences proposed by Balliet and colleagues were fivefold. First, it predicts others' behavior, allowing strategizing interactions to avoid conflicting situations. Second, influencing others' behaviors can predict outcomes. This inference is critical in a church context, where sharing knowledge (Botha, 2021; Hull, 2006) and communicating opportunities to serve (Coetzee et al., 2023; van Overbeeke et al., 2022) are critical in volunteer engagement.

Third is the partner selection. Balliet et al. (2017) indicated that "when individuals find themselves in situations that require a sacrifice from an interaction partner, they usually select interaction partners who 'owe them a favor' (e.g., family or friends) or who have a prosocial personality (e.g., individuals who are agreeable)" (p. 370). Cnaan and Scott's (2021) study confirmed the partner selection inference by analyzing the clergy selection preferences for partnership among congregants. Cnaan and Scott (2021) called them "valued members" making a clear distinction of intentional interactions clergy has with the interaction partners. The researchers explained that "many clergy may seek people based on their congregation's needs and the clergyperson's own idiosyncratic preferences" (p. 383). According to Cnaan and Scott's (2021) findings, clergy preferred to work alongside people who are "known, work well, fair, share, socialize, individual, accepting, open, people, truthful, community service, and challenges," as these attributes predict valued members capacity to "lead initiatives" (p. 397). As a result, the valued members receive a different treatment (e.g., partner selection) than others who do not possess the same personality characteristics.

Fourth, detecting and signaling motives help understand how people evaluate "others' behavior differently depending on the type of interdependence in a situation" and "the type of

interdependence in a situation can be used to make inferences of others' social motives" (Balliet et al., 2017, p. 370). Volunteer motivation to join and stay in an organization has been vastly studied in the nonprofit sector (Faletehan et al., 2021; Nesbit et al., 2018; Pearce, 1993), casting light on the volunteer manager role as an organizational position requiring human resources management skills (Forsyth, 1999; López-Cabrera et al., 2020; Morse et al., 2022; Nesbit et al., 2018). According to Tetui et al. (2023), communication between paid staff and volunteers was essential in task performance and collaborative environments. When paid staff are assigned a volunteer manager role without adequate training, they experience an increased workload, affecting their ability to collaborate with volunteers. Consequently, unsupportive paid staff signals a negligent attitude affecting communication and "fueled negative role satisfaction" among volunteers (Tetui et al., 2023, p. 7).

The last interdependence inference was detecting changes within and across situations. In the absence of perfect knowledge, humans must infer relationships between partners using data collected from their environment, which affects partner selection (Balliet et al., 2017). For example, role satisfaction increases volunteer engagement when volunteers experience role preparation, supportive environment (paid-staff receptivity), and role description (Tetui et al., 2023). Satisfactory experiences contribute to a volunteer staying in the organization. Ongoing volunteer engagement is fundamental for the nonprofit organizations' operations (Obiorah, 2020; Son & Wilson, 2021). Denning (2021) researched how volunteers persist in volunteering in a faith-based context. His study showed three factors promoting volunteer ongoing engagement: a continual process of motivation, action, and reflection (Denning, 2021). He described volunteering as a process: "How volunteers are affected by their experiences; volunteering as having more meaning than what is represented; and how fleeting moments are as important as

ongoing events in affecting future actions" (Denning, 2021, p. 823). The volunteer experience (e.g., knowledge informing partner selection) consists of the organizational opportunity for engagement in communal service and the action of service. Volunteers persist in volunteering even when they experience adverse interactions in the host organization (i.e., ongoing motivation) because the volunteer-recipient interactions (i.e., actions) provide satisfaction that supersedes the staff-volunteer interactions (i.e., reflection). Denning (2021) pointed out the crucial role of faith in volunteering persistence by indicating that "performances of faith in people's daily lives, and faith-based organisations [*sic*]– as volunteers' narratives showed that their volunteering at Lunch was predominantly a performance of their Christian faith" (p. 822).

Interdependence inferences casted light on the psychological mechanism facilitating collaborative interactions in a church setting: direct reciprocity, indirect reciprocity, and partner selection. If cooperation is limited to prospective interaction partners, direct reciprocity can emerge as a motivating factor for cooperation (Balliet et al., 2017). In the volunteerism literature, direct reciprocity fosters cooperation when paid pastoral staff invite church volunteers to participate in ministry (Hjort & Skræddergaard, 2021; van Overbeeke et al., 2022). The indirect reciprocity is initiated by the perception others have of the prosocial personality of a prospective partner. Balliet et al. (2017) explained: "The indirect reciprocity occurs when people cooperate (or not) with others, and then information about their behavior is shared with others in a social network, and then people subsequently choose to cooperate with others who have a cooperative reputation" (p. 375). The partner selection is a valuable inference in "choosing, attracting, and retaining valuable partners" (Balliet et al., 2017, p. 376). Cnaan and Scott's (2021) study confirmed this inference, and the cooperative interactions support the volunteer engagement produced through the quality and relationships of church members (Fowler et al., 2020; Hjort &

Skræddergaard, 2021). The cooperation depends on an actor's perceptions "about partners'

identity and behavior" (Balliet et al., 2017, p. 376).

Perceptions of Staff-Volunteer Relationships

Coordination requires partners to anticipate each other's tasks. Assessing

interdependence can also help predict others' actions. Paid pastoral staff's perceptions of

volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology would impact their direct and indirect

interactions with church volunteers as well as the partner selection discussed earlier. Johnson and

Johnson (2005) argued that "The perception of common goals in conjunction with the joint

motivation to achieve them is the source of interdependence among group members" (p. 288).

Nesbit et al. (2016) studied the role perceptions, expectations, and conflict impact the

management of volunteers in a public library. Their study illuminated that the role perception of

a volunteer manager was ambiguous. Nesbit et al.'s (2016) findings showed:

> Three main patterns of perceptions regarding the role of volunteers in the library system:
> (a) volunteers make some positive contributions, but the volunteer manager still has
> serious reservations about their involvement in the library system, (b) volunteers enhance
> library services, and (c) volunteers are essential to library operations. (p. 175)

The library staff were assigned volunteer manager responsibilities without clear role

descriptions. Their staff receptivity to volunteer involvement was moderate. Although they

perceived volunteer contributions as valuable, they hesitated to "rely too heavily on them"

(Nesbit et al., 2016, p. 175). Another interesting finding was that the level of investment in

volunteer management roles varied according to the organizational support of such

responsibilities. Sixty-one percent of participants demonstrated a high level of investment in a

volunteer management role. This group received performance evaluations and perceived their

"volunteer manager role as central part of their job" (Nesbit et al., 2016, p. 178).

In contrast, 39% scoring low investment perceived their volunteer manager role as conflictive. Nesbit et al. (2016) pointed out that volunteer management may be neglected because it conflicts with other work duties. In a church setting, clergy performs organizational, administrative, and pastoral tasks, leading to role ambiguity due to the unclear prioritization of the tasks. Role ambiguity has been a prevalent cause of clergy burnout in ministerial literature (Chan & Chen, 2019; Jones & Gordon, 2023; Plante; 2023; Visker & Rider, 2017; White Smith, 2020). Thus, the perception of the volunteer manager role impacts the staff interactions and investment in collaborative relationships with volunteers.

When staff personnel positively perceive volunteer contributions towards the organizational goals, the organization provides a support system fostering further volunteer engagement. Crookes et al. (2022) studied nurses' perceptions of volunteers in health care settings. Nurses claimed that volunteer support was largely seen as beneficial to patients and nurses. Some nurses highlighted concerns about the burden of increased supervision of volunteers and lacked knowledge of volunteer recruiting, training, and roles (Crookes et al., 2022). Lack of volunteer management skills affects the direct interactions with volunteers. The staff workload paradoxically increases when volunteers are present due to the implicit training and time spent supporting volunteers' work (e.g., supervision, feedback). Crookes et al. (2022) concluded that "challenges to the acceptance and effective utilisation [*sic*] of volunteers were related to understanding of volunteer roles and training as well as some concerns regarding volunteers adding to nurses' workloads" (p. 8). These findings aided the development of policies and procedures necessary for equipping nurses in volunteer management roles, maximizing the volunteer contribution (Crookes et al., 2022, p. 8).

Volunteer management practices are reviewed and improved by organizations that perceive volunteers as valuable organizational assets. Consequently, the organizational culture fosters volunteer engagement creating "a sense of organisational [*sic*] reciprocity" (Davenport et al., 2021, p. 334). The interactions within a supportive organization framework produces collaborative staff-volunteer relationships (Crookes et al., 2022; Nesbit et al., 2018; Shin & Kleiner, 2003).

Organizational Culture

In volunteer-run organizations like the church, organizational culture theory can explain volunteer-paid staff interactions (Netting et al., 2004). The organizational culture determines the church's adaptability to the environment and fosters the internal interactions, granted the paid pastoral staff and volunteers fully share "the mission of their association" (Kreutzer & Jäger, 2011, p. 651). Donahue and Gowler (2014) commented on the increased hostility towards Christianity, prompting the church to engage in the community's life. To respond and engage with the needs of the community (i.e., environment), the church needs to evaluate its organizational culture (Driskill & Brenton, 2011; Neal, 2000).

Bolman and Deal (2017) defined "culture" as both a product and a process (p. 257). The organizational identity discussed previously provided the framework for the unique church culture. This view did not diminish the leadership role paid pastoral staff possesses in shaping the organizational culture of their church organization. Since not all church congregations are created equal, the paid pastoral staff must create an organizational culture fostering volunteer engagement in the Great Commission. The literature agreed that successful nonprofit organizations develop relational leadership (Lee & Song, 2020; Li et al., 2022; Wesselmann et al., 2016; Xie et al., 2019) and ensure role fit among volunteers (Liao-Troth, 2001; Musick &

Wilson, 2008; Netting & Thibault, 2012). They also instilled a sense of ownership (Bolman &

Deal, 2017; Kreutzer & Jäger, 2011), positively impacting the paid pastoral staff and volunteer

relationship. Relational leadership fosters a trustworthy culture where members can develop

spiritually and increase their social network (Cnaan & Scott, 2021; van Aarde, 2017). DeVries

(2016) encouraged the paid pastoral staff to "prayerfully work to create the proper climate for

spiritual giftedness growth and use" (p. 201). The organizational structure must be flexible

enough (i.e., an organic system) to allow this collaborative culture to grow and liturgy as a

symbolic frame (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2003; Bolman & Deal, 2017; Driskill & Brenton, 2011).

Hence, organizational culture provides a welcoming environment for others to serve and share

their knowledge (Fullwood & Rowley, 2021).

Organizational culture facilitates staff-volunteer collaboration through beliefs, values,

norms, and symbols that shape individual and group behavior (Daher, 2016; Neal, 2000; Schein,

2004). For example, the hierarchy structure provides a culture of knowledge superiority. The

assumption is that organizational knowledge and its tasks should remain in the headquarters and

top leaders. Leaders at the top of the hierarchical pyramid are the decision-makers (Schein,

2004). Zhang et al. (2022) used the interdependence theory to study how high-commitment work

systems (HCWS) improve employee well-being through workplace friendship. Task

interdependence (i.e., means of interdependence) is when employees depend on each other for

access to vital resources, and processes demand coordinated action (Zhang et al., 2022). Their

findings highlighted that workplace friendships mediated the connection between HCWS and

employee well-being—the informal relationships at work. Task interdependence also

strengthened the link between HCWS and friendships at work and the indirect effect of HCWS

on employee well-being (Zhang et al., 2022).

Psychological Contract

The relationships between paid pastoral staff and church volunteers are complex. Netting et al. (2004) examined the theoretical viewpoints and studies on volunteer and paid staff interactions. They contended that adequately understanding the paid staff and volunteers requires recognizing how their status differs, what psychological contracts they each bring to their jobs, and what the organizational culture is like in the setting under study. They argued the importance of understanding the psychological and sociological aspects of any setting where paid staff and volunteers work to intervene effectively (Netting et al., 2004). Following the need for understanding the context of the staff-volunteer relationship, one must understand the church volunteer in the context of the organization's organic nature in relationship with the paid pastoral staff aiming to accomplish the Great Commission.

The nature of the staff-volunteer relationship depends on both parties' perceptions of one another. Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) observed the general methodological issues presented in the religious literature. The tendency was that scholars studying spirituality try to isolate its impacts from biological, social, and psychological variables that may have comparable effects (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013; Cnaan & Cascio, 1999). Since separating these variables contradicts the idea that a person's soul, mind, and body are interconnected elements, Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) suggested studying this dualism. Thus, a holistic understanding of staff-volunteer relationships for effective volunteer engagement in church missions can be achieved through a thorough examination of organizational culture and psychological contracts (Farmer & Fedor, 1999; Netting et al., 2004).

Church Context. Itzhaki and Cnaan (2019) defined the *church* as "religious congregations" where "regular attendees meet face-to-face, develop personal relationships, and

obtain a sense of belonging" (p. 1211). Their definition of a church confirmed the studies on the positive correlation between religiosity (e.g., church attendance), volunteering (Petrovic et al., 2021; Seabe & Burger, 2022; Son & Wilson, 2021), and belonging (e.g., church attendance, membership) increases trust, a critical factor for building relationships (Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Neal, 2000; Valente & Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2021). Most researchers analyzed church attendance (i.e., membership) as indicative of church health (i.e., religiosity; Gutmann & Peters, 2020; Olson, 2008; Valente & Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2021). Conversely, Ferreira and Chipenyu (2021) focused on the church membership analysis through a missiological framework by identifying the quality of the member (i.e., level of commitment to follow Christ) rather than the numerical church attendance as indicative of church health. Hence, the reasons to attend church, commitment, and requisite for church membership varied, adding to the ambiguity of the church and church volunteer concept (Cnaan & Cascio, 1999; Cnaan & Scott, 2021; Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021; Flatt et al., 2018).

The purpose of disciples is personal and corporate (Barna, 2013). Living a Christian life is an aim. The mission is to introduce them to Jesus, help them embrace Him as their Savior, and equip them to live as Christians. The Great Commission is about discipleship, not only evangelism: "Make disciples of all countries" (Barna, 2013, p. 20). A disciple is also a term for all Christians—the individual who believes in Jesus' promises (Klauck, 2009). Discipleship is the process whereby someone becomes more like Christ. It encompasses entry into the process (i.e., salvation) and growth (i.e., sanctification through discipleship). True discipleship has two components. The first is teaching about Christ: who He is, what He did, and what He taught as recorded in Scripture, and teaching about those who were excellent models of being like Him (Barna & Kinnaman, 2014; Bing, 1992; Yount & Barnett, 2007). These learning interactions can

be done through sermons, books, letters, personal and small-group Bible studies, Sunday school, and formal and informal settings (Neal, 2000; Samra, 2003). The second component is imitating those who manifest the nature of Christ in their lives and live out the truths of Christianity, also known as mature believers (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021). Mature believers can convey discipling to less mature believers in small groups or with one person through intensely personal relationships whereby evangelism, humility, suffering for Christ, and other subjects are taught, discussed, exemplified, and tested (Samra, 2003).

Volunteer's Psychological Contract. Psychological contract mechanisms appear to function in many contexts, people and collaboration, and the imperative exchange processes between the worker and the organization have been comparable (Farmer & Fedor, 1999). Netting et al. (2004) explained that a person's psychological contract is a set of thoughts and assumptions about the relationship. Volunteers fulfill their tasks by choice, and their behavior is citizenship (without remuneration; Kreutzer & Jäger, 2011; Netting et al., 2004). People volunteer for value expression, social adjustment, ego defense, or knowledge (Farmer & Fedor, 1999). Volunteers' working relationships start with certain expectations, monitor whether the nonprofit organization meets these expectations, and respond appropriately (Farmer & Fedor, 1999; Kreutzer & Jäger, 2011; Suter & Gmür, 2018; White Smith, 2020). Volunteers' expectations of what the organization will deliver supported psychological contract theory. Pearce (1993) argued the unique pressure volunteers create to the nonprofit organization due to the uncertain motives for "joining or staying with the organization" (p. 11). This study assumed that church volunteers were individuals seeking or in a relationship with Christ (i.e., believer, disciple), regardless of the maturity level (i.e., discipleship stage). The volunteer expectation in the church context consisted of pastors equipping them to become like Christ by renewing their minds (Romans

12:2). Byerly et al. (2022) conducted an empirical study of congregational virtues unearthing congregants' motives for joining and staying. Findings showed that "Congregants' perceptions of aspects of congregational character concerned with discipleship and teaching were significant for congregants' frequency of participation in church activities" (Byerly et al., 2022, p. 350). Hence, church volunteers' expectation of church learning environment (Fullwood & Rowley, 2021; Vermeer & Scheepers, 2019) and positive relationship with congregants (Byerly et al., 2022; Denning, 2021; Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001) leads to volunteer engagement.

Paid Pastoral Staff's Psychological Contract. The reciprocal obligations between volunteers and the organization managed by paid pastoral staff are relational rather than transactional (Donahue & Gowler, 2014; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2004). Farmer and Fedor (1999) differentiated between two types of reciprocal obligations by identifying respective expectations by studying Rousseau and Parks' (1993) work:

> Contracts between employee and employer may fall into a range or continuum: from transactional ones based on specific, close-ended, easily definable and primarily economic transactions on the one hand to relational contracts that are more developmental, open-ended, pervasive, socioemotional, and value-laden in nature, and embedded in a broader network of social concerns such as interpersonal relationships, reputation, and justice on the other. (p. 353)

Volunteers expect trust and an invitation to collaborate from paid pastoral staff (Suter & Gmür, 2018; Valente & Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2021). The focal differences in roles, attitudes, and management practices are major tension factors in staff-volunteer relationships (Netting et al., 2004; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2004). One way the paid pastoral staff contributes to the trust-building relationship with volunteers is by making them disciples, not just mere helpers. Valente and Okulicz-Kozaryn (2021) investigated the impact of social religiosity (e.g., church attendance, membership at religious organizations) and individual religiosity (e.g., believing in God, feeling close to God, prayer) on trust and misanthropy. Findings predicted that individual

religiosity or believing (e.g., prayer, closeness, believing in God) promotes misanthropy (e.g.,

disliking humankind). Valente and Okulicz-Kozaryn (2021) clarified that the motif of

volunteering is not necessarily Spirit-led:

> Religiously induced pro-social behavior and reputation sensitivity do not need to translate into generalized or interpersonal trust. In fact, the motivation behind volunteering and charity could be to impress or boost one's reputation or a result of self-deception— believers make trusting impressions but actually trust less. (p. 358)

Conversely, the social religiosity defined by church participation fosters trust in the organization

and others. It contradicted the results, but Wilson and Musick (1997) observed that religious

individuals are no more inclined to help than non-religious persons. Given Ferreira and

Chipenyu's (2021) study, the call for quality members (the disciple who make disciples) needs

further study. Bing (1992) correctly stated, "Disciples are made, not born" (p. 41). Therefore, the

paid pastoral staff must integrate volunteers' spiritual gifts to edify the church body. The

spiritual gifts (e.g., charisma) are "inseparable but not identical"; they are essential to the church

and "the character of the Christian life in its communitarian and individual expression"

(Lovegrove, 2003, p. 266). In this regard, all Christians are charismatic (i.e., have a free gift) and

serve the church and world (Lovegrove, 2003, p. 266). Thus, if paid pastoral staff build and

nurture a supportive, two-way connection between the church and the volunteer, volunteers

participate more and increase commitment (Farmer & Fedor, 1999).

Role Identity

The two conflicting groups (clergy and laity) are still present when the terms paid staff

and volunteers study the leadership-follower relationship in the church context. One aspect

informing the collaborative dimension of the paid staff and volunteer relationship is the

psychological contract embedded in role identity—"the more others identify one with a

particular role, the more the individual internalizes the role and incorporates it into the self-

concept" (as cited in Netting & Thibault, 2012, p. 206). Psychological contracts are deeply ingrained assumptions about a volunteer's role that may not have been articulated (Netting & Thibault, 2012). The other aspect is organizational culture, the thriving environment for positive interactions between paid pastoral staff and volunteers. The ambiguity in volunteers' roles negatively affects their engagement in missional ecclesiology (Barna, 2013; Musick & Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2012).

Functions, or roles, are socially prescribed patterns of conduct (Musick & Wilson, 2008). For a volunteer to develop a role identity as a priest and disciple would require a place for performing role-related tasks, as mentioned earlier, like preaching and teaching God's Word to others (Anizor & Voss, 2016; Barna, 2013; Chester & Timmis, 2008; Putman et al., 2013). Epitropaki et al. (2017) described it as "identity work" (p. 108). Regardless of other people's perceptions of a leader, the individual in the leadership role must identify as a leader. Thus, self-definition requires identity effort (Epitropaki et al., 2017). The more active and prominent an identity, the more likely followers will understand any given scenario, allowing the enactment and exhibition of this identity (Epitropaki et al., 2017). The literature highlighted three recurrent hurdles the church needs to overcome to engage volunteers: role frequency, role ambiguity, and training (Forster & Oosterbrink, 2015; Mbacham-Enow et al., 2019; Obiorah, 2020; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013; Wong et al., 2019).

Role Frequency. Frequency of service is essential in understanding volunteering. According to Cnaan and Amrofell (1994), the most fundamental kind of volunteering is a one-time urge (i.e., ad hoc volunteers). Netting et al. (2005) researched ground theory on 15 faith-based programs. Their study discovered the role ambiguity that faith-based organizations have. The fluid role presented a diverse type of volunteering time (i.e., frequency; Netting et al., 2005).

Episodic volunteers (i.e. one-time urge) participate in events like holiday programs or Serve Day. In contrast, the continuous volunteers help in routine tasks like Sunday service. Netting et al. (2005) mentioned a third category of volunteers called the "drafted volunteer" (p. 12). Due to various role definitions and psychological contracts, regular and drafted volunteers will have distinct connections with paid personnel (Netting et al., 2005). There are more classifications: once monthly, bimonthly, weekly, and many times a week. Finally, daily volunteers—people who care for sick relatives, work in an ambulance service, set up chairs for weekly church services, shelve books in libraries, or work in soup kitchens—fall into the final few groups (Cnaan & Amrofell, 1994).

Role Ambiguity. Musick and Wilson (2008) commented that "non-profit organizations are well aware of the importance of clearly defining the volunteer role to prevent high turnover" (p. 435). Ogden pointed out the clergy-laity dichotomy, where the spiritual (e.g., preaching, teaching) and human (e.g., pastoral care, counseling) ministries are best left in the hands of the clergy. The laity was relegated to temporal or supporting roles, such as stage workers, lighting technicians, and custodians. Unfortunately, role ambiguity is still present in church organizations leading paid pastoral staff to burnout (Visker et al., 2017; White Smith, 2020). Visker et al. (2017) mentioned internal factors leading to occupational stress as "lack of control, unclear job expectations, dysfunctional workplace dynamics, mismatch in values, poor job fit, extremes in activities, lack of social support, [and] work-life imbalance" (p. 952). God's plan for a healthy body (i.e., the church) is found in the reciprocal interactions (Lowe & Lowe, 2018), fostering a discipleship culture where believers "carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ" (*New International Version*, 2011, Galatians 6:2). Christ is at the head of the church because the Father has given Him all the authority (Matthew 28:18; Bonhoeffer, 2015).

Jesus appointed the pastors (i.e., shepherds or elders) along with teachers, evangelists, prophets, and apostles with the sole purpose of building the church into His image (Ephesians 4:11). The task of shepherding developed in a social context, not as a heroic leader (Mintzberg et al., 2002). The goal is to make disciples; therefore, a diverse body (1 Corinthians 12) must engage in the discipleship process to follow the calling of Christ (Anizor & Voss, 2016; Barna, 2013; Bonhoeffer, 2015; Chester & Timmis, 2008; Dover, 2015).

Paid pastoral staff's primary role comes from the Greek word ποιμήν (poimén), meaning shepherd, or someone whom the Lord raises to care for the total well-being of the people of the Lord (flock; cf. Strong Concordance). Brosius (2017) explained that under Christ's authority, "the elders or pastors work in the churches not only as leaders but capable, gifted administrators, conducting church affairs. The people are the workers whom Christ has gifted to carry out the ministry of the church" (p. 156). The interactions among this diverse community of Christ's disciples require clear communication channels integrating volunteers (Kreutzer & Jäger, 2011). Priestly duty is the one role every believer must practice as Christ's follower. In this sense, volunteer roles are not always distinctive from staff roles (Gobble, 2017; Netting et al., 2005). Riggio et al. (2008) called it "a partnership in reciprocal following." Luther's universal doctrine of the priesthood of all believers contended that every Christian should be a minister of the Word of God (Ogden, 2003). The literature concurred with the shared calling of the minister to the good news of Christ (i.e., gospel), clergy (i.e., paid pastoral staff) and laity (i.e., volunteers) alike (Anizor & Voss, 2016; Camp, 2008; Chavez, 2021; Ogden, 2003). To be a minister is to work for the good of others (Dover, 2015). The Strong Concordance defined minister from the Greek word λειτουργός (leitourgos), a public servant, a minister, a servant. These *leitourgos* have been developed by centuries of practice, particularly among ordained and professional clergy. The call

is for all believers to follow and imitate Jesus in their royal priesthood (Barna & Kinnaman, 2014; Dover, 2015).

Role of the Paid Pastoral Staff. Pastors are spiritual leaders who primarily teach and care for God's children in the area where God placed them (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2–11). The purpose of teaching was well described in Ephesians 4:12–14,

> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. (*New International Version*, 2011)

The literature pointed out the critical role the organization (leaders) had in inviting volunteer participation and providing meaningful tasks to contribute to the organization's mission (Hjort & Skræddergaard, 2021; Nesbit et al., 2018; van Aarde, 2017). The literature also showed that the demarcation between clerical (i.e., paid pastoral staff) and laity (i.e., volunteers) dated to the medieval Roman Catholic church (Anizor & Voss, 2016; Lovegrove, 2003). Cnaan and Scott (2021) distinguished clergy (i.e., paid pastoral staff) from other leaders of nonprofit organizations, describing them as "group leaders who attract a core group of trusted members to help achieve the group's goals… clergy must select people with high moral standards from within the current members, and their choices may affect the congregational personal dynamics" (p. 399). The biblical narrative described the high moral standards and attributes of leaders (role) as a person with a good testimony, able to teach and preach, full of faith, wisdom, and the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3,5; Titus 1:6). These leaders should "fear God," be trustworthy, and "hate dishonest gain" (*New International Version*, 2011, Exodus 18:21). These attributes are found in Jesus, therefore becoming His disciple is imitating Him and inviting others to imitate the leader. As the Apostle Paul said, "Therefore I urge you to imitate me" (*New International*

Version, 2011, 1 Corinthians 4:16). Dover (2015) explained the historical tension "between the notion that all Christians are a priestly people and the concept and practice of ordained, set-apart clergy" (p. 28). The remanent of this clerical view is often to protect the pastoral call, but it undermines the ministerial role of the laity (i.e., volunteers). The clerical monopolization of priestly roles is one of the critiques Anizor and Voss made against the protestant view of the priesthood of all believers. As Barnett and Yount (2007) wrote, "the Christian leader is a shepherd, not a hired hand, or worse, a hired gun" (p. 178). Thus, paid pastoral staff can be in charge without lording over others (*New International Version*, 2011, 1 Peter 5:3) and give volunteers the tools they need to keep spreading the gospel by inviting people to church (team ministry approach) or participating in processes for making disciples.

Pastors are equippers (Barnett & Yount, 2007; Lose et al., 2015; Neal, 2000). A healthy integration of the missional church model into existing mission and church paradigms and for it to work within the framework of existing church structures requires that gifted people equip believers to fulfill their missional calling, vocation, and function (van Aarde, 2017). In addition, the paid pastoral staff is responsible for providing the volunteers with the essential knowledge and abilities to conduct their priesthood task of making disciples, as discussed earlier. Lopina (2017) indicated that continuous training ensures that volunteers have the latest knowledge and resources. Training may produce long-term workers (Galatians 6:10; Nesbit, 2018; Philippians 3:12–15). Volunteer groups can offer a progressive training program where volunteers' duties grow as they go. Discipleship provides the learning atmosphere needed for growth in the seven priesthood practices until reaching maturity and Christlikeness. For example, Ananias imparted healing to Paul as Jesus commanded (Acts 9:11–12). In that way, he empowered Paul; he equipped Paul to fulfill his God-given mission of reaching the Gentiles (Acts 9:17). Similarly,

the paid pastoral staff has the God-given authority to equip fellow believers and release them to do the will of God in God's term. As Ogden (2003) stated, "Ministry is not just the domain of clergy, but belongs to the entire body of Christ." There is no differentiation of status because the Holy Spirit gives different talents to believers to build the body of Christ, the church (1 Corinthians 12; Lovegrove, 2003; Romans 12:4-8). Nel and Schoeman (2019) argued that disciple-making is about evangelism and "evangelising [*sic*], faith-sharing, within a relationship of trust, is disciplining: there is life, we have found it in him [Jesus]" (p. 4). Thus, discipleship is the volunteer training all believers need to fulfill their priesthood role.

Conclusion

Paid pastoral staff are spiritual leaders in a dependent follower role. In this sense, collaborative staff-volunteer relationships are a following, and the following is a type of leading because it needs to hear the call (Riggio et al., 2008). For example, the book of Hebrews illustrates Moses's dual role in the liberation of (Hebrews 11:27). Moses' obedient response to God's calling (Exodus 3:7–22) led the Israelites out of Egypt. God was the leader of the Israelites through the servanthood of His chosen leader, Moses. This scenario portrayed the unique organizational identity of the church. It was the visible body of an invisible God (Allen, 2018; Bonhoeffer, 2015; Dover, 2015). The same God who liberated His people out of the wilderness was the same Triune God leading His church today through His Holy Spirit and empowered people.

The organic nature of the church as the body of Christ requires an adaptive and collaborative culture in which paid pastoral staff and volunteers can exercise their priestly functions to advance the kingdom of God. The organizational identity of the church as an organism takes precedence over institutionalization because the clergy-laity divides obstruct the

priesthood of all believers (Ogden, 2003). The priesthood provides the role identity to volunteers as part of one body. Psychological contracting and organizational culture can help administrators comprehend volunteers' complex organizational roles (Netting et al., 2004; Schein, 2004). To involve volunteers in missional ecclesiology, paid pastoral staff must foster an organizational culture that welcomes volunteers' ideas and develop relational leadership. Therefore, interdependence offers a unique perspective on how interpersonal contexts enable specific objectives and motives and how events set the scene for interpersonal processes (i.e., discipleship) and interaction (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003, 2008).

<center>**Related Literature**</center>

Church Membership

The interdependence inferences—direct interactions, indirect interactions, partner selection—emphasize that mutual interaction does affect the outcome. Son and Wilson (2021) explained that "religious congregations rely heavily on volunteer labor that help explain why church attendance might be the result, as well as the cause, of volunteering" (p. 751). The decline in church attendance affects membership and directly impacts the volunteer pool because "a congregation is a volunteer organization" (Jentile, 2021, p. 5). Recent studies on volunteerism found the association of religiosity to increase volunteer engagement (Byerly et al., 2022; Petrovic et al., 2021; Son & Wilson, 2021). Religiosity is "specifically church attendance," and volunteering is the process of "affirming one's faith and actualizing one's values" (Son & Wilson, 2021, p. 751). Edge's (2022) case study illustrated volunteering as an expression of faith. This perspective of volunteering as a process (Denning, 2021) of expressing Christian identity calls for careful consideration by the volunteer manager role of paid pastoral staff. Since volunteering occurs in church and the community, church volunteers must be equipped to share

their faith through volunteer engagements. The volunteer engagement as an obedient response to the Great Commission (Copeland, 2012; Edge, 2022; Vermeer & Scheepers, 2019) implies a collaborative staff-volunteer relationship.

The literature presented a dwindling Protestant church membership (Fowler et al., 2020; Gutmann & Peters, 2020). Gutmann and Peters (2020) investigated the decline in German churches (e.g., Catholic and Protestant). Under the assumption that demographic and church-specific factors (e.g., baptisms, leaving, and joining the church) influence church membership, their projection estimated that church membership would continue to drop, and by 2060, there will be half as many church members as there were in 2017. This study based its data on the church membership upon baptism, not on the quality of church members. Ferreira and Chipenyu (2021) contended that church decline is due to spiritual "coldness" (p. 7). They wrote, "Membership reduction is a sign that processes occur that is not typical of being the church" (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021, p. 7). For Ferreira and Chipenyu, the real drivers of a church's growth or decline go beyond the number of its members. Baptism as a church membership does not reflect the individual's commitment to follow Christ in all areas of life. It means affiliation with a religious organization (Gutmann & Peters, 2020, p. 5).

Flatt et al. (2018) presented the interest of the church attendee as the reason for church decline. They noted that individuals are not interested in that particular organization's version, kind, or style of religion (Flatt et al., 2018). Thus, offering worship services to meet the needs of its congregants impacts attendance (Olson, 2008; Suter & Gmür, 2018). In doing so, churches regulate attendance because they control the quality of religious services (Olson, 2008). The underlying assumption was that church attendance represents commitment and "is a necessary part of being a good Christian" (Olson, 2008, p. 446). The collective worship is primarily a

means of Christian teaching (Smith, 2009) and the "theological knowledge in the Bible",

fostering prosocial behaviors (Edge, 2022, p. 579). The association of church attendance with

volunteer satisfaction and well-being (Byerly et al., 2022; Mollidor et al., 2015) indicated the

importance of church attendance (Petrovic et al., 2021) as an essential factor in volunteer

engagement. Church organizations provide the opportunities to volunteer and serve the

community (McClure, 2022; Seabe & Burger, 2022; van Overbeeke et al., 2022). This perception

adds value to church attendance, increasing service attendance and volunteering (Forbes &

Zampelli, 2014; Olson, 2008). Olson expressed the organizational culture of collective worship

as faith embodiment. If the church leadership values attendance, they must care for the service

quality (Byerly et al., 2022). Olson (2008) suggested that churches can "host social events

following services that promote fellowship and provide the kinds of activities their members find

attractive" (p. 446). Although catering to congregant demands can lead to consumer culture

(White Smith, 2020), church attendance does contribute to a sense of belonging (Denning, 2022;

Valente & Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2021).

Church attendance and membership are indicators of volunteering (Petrovic et al., 2021;

Son & Wilson, 2021) contributing to church health (Flatt et al., 2018; Fowler et al., 2020;

Gutmann & Peters, 2020; Olson, 2008; Valente & Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2021). Ferreira and

Chipenyu (2021) advanced the study by presenting two dimensions to assess a healthy church

and church decline as quantity and quality:

> The quality of members affects the quantity in the direction of growth and/or decline.
> If the members are spiritually mature (quality), their quantity increases. If the quality
> of the members is weak (spiritually immature), the quantity is reduced. The reason is
> clear: The members cannot influence other people to become Christians and even the
> spiritually weak members would not remain in the church. The quality dimension is
> important for church health. (p. 8)

The Great Commission calls for quality (i.e., mature Christians) and quantity (i.e., make disciples of all nations). Jesus commissioned his disciples to continue the mission of proclaiming the good news of salvation (John 15:16). It is through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) that Christ's disciples can employ spiritual gifts to achieve the commission (Berding, 2006; Neal, 2000).

Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual maturity and employment of spiritual gifts are the common denominators of disciples who make disciples (Copeland, 2012; Mbennah, 2016). Brosius (2017) explained the equipping role believers have in the context of their interdependence relationship. Wilson and Musick's (1997) definition of volunteers fit the biblical view of one another's interdependence illustrated in followership: "Volunteers give their time freely for the benefit of others" (p. 695). This emphasis calls for the active participation of volunteers who are the followers in terms of the church as nonprofit organization. Although their time is not compensated, it has an involved cost of energy, personal resources, and skills invested for the benefit of others and the organization (Neal, 2000; Netting et al., 2004). It also requires the shared goal of making disciples by employing spiritual gifts (Barna, 2013; Barnett & Yount, 2007; Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021).

Who Leads the Church?

The church is God's plan for evangelism, discipleship, and the Great Commission (Barna, 2014; Chester & Timmis, 2008; Dever, 2016). The church emerged from its union with Christ, which is personal and spiritual (Rayburn, 2017). Paul used Christ's headship over the church to show that Christ was the source of the church's existence (Ephesians 1:22–23, 5:2; Colossians 2:19; Rayburn, 2017). Since Christ is the head of the church organization (Brosius,

2017), the church develops organically through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts that enable the reciprocal interactions for discipleship processes (Lowe & Lowe, 2018; Neal, 2000). The end goal is for the believer, paid pastoral staff, and the volunteer, to mature into Christlikeness (Ephesian 4:12). The discipleship processes conduit the reciprocal interactions for spiritual formation where each believer ministers out of God's power (e.g., spiritual gifts). In this sense, Jesus is the leader of the church, who paid pastoral staff and volunteers follow.

Decentralization of Gifts

Ogden (2003) argued that "when we come to realize that there is only one people therefore one ministry, God's people will be released to fulfill their callings" (p. 93). Thus, each believer, paid pastoral staff, and volunteer must express their God-given gift for equipping one another. DeVries (2016) described spiritual gifts as God's ministry abilities for church service. His classification of the spiritual gifts clarified the ways God equips and enables people for the ministry:

> Some divide them into gifts of speech and gifts of Samaritanship; others into gifts of service, utterance (speaking), and miracles; others into the ordinary (which continue) and extraordinary (which have ceased); and still others into gifts of prophetic, priestly, and kingly (leadership) service. (p. 185)

Since the "work of ministry" is done by believers, what must be in mind is not the continuation of the offices but the purpose of these "gifts," which is to prepare the saints to do the "work of ministry" (van Aarde, 2017, p. 7). Berding (2006) argued that the primary concern in the Pauline epistles was (1 Corinthians 12–14; Ephesians 4; Romans 12) through the ministry of all the members of Christ's body. He distinguished between the English definition of gifts (i.e., ability and something that is given) and the Greek meaning (i.e., something that is given). The word gift has been a source of confusion due to the two connotations in the English language that are not present in the Greek term. To this end, Berding proposed an alternative

approach to spiritual gifts as roles, ministries, assignments, and functions rather than the conventional view: enablements, abilities, and powers. Berding's (2006) alternative approach suggested that the believer should seek God's guidance in where to serve rather than asking what their spiritual gifts are. The Holy Spirit has allocated every believer to distinct roles and acts of service, whether modest or significant, short-term or long-term, as a gift to the church (Berding, 2006). Thus, believers should obey the Holy Spirit's guidance to serve (Acts 9:36, 18:26) rather than emphasizing discovering the "special ability" as a skill that needs development. Berding's (2006) position on spiritual gifts fit the priesthood role that Ogden (2003) presented, empowering volunteers (i.e., congregants, believers) to minister beyond the church building.

Neal (2000) added to the spiritual gifts' conversation the need for a shared ministry approach. She recognized that every congregation has a culture—the way things are done, the group's ideals, the organization of practices and procedures, communication methods and interconnections, attitudes to outsiders, and power dynamics. Therefore, paid pastoral staff adopting the shared ministry approach must allow time for assimilation. Schein (2004) suggested an intentional approach to reinforce organizational values:

> Through what they pay attention to and reward, through the ways in which they allocate resources, through their role modeling, through the manner in which they deal with critical incidents, and through the criteria they use for recruitment, selection, promotion, and ex-communication. (p. 270)

Shared ministry is founded on the idea that all believers have the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the good news of God's redeeming love (Neal, 2000). Unfortunately, some paid pastoral staff, who should understand and recognize the dignity and contributions of the volunteer, are oblivious to the volunteer's place in the church for various reasons (Obiorah, 2020). Neal (2000) concluded that "all members, not just the ordained and the paid staff, are called to service—invited to contribute their gifts, energy, and passions to this overarching

purpose. Hence the term shared" (p. 12). As Berding (2006) commented, the church must be in one accord expressing unity in diversity, meaning that no "matter what role we have been assigned (1 Corinthians 12:15–17), there should be no division (1 Corinthians 12:25)" (p. 75).

Conclusion

The collaborative relationship between paid pastoral staff and volunteers as a biblical strategy to engage volunteers in missional ecclesiology needed further study. First, the concept of church volunteering needed clarification (Cnaan & Amrofell, 1994; Cnaan & Scott, 2021). The theoretical framework described the interdependent relationship between volunteers and paid pastoral staff, as it recognized the tension caused by role ambiguity and the need for training in volunteer management practices. The priesthood of all believers demystified the volunteer role in the Great Commission. It was reviewed in light of the organic church identity as the context for mutual interactions.

Second, the theoretical framework revealed the ambiguity of the term volunteering for nonprofit organizations. Its ambiguity was due to the different interpretations of defining a volunteer and determining their roles and motives for volunteering. The literature focused on the leadership role of a change agent and culture conveyer (Neal, 2000; Northouse, 2019; Schein, 2004). The interdependence theory proposed as a theoretical framework broadened the understanding of the emergent psychological contract relationship between volunteers and paid pastoral staff and recognized their diverse roles. Wesselmann et al.'s (2016) research described this relationship: "Relationship involvement is not a unidimensional, static experience; however, relationships can provide individuals with among the greatest opportunities for need fulfillment" (p. 35). Volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology maximized organizational goals (Drovdahl & Jones, 2020; Nesbit et al., 2018). Role identity recognized the valuable contribution

that the volunteer provides to the organization. It also allowed the leader to emerge as an equipper rather than a heroic leader (Mintzberg et al., 2002).

Lastly, volunteers and paid pastoral staff possessed spiritual identity reflecting their interdependence with Christ, the head of the church. This chapter argued that the spiritual relationship with the Triune God informed the mutual obligations, roles, and ministry that volunteers and paid pastoral staff perform. A healthy church needs all its members to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). Perceptions of the volunteer management role impact the staff-volunteer collaboration towards the Great Commission. Hence, the paid pastoral staff receptivity, training, and inclusion of volunteers in missional ecclesiology needed further study.

Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature

The literature described the collaborative staff-volunteer relationships needed for missional ecclesiology: a church that welcomes the participation of its congregants as ministers of the good news of salvation. Thus, there was a need for understanding the paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement in the church. As the Apostle Peter said, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (*New International Version*, 2011, 1 Peter 3:15). Being always ready to give an answer of one's faith is a call for disciple-makers to make disciples. This study added to religion and volunteerism literature. It related to other studies on volunteer involvement to fulfill the church's mission (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021; Nel & Schoeman, 2019) and prevent pastoral burnout (Cnaan & Scott, 2021; White Smith, 2020). Studer and von Schnurbein's (2013) work "selectively focused on the relationship between the organization and volunteers as a unique resource" (p. 428). However, the literature indicated that role ambiguity causes tension between staff-volunteer relationships (Handy et al., 2008; López-

Cabrera et al., 2020; Netting et al., 2004; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013). Volunteers are often episodic and support operational tasks. These tasks are not studied in light of the missional ecclesiology. Although episodic and routine volunteer engagement is not evidence of the quality of members (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021) in terms of faith commitment (i.e., Christlikeness), they are the context for faith embodiment. Therefore, the outcome of those experiences may lead to ongoing volunteerism (Denning, 2021; Dunaetz & Bocock, 2020; Wesselmann et al., 2016).

There was a gap in the literature on how paid pastoral staff perceives volunteer engagement in missional churches. The missional ecclesiology required a body of Christ ready to get involved in Christ's work and witness to society (Niemandt, 2012). It was collaborative in nature (Barna & Kinnaman, 2014; Chester & Timmis, 2008). God provided spiritual gifts to achieve it as He did when constructing His dwelling places in the Old Testament, like the tabernacle and temple (Cuadra-Martínez et al., 2019; Erickson, 2012; Levison, 2018; Verster, 2022). Paul explained to his fellow believers that "we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'" (*New International Version*, 2011, 2 Corinthians 6:16).

The dynamics of the relationship between paid pastoral staff and volunteers can illuminate whether both groups are involved in collaborative endeavors, leading to the fulfillment of the Great Commission and the dependence on the Holy Spirit as the equipper of the Body of Christ. This information integrated the spiritual and leadership dimensions of volunteer engagement in a church setting. Integration was needed to avoid being led astray, to carry each other's burdens, to maintain unity, and to grow spiritually into the likeness of Christ (Colossians 2:19; 2 Corinthians 11:13; Ephesians 4; Galatians 6:2; John 17:11). As a result, the kingdom of God would advance through a thriving, healthy church.

Profile of the Current Study

Disciple-making was the mission embedded in the AG's churches as they develop pastors who can lead churches into self-propagating organisms. This work was relational, thus calling for intentional collaboration among paid pastoral staff and church volunteers. There was a need for disciples who can make disciples in their daily context (Barna, 2017, 2022b). According to the literature, this lack of disciple-makers hindered the church's primary goal. It also increased the workload of paid pastoral staff, leading them to occupational burnout (Chavez, 2021; Visker et al., 2017). This study sought to contribute to the church leadership and volunteerism literature by understanding paid pastoral staff's perceptions of volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology. According to Sandberg and Targama (2007), understanding the phenomenon through interpretive analysis offered a different perspective on what it means for paid pastoral staff to behave as volunteer managers who equip church volunteers for ministry. The next chapter will address this research methodology in depth.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative phenomenology research can help researchers understand how paid pastoral staff view volunteer engagement. Successful volunteer engagement relies on the paid pastoral staff's willingness to train and work with volunteers. Thus, understanding their role as volunteer managers is key to fostering positive relationships and encouraging participation in the church's mission.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

Making Christ's disciples has been the church's ultimate mission (Wilhoit, 2022). This mission is multidimensional and complex. It requires educating others in Jesus' teaching (Mathew 28:19) so that believers learned to live under God's authority and for God's glory in their new identity as Christ's followers and children of God. It implies a mental shift. Putman et al. (2013) described it as a life-long learning process known as spiritual formation. Mulholland and Barton (2016) defined *spiritual formation* as "a process of being formed in the image of Christ for the sake of others" (p. 19). Unfortunately, church literature has shown a decline in discipleship and Bible literacy among believers while pastoral burnout is on the rise (Chavez, 2021; White Smith, 2020), affecting the fulfillment of the Great Commission: making disciples of all nations.

The Great Commission is relational in nature. Since making disciples is a collaborative endeavor, the paid pastoral staff are the spiritual leaders and church managers fostering collaborative organizational culture. Wilhoit (2022) argued that "from the deportment of church leaders, learners may get the message that discipleship is viewed as highly optional or that personal holiness is merely a matter of personal preference" (p. 36). The intentional discipleship

process serves as a volunteer management practice since it provides performance assurance through training (i.e., educational dimension). It also fosters volunteer retention through support (Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013). Disciples are committed to following Christ, but it happens in relationships (Putman, 2016) and within the church context as the family where the disciple grows into Christlikeness. Discipleship processes allow volunteer training, empowerment, and inclusion in the church's mission. Church volunteers need to be equipped in ministry so that their volunteering efforts can advance the church mission. In this way, the Assemblies of God (AG) church would be self-propagating and "composed of disciples who should be investing themselves in the lives of other disciples" (Shirley, 2008, p. 212). Thus, mission alignment results from volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology dependent on the paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer involvement in such endeavors.

The literature on the perception of paid pastoral staff regarding volunteer engagement has been scarce. The value that paid pastoral staff places on volunteers determines the investment that they give to the staff-volunteer relationship to collaborate towards the fruition of the Great Commission (López-Cabrera et al., 2020; Nesbit et al., 2016). Jesus mandated his church to make disciples of all nations. Such a task requires a collaborative partnership between volunteers and paid pastoral staff, as they are both "co-worker[s] in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith" (*New International Version*, 2011, 1 Thessalonians 3:2). This collaborative relationship starts by understanding church leadership's perception of volunteer engagement in such mission. Thus, this research project sought to understand the perception of paid pastoral staff towards volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology. Based on Niemandt's (2012) definition of missional ecclesiology, this term was used to refer to the Christian commitment to Christ's work, engagement in the faith community, and the capacity to witness in the marketplace. For this study, the paid pastoral staff was defined as those who hold a formal leadership position as pastoral staff in the AG's church in spiritual and organizational relationships with church volunteers. These interactions included Sunday services and daily living of spiritual values (Chester & Timmis, 2008; Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021; Hull, 2006). The theory guiding this study was the interdependence theory by Kelley and Thibaut, as it explains interactions, role identity, and role ambiguity. Collaborative relationships and interactions among paid pastoral staff and church volunteers change and grow over time. Because of this, interdependence should be considered regarding the immediate results of certain combinations of actions (e.g., mutual edification) and the future actions (e.g., prosocial behavior) and results made possible (rather than taken away) by conflictual relationships (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2012).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What are the lived experiences of paid pastoral staff managing volunteers to partake in the Great Commission at the Assemblies of God?

RQ2. How do the Assemblies of God paid pastoral staff describe their staff-volunteer relationship?

RQ3. How do the Assemblies of God paid pastoral staff's perceptions of volunteers impact their level of investment in equipping volunteers to partake in the Great Commission at the Assemblies of God?

Research Design and Methodology

This study sought to understand the collaborative relationship between the paid pastoral staff and volunteers within AG's church from a paid staff perspective. Qualitative phenomenology research helps delve into a phenomenon through the eyes of its subjects, in this case, the paid pastoral staff (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moustakas (1994) explained that phenomenology is the starting point for knowledge since it focuses on the things themselves. Phenomenology takes a methodical approach to eliminate all forms of preconception, putting aside assumptions and arriving at a place of transcendental newness and openness, or a readiness to see in a way that is uninhibited by the norms and biases of conventional science, the habits of nature, or the knowledge gained from unreflective experience (Moustakas, 1994). Research questions were the compass for this discovery journey since they helped the researcher find their way as they travel and plot out potential avenues of inquiry (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017). Thus, the researcher can explore the social world and discover how people and communities live in it through qualitative phenomenological research (Swinton & Mowat, 2006).

The methodological design was a phenomenology approach: "Phenomenology provides an epistemological framework and has proved seminal for elucidating how sense and meaning are constituted in subjective consciousness and how they are constructed in everyday interaction and in scientific observations and interpretations" (Eberle, 2014, p. 184). It was a unilateral approach since the method of research "involves researching the expectations of only one of the partners to the contract"—in this case, the paid pastoral staff (Nichols, 2013, p. 990). This study sought to understand the paid pastoral staff's perceptions of their interactions with church volunteers.

The objective of phenomenological research is to get as much information as possible from each participant to understand better the phenomenon of interest (Vagle, 2018). In qualitative research design, phenomenological material is diverse. It could vary between different data sources, such as interviews, observations, and written descriptions, including artistic drawings and paintings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Vagle, 2018). Data collection in qualitative research involves in-depth interviews, such as open-ended questions, regarding the topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Swinton and Mowat (2006) described the interview process as "a meaningful human encounter within which both parties gain implicit and explicit knowledge about the other. It is a unique space for the creation and sharing of meaning" (p. 64). Harper (2012) described: "Phenomenological exploration requires that the researcher engages with the participant's felt sense, their experience of 'how it is' for them to be in a particular situation, of 'what it is like' to have a particular experience" (p. 118). Thus, it requires flexibility without compromising "methodological congruence," meaning the alignment between research questions, study purpose, and techniques (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 36).

Sandberg and Targama (2007) pointed out the rise of interpretative data analysis in organization and management research. The researchers indicated the need for explaining human activity by considering people's perception of reality and how it shapes their behavior in organizations and society because "an understanding of reality forms the basis for people's work performance" (Sandberg & Targama, 2007, p. 21). Most interpretative viewpoints have followed philosophical phenomenology's emphasis on lived experience as the basis of human action and activity to overcome the rationalistic perspective's inadequacies (Sandberg & Targama, 2007).

Two major advocates of philosophical phenomenology were Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, was a renowned philosopher of the 20th

century. The phenomenologist's perspective on intentional consciousness is designed to allow

them to justify their basic ideas about the world and themselves and investigate their rational

links (Beyer, 2022). He called this method "transcendental phenomenology." Husserl's attempts

to construct a philosophical science of consciousness require the researcher to separate from the

participants' experience. Thus, bracketing or epoché is a fundamental strategy for ensuring

validity. His student, Heidegger, had a different view of phenomenology.

The German philosopher, Heidegger, was interested in the state of being revealed and

pushed for a phenomenological perspective of how the text, the author, and the researcher

interact (Bhattacharya, 2017). Heidegger believed that individuals' explanations of their

experiences revealed reality (Dibley et al., 2020). Heidegger's approach was called hermeneutic

phenomenology. Through the hermeneutic circle, which "is an ongoing, non-linear, circular and

iterative process, going from the parts to the whole and back again in a rigorous, circular process

of questioning, writing and thinking," the researcher gains an understanding of the phenomenon

(Dibley et al., 2020, p. 118). Dibley et al. (2020) explained the aim of this interpretive process as

a means to access the knowledge of the world one lives in through people's experiences and

interactions. Thus, the researcher interprets the data and is part of the interaction known in

hermeneutical phenomenology as a co-created meaning. To this end, Sandberg and Targama

(2007) assumed that language can represent reality since "researchers use it as a representational

system to objectively describe reality" (p. 23). Their assumption of the reality-language

correspondence concurred with Dibley et al.'s (2020) description of the interpretation process:

> The telling of the stories by the participants is an interpretation through language. All
> have their own horizon of understanding that continually expands through each new
> experience. A horizon of understanding each unique individual informs the interpretation
> of their experiences, which is formed by backgrounds and traditions that create the basis
> of understanding a person's world from their historical and social interpretations. The

researcher also has their own horizon of understanding that informs interpretations which becomes a fusion of horizons between the interpreter and the participants. (pp. 114–115)

Setting

The AG is a Christian mission-driving entity governed by the General Council. As a nonprofit organization, they seek to promote: "(1) concern for the promotion of the glory of God, (2) love for Christ through obedience to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19, 20), (3) an ardent desire 'to pluck brands from the burning,' and (4) compassion for the suffering who need some form of aid assistance or institutional care" (McGee, 2012a, 2012b). Equipping clergy as a missionary has been their primary concern since 1914. They believe in God's calling on the missional leader who, through formal training (e.g., Indiana School of Ministry, Evangel University, Global University), received the skills to make disciples in other countries. Self-propagation is a model of discipleship from which indigenous churches emerge and keep spreading the good news of Christ. This task requires a collaborative partnership beyond financial support between paid pastoral staff and volunteers. Thus, the staff-volunteer relationship is vital in the missiological operation of AG churches.

Participants

This study sought to understand the collaborative relationship between paid pastoral staff and volunteers within the AG's congregation, as perceived by the paid pastoral staff. The paid pastoral staff are responsible for making decisions and establishing an inclusive organizational culture. In addition, they are expected to equip their followers (Barna, 2022b; Botross, 2022; Chavez, 2021; Siew, 2021) with the necessary tools to continue Jesus' goal to make disciples from all nations. Thus, the population consisted of staff pastors in a paid position at an AG church who have held volunteer managerial responsibilities for at least one year. This study offered case-to-case transferability. As Eberle (2014) described,

transferability includes conveying "knowledge from a study to a specific new situation" (p. 184).

The research participants from the population of interest were paid pastoral staff currently employed in an AG church within the Great Lakes Region. Participants were required to be 18 years of age or older. According to the AG General Secretary's Office (2022), there are 1,300 registered churches in the Great Lakes Region. Participants were selected in two phases to narrow down the sampling. First, AG churches with an organizational infrastructure of 300–1,500 active members (i.e., large churches) were identified by email contacting the Indiana District Office as a starting point, requesting information for a church meeting this criterion. The suggested candidates were contacted via email communication (see Appendix A). The church size was not significant for this study, but it did assist in the recruitment process. The AG church directory provided information about affiliated churches by region. This source was also accessed to identify the target population. Only listed churches with website links were accessed. Churches not listing pastoral staff emails were not considered in this study. The goal was to identify 10 pastors in paid pastoral staff positions who had at least one year of experience managing volunteers and were available to participate in this study. This purposive sampling was feasible, followed by the second selection phase, snowball sampling. As Yin (2014) explained, snowball sampling is when "in the course of an interview, you might learn of other persons who can be interviewed" (p. 95). Snowball sampling suited this study's phenomenological design since the paid pastoral staff is a hard-to-reach population (Brooks, 2014; Chavez, 2021; De Oliveira, 2008). The objective was to recruit 10 participants with volunteer management experience who were representatives of AG churches.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is twofold. The researcher collects the data, which is a crucial process in the qualitative research approach. Since "qualitative research is interpretative research," the researcher analyzes the data manually or through computer software like Atlas.ti (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 183). Thus, the researcher collects and analyses the data. As a human, the researcher affects data interpretation and collection. The researcher must be aware of factors influencing their data interpretation, such as "their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 182). Reflexivity was used to communicate the researcher's past experiences and how these experiences can lead to different interpretations to ensure the validity of this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasized the ethical considerations that a researcher must anticipate throughout the research process, including the literature review, ensuring no plagiarism. According to Liberty University, the application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) using the Cayuse platform is required after the approval of the prospectus submission and hearing. As part of the IRB application, the permission letter, consent (see Appendix B), recruitment forms, and interview protocol (see Appendix C) were included. The IRB approval (see Appendix D) process was completed prior to data collection. It consisted of the following steps: (1) completing the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program); and (2) creating supplemental documents, such as letters for permission, recruitment, consent, and instruments to use with participants granting anonymity and confidentiality. The informed

consent forms were gathered before the interview discussed in the data collection section. These milestones preceded the execution of the research study.

The research topic and the purpose of the study were informed to the participants. Participants were notified that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants signed the consent forms before the initial interviews. During the data collection process, fair treatment to all participants was provided by restating the purpose of the study and giving them a copy of the interview protocol when they scheduled the interview.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) mentioned two other areas for ethical consideration. One area was the process of data analysis. Since the qualitative researcher is both the data collection and interpretation instrument, one must set clear procedures to "avoid disclosing only positive results" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 90). Dibley et al. (2020) mentioned the conflict surfacing from the researcher as an interpreter. The researchers stated that although conflict of interest may not prevent the researcher from doing the study, it required resolving and disclosing the issue (Dibley et al., 2020). Additionally, it was vital to maintain participants' anonymity. This ethical consideration was achieved by coding each participant's church and assigning a sequential number to the interviews (Erskine, 2004), as well as alphanumeric identifiers to participants (i.e., P1, P2, etc.). The list linking codes to participant identities was stored in a separate password-protected folder on a password-protected computer. Secondly, data management (e.g., storing, reporting, and sharing the data) should safeguard confidentiality and avoid plagiarism (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The use of the collected data was solely for the purpose of this research project. The data was backed up on an external hard drive (EHD) labeled "Dissertation EdD 2024." The EHD will be stored in a locked safe box for five years upon degree completion. After

five years from the completion of this project has passed, all information pertaining to the data collected for this study on the EHD will be erased.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

McGregor (2023) indicated that phenomenology determines the essence of human experiences, such as family life, as lived and described by participants, allowing the researchers to discover participants' life experiences through sustained engagement with and interpretation of their statements. The paid pastoral staff relationship with volunteers was studied through open-ended questions. The data was analyzed to assess the impact that the existing collaborative relationship, if any, has on the training, development, and inclusion of church volunteers toward the AG mission of self-propagation. This section discusses the data collection methods, protocol, and data analysis.

Collection Methods

The use of open-ended interviews and follow-up questions was necessary for data collection. After approval of the IRB and receiving the participants' consent, the data was maintained electronically. Participants were contacted via email and scheduled for virtual interviews on Zoom, which were recorded on an EHD labeled "Dissertation EdD 2024" and stored in a security box in the researcher's home office.

Implementing the task-related grand tour questions was appropriate to determine pastoral perceptions of volunteer engagement in the church setting. Bhattacharya (2017) explained that in task-related grand tour questions, an interviewer could ask the interviewee to draw, outline events, or complete another relevant task and then develop a dialogue based on the task. McGregor (2023) stated that qualitative research is tactical:

> A tactic is a particular maneuver or small-scale action made or carried out with only a limited or immediate end in view. Being tactical means being skilled at calculating a plan

of action to gain a temporary advantage and then changing tactics as the plan (the strategy) unfolds. (p. 6)

Therefore, to get the best responses from participants, the researcher must have follow-up questions or prompts (Turner, 2010). Swaminathan and Mulvihill (2017) suggested these follow-up questions to extract more information:

1. Can you tell me more about that?
2. Can you give me an example?
3. Am I understanding you correctly?
4. If I might summarize… Did I understand that properly?
5. Is there another story you recall that might illustrate what you mean?
6. How did that come to take place?
7. What do you wish had happened?
8. What if _____ had changed in the following ways?
9. What do you think is happening here?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about? (p. 48)

Instruments and Protocols

This study focused on the paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement in the missional ecclesiology. By evaluating paid pastoral staff's lived experiences as managers of volunteers, this study sought to understand the collaborative participation between volunteers and church leaders from an organizational perspective. The paid pastoral staff are the decision-makers setting an inclusive organizational culture. They are also expected to equip their congregants (Barna, 2022b; Botross, 2022; Chavez, 2021; Siew, 2021) to carry on Jesus' mission of making disciples of all nations through teaching, preaching, and baptisms. The implication was one of a self-propagating church (McGee, 2012b), characterized by the participation of the volunteers in the church's mission. Volunteer contribution must align with the church mission as well as with the paid pastoral staff's equipping efforts, creating the mutual interactions necessary for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Sandberg and Targama (2007) described the shift towards interpretative management research: "It becomes clear that it is impossible to separate a job from the person doing the job" (p. 32). The researchers argued that one's reality is shaped by

experiences and interactions with others. The research shift from studying the "human being and environment as two separate entities to people's lived experience or understanding of reality—provides an alternative explanation or view of what constitutes human action and activities in organizations" (Sandberg & Targama, 2007, p. 27). Therefore, the basis of the collaborative relationship between paid pastoral staff and volunteers in a church setting emerge from the understanding that paid pastoral staff have of the volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology (i.e., relational dimension) and how they see themselves as volunteer manager (i.e., organizational dimension) and equipper who is and makes disciples (i.e., spiritual dimension).

Interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to explore paid pastoral staff's lived experiences as volunteer managers. It also explored how their past experiences led them to where they are and influenced their interactions with volunteers. The semi-structured interview covered the following themes, although only some questions were asked.

1. Paid pastoral staff as managers of volunteers:
   a) How many years have you been serving in your current ministry?
   b) Can you describe the responsibilities and expectations for your current role?
   c) Do you perceive your current responsibilities as those of a volunteer manager?
   d) How would you describe your experience as a volunteer manager?
   e) How has your volunteer manager role contributed to volunteer engagement in the organizational mission at Assembly of God?
   f) What does it entail?

2. Paid pastoral staff as equippers:
   a) How does equipping volunteers to do ministry look like to you?
   b) Who is responsible for equipping the volunteers to do ministry?
   c) Do you need special skills to equip volunteers for ministry?
   d) How do you know a volunteer is equipped for ministry?

3. General knowledge of volunteer engagement:
   a) How would you describe the volunteers in your church?
   b) What percentage of your congregation is currently involved in ministry?
   c) How well can volunteers share their faith in their areas of service?
   d) What kinds of difficulties do they have?

The interviews concluded with the following question: "Are there any additional experiences in your life you think have contributed to your knowledge, ideas, or beliefs about volunteer engagement in the church's mission at the Assemblies of God?"

Procedures

Data saturation was used to ensure validity and reliability. Creswell and Creswell (2018) defined *saturation* as the point at which "the researcher stops collecting data because fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties" (p. 250). Two validity strategies were used in this study: bracketing and triangulation. Swaminathan and Mulvihill (2017) described *bracketing* as a dialogue with oneself—a reflexivity exercise that helps one ask oneself questions and be aware of one's own assumptions when asking interview questions. This includes bracketing "constructions, preconceptions, and assumptions that may be closely related to what is being researched" (Zeegers & Barron, 2015, p. 80).

The other validity strategy was triangulation. *Triangulation* is "to gain more than one perspective on what is being investigated" (Zeegers & Barron, 2015, p. 80). The qualitative researcher collects several data types relevant to the same study phenomenon to determine consistency or inconsistency (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Tobin and Begley (2004) noted that triangulation was used to expand their study and provide a deeper and more complete understanding of the phenomenon.

Data Analysis

Data gathering and analysis are affected by phenomenology's philosophical discourse (Bhattacharya, 2017). The interpretive design evaluates the nurture dynamics of paid pastoral staff towards volunteer engagement in the church's mission in AG churches. The collaborative endeavors between them are necessary for the self-propagating mission of the AG as an

organization seeking to fulfill the Great Commission. In this regard, this section discusses the data analysis and trustworthiness of the study.

Analysis Methods

Turner (2010) explained that open-ended questions during interviews allow participants to completely express their comments in as much detail as desired, making it difficult for researchers to extract similar themes or codes from the interview transcripts. Following Creswell and Creswell's (2018) steps of qualitative data analysis helps identify repeated patterns until reaching data saturation. First, the transcripts of the interviews provided the raw data. Second, this data was organized for analysis. Each interview transcript was identified with a sequential number to protect the participants' privacy. Then, the data was read three times: 1) to become familiar with the data, 2) to reflect on the meaning of the data, and 3) to start coding the data.

Next, the data was codified using Atlas.ti software. Flick (2014) suggested careful codification of data because "it is important to document who is saying what and in what context" (p. 500). This process was not linear, thus requiring copious time for reading and analyzing the data. Once the themes and descriptions were identified, they were represented in "a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 195). At this stage, the phenomenological researchers reduce data "by eliminating repetitive statements and data irrelevant to the phenomenon being examined" (Flick, 2014, p. 304).

Bhattacharya (2017) explained that qualitative data use inductive analysis for data processing. The raw data was categorized into small analytical units of meaning (typically termed codes), clustered into comparable analytical units, and named as categories to uncover prominent patterns after examining inside and across categories (usually called themes) (Bhattacharya, 2017). Lastly, the themes and descriptions were interpreted using an interpretive

framework. McGregor (2018) explained the qualitative interpretive research design as one aiming for "clarity of focus," where the researcher analyzes situations by putting pieces together (p. 8). They must fit the puzzle pieces to create the most explicit and informative image of the phenomenon, as stated by participants (McGregor, 2018).

Trustworthiness

According to Beck (2021), qualitative researchers must balance rigor and creativity without compromising the trustworthiness of the research. The standard of trustworthiness in qualitative research consists of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. This section discusses these four criteria substantiating the rigor of the current study.

Credibility

Reflexivity was used to maintain trustworthiness. *Reflexivity* is "the qualitative researchers' capacity to identify ways in which their own attitudes, beliefs and positioning might influence their understandings of the meanings and contexts what it is that they are researching" (Zeegers & Barron, 2015, p. 80). Vagle (2018) described researcher reflexivity as consistently examining how one's positionality, perspectives, backgrounds, and insights influence all aspects of a study—including but not limited to research design, data collection and analysis, choice of theories, use of theories, context of the study, selection of research participants, and communication of findings. Reflection and question on the subject under study was captured in a notebook. Beck (2021) indicated that "credibility relates to the confidence one can have in the truth of the findings" (p. 118). Hence, bias and pre-understanding of the topic were written in the notebook. Articulating knowledge and preconception are fundamental in an interpretative process analysis where the researcher co-creates the meaning of the phenomenon with the participants (Dibley et al., 2020; Sandberg & Targama, 2007). Vagle (2018) explained that

"interpretive phenomenologists assume that it not only is impossible to avoid bringing theoretical assumptions to the work of qualitative research, but it is also undesirable to avoid theory" (p. 81). Thus, the researcher's pre-understanding requires reflexibility, not bracketing, as in transcendental phenomenology.

Second, the credibility of the data-collecting process was enhanced through prolonged engagement, audio recording, and verbatim transcription, data triangulation, data saturation, and data coding analysis. Prolonged engagement consisted of an initial recruitment email with participants to inform the purpose of the study, followed by the virtual interviews, which lasted 60 minutes each. A follow-up interview of 30 minutes was scheduled after the initial reading of the data occurred and the need for clarification or data saturation emerged. The ethical guidelines mentioned earlier were followed to record and store interview transcripts during and after the completion of this research project. Data triangulation was conducted by "comparing multiple data sources in search of common themes" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 88). Participants' lived experiences as volunteer managers and equippers who makes disciples, along with their general knowledge of volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology, were compared to find emerging themes. The interview transcripts were uploaded to Atlas.ti software for data coding.

Dependability

The detailed presentation of the sample population selection, data gathering process, and interview protocol enhanced dependability. Høffding and Martiny (2016) argued that the validity of phenomenological research "should be understood in relation to the interview process, which means getting the interviewee to perform the acts that ensure validity in action" (p. 557). Participants received a digital copy of semi-structured questions when they scheduled the interview to foster dialogue in the interview.

Confirmability

A document for emergent themes and codification was created to use in the data analysis. The data collected in the study was made available for review by other researchers upon request.

Transferability

Leedy and Ormrod (2016) mentioned that in a phenomenological study, the researcher can make some generalizations of the phenomena based on "multiple perspectives on the same situation" (p. 255). This study may be transferable among AG churches since they share the same fundamental truths and seek to be self-propagating churches in obedience to the Great Commission. However, the transferability of the findings was limited to the context in which this research was conducted.

Chapter Summary

Understanding the collaborative relationship between the paid pastoral staff and volunteers for making disciples (i.e., self-propagation) requires a phenomenological research approach because it allows the researcher to investigate participants' perceptions and learn how people and communities live (Swinton & Mowat, 2006). This chapter presented the strategy for data collection and data analysis as means of knowledge informing the perception of paid pastoral staff on volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Overview

This qualitative phenomenological study sought to understand the paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology. Chapter One introduced the complexities of the staff-volunteer relationships and prevalent conflicting views hampering the staff-volunteer relationship collaboration. Chapter Two covered a brief overview of the literature and offered important theological, theoretical, and practical implications about the collaborative relationship between paid pastoral staff and church volunteers. Chapter Three presented the phenomenological research design that guided this study, the target population, the research methodologies and instruments, the acknowledged limitations and generalizations, and the analytical procedures employed. Chapter Four analyzes the participants' experiences as volunteer managers, presents the distilled data, and provides the results of one-on-one interviews.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

Data for this phenomenological study were collected through semi-structured interviews to discover paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement in the church's mission. First, the eligible study participants received an email scheduling the Zoom call, including the interview guide (see Appendix C) and consent form (see Appendix B). Thirteen one-on-one interviews via Zoom were conducted over four months (October 2023–January 2024). Each participant received a numerical identifier upon scheduling the interview. After consulting with the dissertation supervisor concerning the sample quota, it was determined that the study would include 10 participants. Thus, the last three scheduled interviews were not considered in the data analysis.

Second, each interview was recorded using the Zoom video and audio functions. Simultaneously, the interviews were recorded and transcribed with the Otter application. After recording, each interview was saved in a folder on a password-protected computer. The interview transcripts were formatted as a Word document and sent to participants for review. The videos and audio files were downloaded to the external hard drive (EHD) labeled "Dissertation EdD 2024" as a backup. Then, the audio and video files were erased from Zoom and Otter. Once the participants emailed back the interview transcripts, the revised documents were uploaded to Atlas.ti for coding.

Third, to ensure accurate data entry, the researcher listened to the audio recording in conjunction with the transcript for each participant as the first step of coding: familiarization. Each interview was read a second time to code "conceptual interest" and emerging codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 195). The third reading was for interpretation using Atlas.ti to facilitate the code occurrence analysis. Notes were captured in the reflexivity notebook and as memos in Atlas.ti to reduce personal biases (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). In a table using the Numbers application, the codes and themes were organized by participants' responses to the research questions (see Appendix E). This table facilitated the examination of the phenomenon using an interpretative approach and emphasizing clarity of focus (McGregor, 2018).

Demographic and Sample Data

The study focused on pastors who held a paid pastoral staff position in the AG denomination in the Great Lakes Region. Participants were selected based on age and experience, with the requirements of being older than 18 years old and having at least one year of experience as a volunteer manager. The decision to choose pastors within this denomination was based on the researcher's background and personal experience volunteering in an AG church in

the Indiana AG District. This decision was made due to the increase of pastoral burnout within

the denomination (Chavez, 2021; Visker et al., 2017), which was putting its missional approach

(McGee, 2012) at risk. By examining the experiences of paid pastoral staff, the researcher sought

to produce valuable insights that could assist other pastors and volunteer managers in cultivating

collaborative relationships within their church environments. Given their dual role as spiritual

leaders and organizational managers, paid pastoral staff were an ideal focus for this study.

      With this goal in mind, the researcher sought the permission of Liberty's Institutional

Review Board (IRB) to invite AG pastors in staff positions to participate in this study. Once that

approval was granted (see Appendix D), the researcher identified potential participants by

accessing the AG church directory and sending recruiting emails to pastoral staff whose emails

were on the church website, starting with the Indiana District and moving to other adjacent

districts within the Great Lake Region. This purposive sampling was followed by snowball

sampling. Additional emails were sent as a follow-up until the sample quota was obtained (see

Appendix F). The researcher identified 10 AG pastors and their churches in the Great Lakes

Region with volunteer management experience using a numerical identifier (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Information

Participant Identifier	Gender	Education	Church Identifier	Current Role	Staff position	Years in the Position	Total Years in Ministry
P1	Male	Master's Degree	C1	Children's Pastor	Fulltime	13	13
P2	Male	Bachelor's Degree	C2	Small Groups Pastor	Fulltime	1.5	8
P3	Female	Master's Degree	C3	Lead Pastor	Fulltime	0.5	14
P4	Female	Bachelor's Degree	C4	Children's Pastor	Part-time	5.5	5.5
P5	Male	Bachelor's Degree	C5	Lead Pastor	Fulltime	14.5	26
P6	Male	Bachelor's Degree	C6	Executive Team Leader	Fulltime	9	12
P7	Male	Master's Degree	C5	Pastor of Spiritual Formation	Fulltime	10	10
P8	Male	Associate degree	C7	Children's Pastor	Fulltime	2.5	12
P9	Male	Master's Degree	C8	Executive Pastor	Fulltime	3.5	3.5
P10	Female	Bachelor's Degree	C8	Associate Pastor— Worship, Women's Ministry, and Children	Fulltime	3	10

Note. P3 had seven years of experience as a connection pastor in the same church where she received the lead pastor position.

Data Analysis and Findings

Data collection for this study was conducted using a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C). The collected data was then analyzed thoroughly to identify themes and

relationships that provide valuable insights into the research questions. The succeeding section features a detailed discussion of each theme, including excerpts from participant interviews to explain the data interpretation further and explore the research questions that guided this study. Each participant was referred to using P and a sequential number (i.e., P1, P2, P3, etc.), and each church was referred to using C and a sequential number (i.e., C1, C2, C3, etc.).

Research Question One

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of paid pastoral staff managing volunteers to partake in the Great Commission at the Assemblies of God?

Theme 1: Paid Pastoral Staff Collaboration is the Foundation for Staff-Volunteer Relationships

The previous work experiences of paid pastoral staff have been linked to their relationship with their lead pastors. The instances where participants expressed negative experiences were due to the lead pastors' approach to pastoral ministry. In support of this position, P7 reported:

> Like I think back to my previous church, it wasn't a very healthy situation. And so, I came out of that recognizing, here's a, b, c, and d of things that I will not do when I'm leading a leadership team or a volunteer team.

The pastoral staff became frustrated in cases where the lead pastor believed that a pastor should do it all. P2, reporting on his observations of the unrealistic expectations for pastors, exclaimed, "Because you're the one that holds the title of pastor, you have to do everything because you're the only one that's qualified to do everything. And that's a very unfortunate perspective because that's not at all what Jesus taught."

Paid pastoral staff's previous work experiences shaped their volunteer management approach. Participants who experienced unsupportive work environments struggled to perform volunteer management tasks like recruiting volunteers. When speaking of the lived experiences

of paid pastoral staff managing volunteers, P2 noted, "I was, in my previous roles, I was really

frustrated by being a volunteer manager in that sense because I felt like I was supposed to rally

teams around something that I was doing anyway. And that's just not sustainable." P1 stated that

unsupportive environments hindered problem-solving among ministry leaders. He said, "Nobody

had time for that, like you just didn't have time to share was going to your ministries, and it was

just assumed." P1 also stated:

> So when you're going and needing to go through levels of bureaucracy in order to try things and you're consistently shut down, it does make you feel like "Okay, I'm set up for a no-win situation." If I can't put something on the website and I can't say something to the parents, but I'm supposed to recruit people, and I only have certain amount of time to do it. How's it supposed to happen exactly? So that that would be an unsupported environment.

When speaking of previous volunteer management experiences, P7 said, "The negative

things that I experience with leading a volunteer team was the leadership oversight not having

the back of me as a volunteer leader…just poor conflict resolution, I guess." P3 expressed that

her previous church had "no checks and balances and no oversight." These negative experiences

taught them what not to do as volunteer managers in subsequent ministerial position (P1, P2, P3,

& P7). P7 described: "So that was one big learning thing was if I'm ever overseeing a leadership,

someone leading a leadership team or even volunteers, I want to give them my full support… It's

keeping a unified front… Having open communication." The lessons learned from an

unsupportive environment were evident in their approach to volunteer management practices that

are addressed in the next theme.

Conversely, supportive church environments fostered leadership development and

promoted internal communication among paid pastoral staff. For example, P6 expressed that his

leadership style was based on performance deterring volunteer engagement. When speaking of

the support he received from his lead pastor, P6 said:

Loved him. Loved his heart. Loved how he pastored. He pastored with family first, which was really healing to me personally, because I was… I think I was pastoring with performance first, and that can be really damaging. But if you pastor with family first, I think that's the only right way to do it and go the distance. And so he fixed that in me.

P1 expressed that supportive church environment promoted collaboration through internal communication channels. P1 stated:

So here we do have that. I feel like our youth pastor knows very well what's going on in kids' ministry, or worship pastor knows what's going on in kids' ministry. I have an idea of what's going on with our outreach ministry. Because we do have a chance to talk about that internally.

The communication between paid pastoral staff and the lead pastor established the foundation for a supportive church environment. The collaborative relationships among pastoral staff were depicted in their willingness to execute the vision and mission of the church. Vision casting and leadership modeling emerged as sub-theme in the previous experiences paid pastoral staff had as volunteer managers.

Vision Casting. When paid pastoral staff catch the vision of the lead pastor and the lead pastor provides a supportive environment for the implementation of such vision, the paid pastoral staff in supportive roles (e.g., executive pastor, small group pastor, children's pastor) succeed at casting the church vision for their respective departments. For example, P2 pointed out the supportive environment in terms of vision casting when he said, "So**,** my senior leader is constantly engaging with me around my vision, strategies and goals for the year." In this church (C2), the paid pastoral staff worked together providing check and balances, carrying on the church's vision as team. In addition, P2 commented about aligning efforts to meet the needs of the church:

We've identified some goals that are set for me, from our lead pastor and our senior leaders like, "Hey, we need to see growth in the number of small group leaders." Like we're growing as a church we've gone from 1,500 to 1,700, in consistent attendance for this year. So, we should see that growth also happening in our small group leaders, in terms of how many groups we have to offer.

Likewise, P1 expressed that collaborative relationship among paid pastoral staff was important in meeting church needs: "So, if our church has certain numbers of purposes, certain numbers of goals, those become our goals as well. So, I try really hard to align what we are doing in kids' ministry to directly support the church's ministries." Further, P6 explained, "My role is really in ensuring that the way that our pastor wants to develop disciples for Jesus and raise leaders, making sure that that is happening in a unified and accountable way." Once the paid pastoral staff casted the church's vision, they welcomed others to participate in the mission through their volunteer management practices.

Leadership Modeling. Among participants, one of the most cited areas of the collaborative relationship in church settings as volunteer managers was leadership modeling (P2, P3, & P9). When speaking of the leadership modeling, P2 described, "It's a hierarchy of discipleship. That's all it is. It's the follow-me-as-I-follow-Christ thing and it just works down the line. We have systems for what that looks like, but to put it as simply as possible." Similarly, P8 noted:

> There's a level of commitment to ministry that I've seen over the years that's required and necessary to be able to be there for your team. That I don't know had that not been modeled for me that I don't know if even now just if I hadn't had those experiences that the average Joe would know even how to respond to.

This was echoed by P6, who believed that there was a level of responsibility to walk with others in a discipleship process through leadership modeling. P6 spoke to this reality when he stated:

> "Hey, come volunteer at [C6]" is the beginning of a pathway. That pathway will eventually invite them to go deeper into Scripture about what it means to be a leader and it's essentially defining how Christ defined a leader, which is a servant, somebody who is humble and teachable and loves Jesus and loves people… and we walk them through those scriptures and that process. And then, "Hey, why don't you just shadow me in how we minister to people inside of children's ministry, youth ministry, young adults, ministry, adult ministry, small groups, outreach, ministering to widows or ministering the poor, like, what in whatever way really compels your heart? Come walk with me, come follow me through this." And all of a sudden, they're not volunteering anymore. They're tapping into the very spirit of God and they are coming alive inside.

Further, when considering the leadership modeling in supportive church environment, P3 noted:

> But we started at the team member level, everybody's team members and we start pulling people beside us to train them into team leaders. So, we pull them beside us, we show them what we do, we care for, and that was the whole point of becoming, or creating an organizational system.

Leadership modeling was embedded in the collaborative dynamics among paid pastoral staff to carry the church's vision and it was present in the volunteer management practices. P9 claimed, "Well, basically, anything we would ask a volunteer to do, someone on staff has already done before. So, we generally have an idea of what it takes to do that." Thus, the leadership modeling was a purposive strategy for volunteer engagement among participants (P1, P2, P3, P6, P8, P9, & P10).

Theme 2: The Paid Pastoral Staff's Perceptions of the Volunteer Management Role

Participants perceived their role as volunteer managers as an expectation of their ministerial position. The ministerial positions represented in this study were identified in Table 1. According to P2, "Yeah, I mean, yes, absolutely. I don't think… I would say Jesus's role was volunteer manager too." P8 also agreed to the volunteer manager role when he explained, "That is part of the role. Yes, absolutely." P4 expressed that the role of volunteer manager was embedded in the children's pastoral role:

> Yeah, I guess so. Yeah, because I guess I am kind of managing the volunteers and what's going on […] I just never thought about it. I've never thought about that before. But yeah, it's probably one of those things that like over the time, you don't realize that you're doing but you're doing it. You know what I mean?

All participants agreed that volunteer managers were responsible for recruiting, coordinating, and retaining volunteers. The way paid pastoral staff handled volunteer engagement was through relationships. In support of this position, P8 argued:

> So as far as the actual role itself the primary driver behind that is care. A lot of the care that's provided to the volunteers from the spiritual aspect from a relational aspect because I have the title of pastor.

Similarly, P10 stated, "So, you know, so I believe really strongly that discipleship and mentorship and community, it has to come out of relationships. And so, me really making an effort to have a relationship with our area." According to P2, "So that's a volunteer manager. It is very personal. It's very relational. It's not volunteer management, that you would typically see." This perception of volunteer management was echoed by P3, who believed that organizational structure should reflect this collaborative relationship. P3 stated:

> So now in our volunteer leadership, that continual care for them, and that continual reminder that discipleship is a call like disciple. This is what it is. We can call it anything we want. We can call it, you know, the pipeline is discipleship.

Recruiting. The recruiting or onboarding process was the initial step for volunteer engagement (P3, P2, & P6). When reflecting on the recruiting process, P7 stated, "I see volunteering as a discipleship step. I think that when we serve, we are discipled more than we realize." Likewise, P6 noted:

> We have like kind of a core value here that every member is a minister of and that's straight from the Bible. The Bible says that we are all members of reconciliation… are all ministers of reconciliation. So, the moment that you give your life to Jesus Christ become born again; as the Scripture says, you are connected with God, and you have a purpose and a calling.

Making disciples through volunteerism depicts an inclusive organizational culture, making it easy for volunteers to serve (P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, & P10). According to P6, "The inclusive culture allows people to serve regardless of their time in church or their level of maturity. There is room to grow spiritually through three learning environments: personal prayer and worship, small groups (Life Groups), and serving teams." In addition, P9 stated, "Everyone is called. We're all called to love God, self, and others through making disciples who make disciples. And we're all called to bear faithful witness. And those are not unique to me, or to pastors." This perspective depicted participants' beliefs in the priesthood of all believers.

Similarly, P2 agreed, "We're all called to the ministry, you know, we all have different roles and levels in what we're called to, but we're all called to make disciples. And what is pastoring if it's not discipleship, and making disciples?" Thus, their recruitment process started by casting the vision, as P8 said, "The clearer the vision the more clarity there is to the reason why someone wants to get involved in." P2 also stated emphatically a desire for vision casting as the primary step in the recruiting process:

> My favorite leadership quote is, "If you want to build a ship, don't just divide out the materials and divide out the responsibilities and bark orders. If you want to build a ship, teach the people to long for the vast and endless sea."

Paid pastoral staff used different venues to communicate the vision and promote volunteer engagement: Pulpit (P4 & P7), personal invitation (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P9, & P10), and volunteer-to-volunteer recruiting (P7 & P9). For example, P9 said:

> Like our Sunday, our adult Sunday school teacher, when they're not going to be here, they go out they are the ones who prep all of their own replacements. So, like they've delegated down and find substitute teachers for them on their own. But that's not always the case.

> For children's pastors, relying on parents' collaboration was a common recruiting

practice (P1 & P4). P4 said, "Because we kind of always ran the nursery in like a collab, you know. If you have a child and ministry, then you should be serving." However, P8 expressed that parents did not always welcome this view. He argued, "Particularly parents don't like serving in kids' ministry, because they've got kids of their own and they want to get away from. I guess it just about momentary time."

There were regulations and different onboarding processes for volunteers serving in the children's ministry than for volunteers serving in other ministries. Volunteers in the children's ministry needed a background check. According to P10, the recruitment process for children's ministry was "geared towards the screening process, towards discipleship, and… they have a

some baseline theology… because all volunteers who work with minors are required to be members and approved… you know, liability and things like that." P9, who served with P10, emphasized the district requirement for serving in the children's ministry: "So if they're teaching kids' ministry, they have to be a church member. They have to have a background check. Those are like the two hard and fast requirements." Small group leaders hosted groups based on interest (P5, P7, & P9), not qualification, except scriptural teaching (P7). In support of this position, P9 reported, "If people want to like teach a Bible study, that requires vetting by both the lead pastor and I regarding their material and their qualification to teach that class." Volunteers in the worship team had a different onboarding due to their public exposure. When speaking of the worship team recruitment process, P9 said, "So, if you have to be on the worship team… They've got a whole onboarding process that's like a month-long or something like that or two months long before they can go on the platform."

Nonetheless, the participants agreed that volunteers in leadership/teacher roles must be church members (P1, P4, P7, P8, P9, & P10). Sunday attendees were not necessarily considered members of the church (P10). To become a member of the church, volunteers must complete a series of classes that provide information about the church and its service opportunities (P2, P3, P6, P5, P6, P7, P9, & P10). P6 stated, "Growth track describes, you know who we are our history here, our mission, our core values, our purpose, talks about three different environments that we believe every disciple should have active in their life." In addition, when considering the difference between members and regular attendees, P10 noted:

> Membership for us is just commitment to the body and our first steps for engaging congregation members in discipleship and opportunities for like next level serving so working with minors and leadership roles. So, our members are folks that have gone through like an orientation and conversations with the pastors approved by our board, and you know, kind of accepted into the congregation but like we do like a prayer and a welcoming you know, just to just to make them feel comfortable in at home.

Coordinating. Another role for paid pastoral staff in volunteer management was resource facilitator. They were primary responsible for providing service opportunities to volunteers and the resources to do their tasks (P1, P4, P7, P9, & P10). For example, P10 described coordinating tasks:

> My role includes scheduling teams, and I'm providing any logistic needs. So, like on worship team, it's printing chord charts, and you know, providing communication for practice spaces making sure that practice space is up to code and up to par for what we need and making sure that volunteers have everything they need when they come to a space for practice. For children's, it's providing resources and materials doing communication, making sure that so because that's a minor's team, providing them with any kind of training that they need, so like health classes and background checks to meet, you know, just minor screening, things like that, and those classes, and then for our women's team that's a little bit more fellowship oriented.

Likewise, P4 stated, "So, I guess, just making sure that they have what they need, making sure that I'm getting curriculum to people in advance, also making sure that they know what we're teaching the kids." The coordination also included conversations to find the right fit for volunteers to serve. The language participants used to describe job-fit strategy was gift identification (P1, P2, P5, P6, & P10). For P7, the job-fit process consisted of various steps:

> The process for teams is there's an initial connection is a sit-down meeting, there's a trial period, and then they either serve or they come back to me, and we send them down to another ministry and repeat that process until we find a fit.

P9 also commented about job-fit that "volunteer for… management is about providing opportunities. So, if people are like, 'Hey, I want to do this thing.' 'Okay, cool. Let's find that opportunity for you.' Let's see how this is gonna work." Further, when considering the job-fit as spiritual gift identification, P10 noted:

> So, some another expectation, I would say would be identifying the spiritual giftings that people have as their onboarding and as they're serving so that their role is more about them serving the body based on who they are and not serving based on what someone tells them to do or what they think they have to do.

A significant theme woven throughout participant responses was that the paid pastoral staff desired to develop volunteer leadership. Participants tended to engage the volunteers in leadership roles, using terms like directors, coaches, team leaders, small group leaders (P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, & P10). Volunteer leadership development took intentionality and time. P3 expressed:

> We started from the bottom up, I think the hardest ones are and I say high octane. Those people that you have now pulled up and you've pulled up and you pulled up and you get them to the place of "Okay, I actually want you to be a director. I want you to oversee this whole thing." And so, you're gonna have oversight.

P1 stated, "So, I'm always trying to promote leadership inside the team. And so, if we see somebody that clearly has good communication skills or great people skills, we invite them to become a coach." Likewise, P2 developed volunteer leadership by building rapport:

> Then, I am also training, and I invite personally, coaches and these coaches are mature followers of Christ that I have seen them walk out, discipleship and disciple making as a small group leader or in their own relationships with people around them and people in their area of influence.

Retaining. Volunteer retention increased when volunteers derived a sense of meaning (Hjort & Skræddergaard, 2021; Michaelson, 2021; Nesbit et al., 2018; van Aarde, 2017) and belonging (Itzhaki and Cnaan, 2019; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Neal, 2000; Valente & Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2021) in their area of service. The church provided the meaningful work as their relationships developed based on the missional belief of kingdom work (P2, P5, P6, P7, & P9). According to P6, "These are all just volunteering, but I think in some cases, there's not a need for money, I think there's a need for meaning." Job-fit was a retention element practiced among participants. For example, P1 expressed that ensuring volunteer job-fit is a retention component: "That I would say, 'Okay, we've saved a team member, she's now serving in a spot that she actually likes. And she's equipped for that as opposed to the last place she wasn't really equipped for that." Similarly, P5 exclaimed:

> We want the mentality that says we want you to find your place, your fit. There's the key, which means that if you try out something and you find out, this is not my fit, we don't want you to serve there.

Job-fit strategy had a training component that looked different in children's ministry than it did to small groups. To work with children, volunteers needed "to be able to unpack their faith in a way that is meaningful… really meaningful to the children," according to P8. Volunteers serving in children's ministry benefitted from communicating biblical truths at the children's level. Concerning this training need, P8 went on to state, "Just biblical understanding, you know, how to teach specific aspects of the Trinity that ends, or you know, just some of those, those foundational things." The volunteer training depended on the area of service and level of responsibility. According to P10, "My definition, maintenance includes training up potential leaders within those teams who can have like those next level responsibilities." Figure 1 summarized the perceptions of the volunteer manager role in the church.

Figure 1

Perceptions of the Volunteer Manager Role in the Church
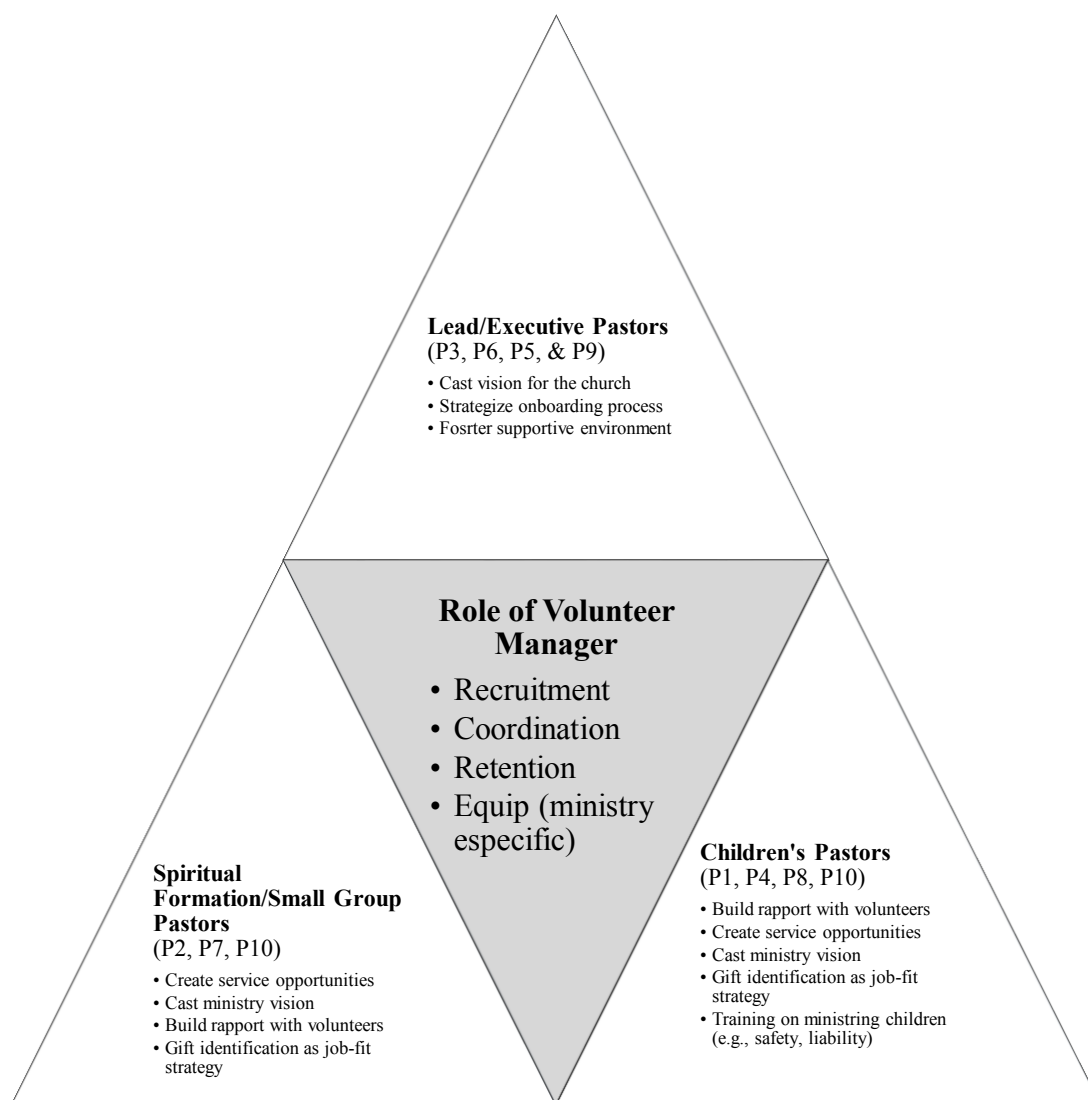
Challenges of Volunteer Managers. The volunteer manager role in a church setting was complex. The paid pastoral staff understood the role's responsibilities and expectations to be relational. The workload for volunteer managers was described by P1:

> So, overall, I would say, that volunteer management is one of the biggest challenges of this type of job in general. Kids' ministry pastor has a lot of recruiting, a lot of staffing, a lot training, and then retaining teams. It's the biggest challenge… I would say or at least one of the biggest challenges. And that doesn't mean it's bad. It's just that is one of the

biggest challenges, right? Because people will join your team for different reasons, but they stay because of their relationships.

Similarly, P9 described his workload:

> Yeah, so it's a lot. I run our Church administration side. I am really frequently in the preaching rotation. So probably 35% to 40% of the week I'm in the preaching rotation. I'm in the children's ministry rotation as well. I run our Nursing Home Ministry.

Regarding the volunteer manager role expectations, P8 said, "The expectation of doing a million different things but a little pay is pretty common in midsize church." P7 provided a different perspective to the discussion by expressing that shared expectations were taxing. He said, "And by that, I mean what the expectations of the church have for that position, versus the expectation of what the leader or the volunteer has for that position and trying to find a common grounds." For example, P8 argued that relational expectation needed to change with church size. He exclaimed, "So the larger the ministry becomes, the more volunteers you have. All right. And the expectation is that you are in relationship with each volunteer, but you can't. You just can't." Table 2 shows the church size and the volunteer engagement perceived by paid pastoral staff.

Table 2

Church Information

Church Identifier	Location	Sunday Attendance	Classification	Volunteer Engagement
C1	Indiana	1,000	Large church	90
C2	Indiana	1,700	Large church	500+
C3	Indiana	350	Medium church	150
C4	Indiana	160	Small church	30
C5	Michigan	300–350	Medium church	105–140
C6	Michigan	1,000–1,300	Large church	700–910
C7	Michigan	500	Medium church	35–45
C8	Ohio	130-150	Small church	41–49

Note. Participants provided an estimate for the Sunday attendance. The number of volunteers reflected the participants' perception of volunteer engagement in their area of responsibility.

In C7, where P8 served as a children's pastor, there was a 9% participation rate in the children's ministry. Thus, the implication of having a personal relationship with each volunteer was unrealistic. P8 spoke to this reality when he described how staff-volunteer relationships were similar to a counselor-client relationship. He stated, "It's much like in a counseling relationship, where the counselor can't get fully engaged in this client's needs because it's not his job to… you know… confide in the client." The frustration in staff-volunteer relationships emerged from the one-sided relationship where the pastor provided a friendship that was not reciprocated. P8 described the staff-volunteer relationship:

> So, in a typical human relationship, if you've come to me with a need and I help meet that need, the reciprocity would be… you would then, therefore, feel comfortable than with me coming to you with a need and that need being met as well. That doesn't take place in the pastoral relationship.

Similarly, P6 described the relational aspect of volunteer management:

> The difficulty and all of that stuff is just the stress of managing some of the tough situations that you're faced with and helping people with benevolence programs or housing or community or food or whatever, whatever the obstacle is.

The volunteer managers' contribution to the church organization extended beyond spiritual counseling. The expectation was to do life with their volunteers (further discussion on the relational dimension of volunteer management will be discussed in the RQ2 findings). This expectation was echoed by P6, who expressed the stress of helping people during hardship: "That's helping them get back on track with life. You know, those are those are stressful situations." Likewise, P2 expressed the pastor as the first responder for people in hardship:

> I get to see a lot of people in their first steps of discipleship because most people that come here, the first thing they want to do if they're having an issue, or if they desire to be part of the church is talk to a pastor.

In addition to the relational expectations for volunteer managers, P4 expressed recruiting and retention concerns due to volunteers' mobility. She stated, "We have more people that stay then go, but… you know… sometimes you have needs where you just need more volunteers and that's always hard, like finding more volunteers." According to P8, managing volunteers in the children's ministry is "frustrating. I mean, I love volunteers. But the truth is, there's a level of accountability that only comes with pay grade."

Other Findings

Credentialing. The ministerial credentialing process was different for each participant. There were three levels in the AG credentialing process: credentialing, licensing, and ordination. Paid pastoral staff were not required to have them to serve as paid pastoral staff. According to P3, "You could become a certified pastor, which meant you had a lot of checks and balances... everything you did you answer to your church, you answer to your leadership." P3 was the only participant that went to the Indiana School of Ministry (ISOM) for four years and received her ordination. She emphasized the need to further her studies to serve others well: "I can go off, yes, my limited biblical knowledge or my limited personal knowledge life experience, but I feel that I have a responsibility to learn as much as I can learn to be able to best equip people." Others opted to get credentialed through different organizations like Fellowship and Christian Association (P6) and Messenger Fellowship (P10).

The value of the AG credentialing process needed to be clarified. P4 expressed that credentialing was not a priority. She stated:

> Like take the test that people who go through ISOM have to take a test at the end. That's all I have to do to be able to do it. I've just never saw the need like when our church is always not necessarily has always done like what the AG, you know, district or whatever does.

Likewise, P6 expressed concern about not having AG credentials to his senior pastor: "'Hey, do you want me to like officially, like be licensed with the Assemblies of God?' And he's like, 'No, no, nothing really needed at this point to do that.'" P2 added a layer to the conversation when he said, "The credentialing process is not seminary. It is training… biblical training." This training was waived when participants had a Bible degree (P4 & P6) or were ordained through affiliated organizations (P6 & P10). Further, P3 stated, "What the Assembly of God has done is they have created their own school. It is not accredited. And so that's why I still went back to school on my own. Anyhow." The paid pastoral staff would benefit from additional training in organizational management to better execute their volunteer manager role. For further discussion on this training need, see findings in RQ3.

From Volunteer to Paid Pastoral Staff. The commonality between paid pastoral staff and volunteers was their willingness to serve. For example, P3 described her process of becoming a paid pastoral staff:

> I'm a natural gap filler. And so, that's one of the gaps that I saw. Like, okay, literally, my meeting when I said I feel like God is calling me to serve the women of this church. I will serve them. How you want me to serve them? … "Great, awesome. We're so excited to have you on board. Go change our world," not where we need you to do A, B, C, D.

For the children's pastor at C4, the process of becoming a paid pastoral staff was automatic. She said, "We've always kind of hired from within house for positions in the church, like raise people up for those positions." Similarly, P6 started an executive position by his disposition to assist the lead pastor. He described the process:

> And then after two years of that, he said, "Hey, do you want to be like this executive team leader person?" And I was like, "Hey, I'm here because the Lord told me to come here and support you. So I'll do whatever you want me to do." And that that's the best role that you feel that helps you the best, I'll do it. I had no idea what I was saying yes to probably still don't to this day.

For some of the paid pastoral staff, their positions had emerged out of a church need. They served as a volunteer first, and their perseverance executing the role without pay opened an opportunity for them to manage that area of service (P3, P4, P7, & P12). For others, their commitment to serve God in any capacity available opened doors to serve in a paid position (P6, P9, & P10). Ministerial credentials were not a requirement at the time of assuming the paid pastoral position. Their pastoral credentialing process started after they assumed the paid staff position. Thus, AG credentialing was not a qualification for the paid pastoral staff role as a volunteer manager.

Role Clarity. The job description for paid pastoral staff was not always well-defined. One reason was the role emergence. P7 explained why he had no job description:

My role was a new role. And I think two years ago is when I switched to my current role as spiritual formation pastor, and it came out of the desire to have someone that can actually oversee our Discipleship Ministries.

The absence of job descriptions may have stemmed from differing viewpoints regarding a job and a ministry. P6 explained this difference in terms of the church's uniqueness:

We don't call these job descriptions like when somebody's on staff, we call them ministry descriptions, because we never want to, like relegate this to a career. This is something that we really understand and is eternal in its nature.

Although job descriptions were not essential in the role execution of paid pastoral staff as volunteer managers (P1, P4, & P7), they were critical factors in volunteer engagement. To this end, P8 stated that "you have to because you're never going to actually accomplish anything with a large amount of people without roles and responsibilities. Without clearly defined start times and times, you know." P3 confirmed the need for written expectations when she said, "And so, for me, what I learned quickly is my best route is to have it on paper." The reason for having written expectations for volunteers' roles and responsibilities in the church was that it facilitated

the communication and reproduction of volunteers helping volunteers. For example, P3, in

response to the need for clear communication of role expectations to volunteers, frankly noted:

> These are the general expectations you were caring for people. You are, you know, helping them to know God more and draw nearer to him, and you are reminding them that it is all about them now doing the same for other people.

RQ1 Summary

Participants were asked to describe and discuss their perceptions of their role as a

volunteer manager. They were able to articulate the complexity of this role, drawing on their

years of experience in pastoral ministry. They emphasized the importance of staff collaboration

(i.e., the relationship between staff pastors and senior pastors), which reflected the church's

capacity to engage volunteers in ministry. Paid pastoral staff expressed how the supportive

environment allowed them to cast a vision for their ministry and receive support for recruiting

volunteers. The volunteer manager's role was intertwined with their pastoral responsibility, such

as scriptural teaching and pastoral counseling. This role was crucial in volunteer engagement, as

it created opportunities for volunteer service in the congregation and outreach events. By

employing job-fit strategies, they enabled volunteers to serve effectively. Therefore, the paid

pastoral role in the AG churches was not ambiguous but rather complex and multifaceted.

Research Question Two

RQ2: How do the Assemblies of God paid pastoral staff describe their staff-volunteer

relationship?

Theme 3: Supportive Environment Fosters Collaborative Relationships

The church leadership structure is collaborative when paid pastoral staff work together to

fulfill the church mission. When reflecting on their role expectations and responsibilities as a

volunteer manager in a supportive environment, P9 stated, "We've chosen to structure our staff

and that so like all of this feedback stuff is just part of our job and so it's not that like, inherently

where any of us are like super overburdened with work." Likewise, P1 expressed that a

supportive environment starts with the paid pastoral staff working together to solve volunteer

shortages. He described an example:

> In order to have support for the adult connect groups, we need to have more volunteers
> on the kids' side. So, we talked about it as a staff. And one of the ideas that I came up
> with was having small group leaders come and rotate once a trimester because we do it
> based on a trimester system. It's like, "Hey, let's just have each group leader sign up for
> one Wednesday where they come with their group; and so out of the 13 weeks, they take
> one to come alongside the kids' team and basically be extra hands in the rooms."

Further, P2 stated, "So, my senior leader is constantly engaging with me around my vision,

strategies and goals for the year." The paid pastoral staff collaboration to work, solve problems,

and give encouragement fostered a supportive environment where volunteer engagement can

flourish. The collaborative relationship among paid pastoral staff greatly influenced volunteer

engagement. The paid pastoral staff expressed concern about the volunteer workload by

identifying potential volunteer burnout. In those cases, the paid pastoral staff took the initiative

to address the issue by initiating conversation with the volunteers. P5 spoke to this reality when

he said, "You know, if people are spread out thin, then I want to make sure that we're not adding

to the issue." He went on to illustrate an initial conversation with volunteers on the verge of

burnout:

> Like when I remember meeting a beautiful couple at our church… And I heard them
> talking one day about where they were serving. So, I said, "I would love to sit down with
> you and have a conversation about serving." "Absolutely pastor." And I found out they
> were serving in 14 different areas. And so, I said, "Today you have to quit twelve of
> them." They go, "Did we do something wrong?" "You're not wrong, but you're married.
> You've got kids. You've got grandkids. You've got a life, and the church can't burn you
> out. We're here to help give life not take it from you." I wanted them to know that I
> valued their lives and not just valued church.

Similarly, P4 noted the following:

> If somebody is serving and something else, I don't necessarily like for them to serve in
> the kids' ministry because I don't want to burn anyone out. So, you know… sometimes

somebody's serving in worship, or the worship team already, so I don't necessarily want to put them on the kids' ministry team.

The paid pastoral staff approach to volunteer engagement was relational, meaning that the volunteer's well-being had priority over the service that they can provide to the church (P5). An important aspect of the volunteer manager's role in a church setting was to maintain open communication to prevent volunteer burnout. This attitude towards volunteer engagement depicted the caring nature of the staff-volunteer relationship.

Theme 4: The Christian Identity is to Serve

For Christians, serving others is central to who they are (P1, P2, P5, P6, & P7). P5 expressed that serving is an attribute of the Imago Dei:

> When we don't serve we're missing a part of who we are… You are working out your salvation with fear and trembling, that Imago Dei is getting fine tuning in your life. And serving helps rub away the culture around us and begins to see the culture of the kingdom beginning to rise in our lives.

Similarly, P1 exclaimed, "'Hey, you're a believer. This is what it means to be a Christian. We share our faith with others, we serve others in need,' like this is just who we are, because that's what Jesus did." Therefore, the paid pastoral staff demonstrated service through collaborative relationships with volunteers to model Jesus' leadership.

To understand the relationship dynamics between paid pastoral staff and church volunteers, one must look at the dual aspect of the relationship. The vertical aspect was a relationship with the Triune God through the dependence on Him. P10 explained the vertical relationship as a missional calling:

> So, our mission, our vision is people helping people connect to God. And so, you have to have people who are confident in their relationship with God and their ability to serve before they are able to really connect people with God and so if they can't love and serve one another in the body, how on earth can they serve and love people outside of the body?

Likewise, P6 indicated that the missional calling is discipleship when he said, "Our mission statement is to make disciples for Jesus that are healthy, growing and full of love." This was echoed by P3, who believed that the vertical relationship qualified a volunteer for a leadership role: "I think first and foremost is their passion for God. Secondly, would be their passion and care for people." Thus, the perspective for volunteer engagement lied on the belief that God propels church volunteers' acts of service.

The horizontal aspect was the relationship among paid pastoral staff and volunteers. According to P1, "Whatever it is, we let them do some self-diagnosis on the front. And then as they begin to serve, this is the third part is we look for leadership." P6 also agreed, stating, "And a lot of that discovery happens through the act of serving or the act of giving or the act of loving like different aspects that make those things come alive." The horizontal relationship extended beyond the church context. P5 spoke to this reality when he shared, "And so that's why discipleship can't be the Sunday morning goal. That's vision casting. That's proclamation. That's all wonderful. Discipleship has to be integrated in everything that we do." When reflecting on the discipleship components, P2 stated, "That there's relationship happening, connection happening around the word, they're praying together, and they're being discipled in whatever they're doing." In addition, P10 stated that horizontal relationships provided opportunities to connect intergenerationally: "Like it's created open doors for generational connection and community just because we have people saying yes to serving in children's ministry once or twice a month, and that's connecting them with our young adults and with the children." Thus, discipleship was embedded in the call to serve.

Theme 5: Positive Perception of Volunteer Engagement

Among participants, one of the most-cited descriptions for church volunteers was the word "amazing" (P3, P4, P5, P6, & P10). P4 pointed out the valuable contribution of volunteers to the church, noting: "So, you cannot run a church without your volunteers. You just cannot. It's going… I mean, it just… it's not going to happen. A church happens because of its people." See Table 3 for the volunteer descriptors. The perception of church volunteerism as discipleship provided a strong why, along with a new perspective on church volunteerism by considering volunteers as more than just assistants to the paid pastoral staff. This approach enhanced their ownership and sense of belonging, leading to greater commitment and retention (P1, P2, & P7).

Table 3

Volunteer as Perceived by Paid Pastoral Staff

Value	Volunteer Descriptor	Example Statement
Volunteer Attitude	amazing, servant heart, committed, joyful, courageous, kind, caring	P3: The ones that we have are amazing. They are just full of life looking for opportunity to care for people."
		P8: Kind and caring. People with high integrity. Some professionals some not. All different backgrounds.
Demographic	diverse, multiethnic, multigenerational	P9: Diverse in how in we have diverse ages we have diverse, like ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, but also diverse in capacity and like a skill set and willingness to volunteer and availability to volunteer.
Financial Support	generous	P6: It's people here are jeez, I mean, super generous, amazing people. They are some of the more kind people that I've ever met.... we raise like over, close to $2 million one year for the missionaries that we support in like 122 different countries.

The paid pastoral staff expressed optimism about volunteer engagement due to a job-fit strategy (discussed in RQ1). In support of this position, P7 reported that "30% to 40% of our church is serving." He also claimed, "They're joyful… We've been so intentional with telling

people if you're going to serve, I want you to serve because you enjoy it because you're doing something that you are gifted in, that you're passionate about." Similarly, P8 said, "Overall, we have a pretty good percentage. I would say more than 60% are involved in some sort of volunteer-related ministry role." Further, P2 explained:

> Very loyal and genuinely excited to be engaged. And that's something that is very rare. And one of the huge reasons that it's so fun to be here. My lead pastor is very good at saying it this way, "I don't want something from you, I want something for you."

For the paid pastoral staff, investing in volunteer engagement was a rewarding experience. When speaking on discipleship as the first step of volunteer engagement, P2 said, "The long and short of it is… it is exhilarating because I get to see how the Lord is changing and shifting and healing people and calling them into all that He has for them." P10, regarding the relational opportunities of volunteer management, observed:

> I see firsthand transformation that's happening because people are saying yes to Jesus and they're being willing to serve on a weekly basis, on a biweekly basis, on a monthly basis, and because they're serving, and because they're open to the Holy Spirit in that serving place. There's just such a significant transformation that's happening. And to me, that is evidence of who God is and of his work happening. You know what I mean? It's little miracles, it's not big, crazy miracles, but it's miracle because people are changing.

The volunteer management role of paid pastoral staff contributed to the volunteer realization of God's call, expressed through acts of service, but not limited to church volunteerism (P1, P2, P5, & P6). The paid pastoral staff approached the volunteer engagement as discipleship, implying the spiritual dimension of the relationship. Thus, the paid pastoral staff were the spiritual equipper empowering volunteers to serve in diverse capacities.

Theme 6: Hindrances to Volunteer Engagement

There were three major hindrances to volunteer engagement in church settings. First, volunteers had limited serving time (P1, P3, P4, P5, & P9). According to P1, "The biggest difficulty that people face is time. There is a lot of demands on people's time, and we hear about

that as the number one thing to be here, right?" P5 also agreed, stating, "I think difficulties that

volunteers experience is… I think the number one difficulty is their time is so parsed out in life."

P9 expressed that the time constraints concerned volunteers willing to serve, as he observed:

> So, I would say like capacity and like knowing capacity, so whether that is not having as much time or capacity as they want to. And then overcommitting and like feeling guilty that they overcommitted or… yeah, I mean, that's a big one. It is ultimately like the… I think… one of the biggest obstacles is people want to do more. They just can't.

The other hindrance to volunteer engagement was the need for more self-confidence to

do the volunteer activity implied in service as a response to a divine calling. Volunteers who

lacked an experiential relationship with God (i.e., vertical relationship discussed earlier) lacked

confidence in sharing their faith with the people that they serve. P8 spoke this reality when he

said, "And some of them just frankly have not had as experiential of a relationship with God as

others so for them, it's not as palatable, it's not something that they can fully express." In

contrast, volunteers who had experienced God in terms of calling did struggle to materialize the

call. Likewise, volunteers who materialized their calling by serving according to their spiritual

gifting were happier (P2, P5, P6, & P7). Church volunteering was a collaborative effort between

volunteers and paid pastoral staff in identifying and utilizing spiritual gifts. Both parties worked

together to ensure that each volunteer's unique talents were recognized and put to good use in

serving the church congregation. P2 commented, "But that means that everyone is in the role

they've chosen, and they're excited about it. They've identified a passion, and they get to serve

in that in some capacity." It was through conversation with paid pastoral staff as volunteer

manager that volunteers were empowered to perform the task given by God. This was echoed by

P9:

> One instilling the confidence in people that… yes, if you feel this call, then we will find a way to make it work. And two, that if you feel this calling, you have the capacity to do it and we can figure out how to make it work.

Lastly, volunteers' ability to communicate and build relationships with fellow believers was diminished post-COVID-19 (P1, P5, P7, & P8). A significant theme woven throughout participant responses was the drop in Sunday attendance after COVID-19 caused the restructuring of church services. When reflecting on COVID-19's impact on Sunday attendance, P5 reported, "Coming out of 2020, where everyone just stopped meeting together, all altogether, people started craving reconnection." P7, reporting on his observations of group leaders post-COVID-19, frankly noted, "I guess coming out of 2020, people struggle a lot with just in personal relationships and conversations." During the discussion, P1 brought up the importance of establishing a strong organizational structure to help the church navigate the challenges presented by the pandemic and successfully move forward. He stated, "Okay, who do we want to be as a church? And setting up some of those policies and procedures." Leadership transition due to COVID-19 also emerged. For example, P6 linked the changes in Sunday attendance post-COVID-19 to church leadership: "Before COVID, 1,700. Currently, 1,000–1,300. The church lost many families due to offense: disagreement regarding masks, social distancing, and leadership decisions during COVID." In addition, P8 observed that the leadership transition had been aggravated after COVID-19: "Prior to COVID, actually, there was already leadership transitioning happening. I think COVID was just something that solidified a lot of that in people's minds. It was a mass exodus of most pastors." Similarly, P4 also noted that leadership transition negatively impacted Sunday attendance when she stated that COVID was a reason, and "we also have a new pastor for the last three years. So, you know how that goes. Like you know your numbers go."

P3 contributed an added layer to the conversation when she articulated that online church audience were counted as Sunday service attendees. She said:

So there are at current probably like 350 at current. It used to be a lot larger pre-COVID. So that is our after COVID. And that is actually in house number because if you're counting our online audience or whatever, we probably hit about five all together, 500 or more.

The mention of online audience as Sunday attendance posed new questions regarding online discipleship and its impact on church volunteerism. During COVID, the churches in this study offered online services. P10 spoke this reality when she said, "COVID, where our church had to close down completely, and we were completely online and virtual." Only P3 mentioned the online audience as part of the Sunday attendance. Thus, the consideration of a hybrid church membership needs further study.

RQ2 Summary

The paid pastoral staff perceived their Christian identity as the one who serves because Jesus served. They agreed that volunteerism was the first step of discipleship. Therefore, their volunteer engagement derived from relationships seeking to imitate Jesus' biblical example. Consequently, the collaboration itself was a discipleship process in which both parties worked together to discover the volunteer's spiritual gifts so that the volunteer engaged in meaningful work. This view of church volunteerism as a kingdom work explained the paid pastoral staff's willingness to initiate collaborative relationships with volunteers.

Research Question Three

RQ3: How do the Assemblies of God paid pastoral staff's perceptions of volunteers impact their level of investment in equipping volunteers to partake in the Great Commission at the Assemblies of God?

Theme 7: Equipping Church Volunteers

The volunteer management role that paid pastoral staff assumed was twofold. Creating job-fit strategies, as discussed in RQ1's findings, was required to provide opportunities for

volunteers to serve. As a result, volunteer engagement increased, adding human capital to the

church. The other expectation for the paid pastoral staff was equipping the volunteers for

ministry. This equipping task was a biblical mandate in Ephesians 4:11, cited by the participants

(P2, P3, P5, P6, & P9). P6 commented about the pastor's responsibility for equipping

volunteers:

> So Ephesians 4:11–12 talks about how those apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and pastors, and they were to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. So our role is just servants. We're just trying to connect with God and help people experience the purpose that's hidden inside of them.

Likewise, P2 expressed the purpose of the equipping mandate:

> Your role is to not be doing the work, your role is Ephesians 4, to be equipping the church to do the work of the ministry. So, if you're not equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry, then you're not doing your vital role as the office of the pastor in this moment. And that is a huge deal to me.

The paid pastoral staff initiated collaborative relationships with church volunteers to

engage them in discipleship. Through horizontal relationship development, volunteer

commitment to the church increased by identifying and employing spiritual gifting (this related

to the job-fit strategy discussed in RQ1's findings). The paid pastoral staff invited volunteers to

serve, assuming that volunteerism fostered relationships. Relationships were the foundation for

discipleship (discussed in RQ2's findings). According to P5, discipleship was "getting them to

get both feet into the kingdom, and to walk in the course of following Jesus." P3 mentioned two

ways in which she executed the equipping of volunteers:

> And I think sometimes we limit that, but we have a whole big giant Bible that tells us what this living-the-life in following Christ looks like… It is a number one for me to live the life and to be a model of that life. And then number two ways to pull them to walk alongside of me, not that I command them or tell them what they need to do, what they should do, but that we are doing it together and that I am truly equipping them and as we do it together, I teach them because it's discipleship one-on-one.

Therefore, equipping was an intentional relationship process initiated and managed by the paid pastoral staff, requiring relational skills. When the church grew, the assumption was that the volunteer base would grow simultaneously (P4, P8, & P5). P6 observed the benefits of collaborative relationships when volunteers were equipped for ministry: "This is Ephesians 4:16… we all grow in every part. Every person does its own special part. So, when I do my part and somebody else does their part, we all collectively grow for the better." Unfortunately, participants expressed the need for training in relational skills (P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, & P9). Table 4 shows additional skills that paid pastoral staff need to execute the volunteer management role successfully.

Table 4

Additional Skills Required for Managing Volunteers

Domain	Skill Needed for Managing Church Volunteers	Example Statement
Organizational dimension	Organizational management Strategic planning Administration Project management	P2: But when you're engaged in a larger church that has a lot of volunteer structure, and you have to be able to work systems. P1: And you do need the ability to follow up with people. You need to be able to have a plan and to evaluate and measure and so I would say those are all things that can be developed for anybody. P4: Oh, I try to go to different kinds of trainings. Not just for ministerial, but like, you know, for instance, I just went to a, what's it called? Like, abused children's seminars. And so, you try to go to seminars and trainings, safety seminars. P8: Ideally, you would attain those specialized skills counseling for children, child development, understanding, specifically, curriculum development, how you actually learning, teaching.
Relational dimension	Leadership Communication Emotional intelligence Conflict resolution	P6: They need to be highly emotional intelligence, have good communication skills, love people, know how to delegate, recruit people, and mange teams, and be a problem solver. P1: I've been spending the last six weeks resolving a conflict between two of the team members. So maybe we should have one. P7: And so, I guess, if someone's leading a volunteer team, they probably should have some understanding of conflict resolution. Communication is huge communication is the biggest thing.
Spiritual dimension	Scriptural knowledge Facilitate discipleship	P2: If you're simply a teaching pastor, then you sure should have solid theological training, right? Because your job is to communicate theology and point to missiology. P10: On the pastoring side, just like checking in with team members, praying with them being available for them when they have things going on and then providing discipleship opportunities for them based on their personal needs.

The Equipping Components. Equipping volunteers for ministry consisted of spiritual training and relational development. These were not mutually exclusive. The spiritual training was based on the volunteer's vertical relationship with God. According to P8, "Equipping volunteers ministry is simply an extension of their relationship with Christ. If their relationship with Christ is solid, their relationship with Christ is something that they experience on a daily

basis." P5 argued, "Equipping people to volunteer is ensuring people understand what the kingdom work looks like, and really having a having a firm foundation and an understanding that like we're called to do more than just give money to the church." Thus, volunteer engagement in the church context implied learning spiritual dependence on God (i.e., discipleship) and service beyond financial contribution.

The development of relations was vital in ministry equipping. In support of this position, P6 stated, "As a volunteer, you deal with stuff but what we treasure the most around here is the human spirit and heart. So, we want to make sure that we steward that correctly." The discipleship was initiated at the membership process discussed in RQ1's findings (i.e., recruiting process). Concerning the purpose of the membership process as part of discipleship, P2 stated:

> We're going to figure out where you want to volunteer. What God's breathing on in you? What you're gifted to do? We're gonna give you an opportunity to do what you're gifted to do. We're going to find your purpose.

This perspective of purpose finding embedded in job-fit strategy was unique to the church setting, where the paid pastoral staff were initiators and facilitators of such tasks (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, & P10). P9, regarding the essential components of the discipleship process, stated, "It involves like spiritual disciplines and how to develop a Rule of Life like… how to develop sacred rhythms of seeking God because you can't be a disciple if you don't know God." He also noted that discipleship required "how to study the Bible, and how to move beyond just reading things and hoping something jumps out. So that's quarter one, quarter two, quarter three, and then quarter four is calling, giftings, and practical ministry." These components were similar across participants, with the difference being the time this equipping took. For C8, the discipleship process took three years, while for C2, C3, and C5, it was more fluid. For example, P2 explained the equipping process through discipleship: "It looks like identifying where they

are in their walk with the Lord, and the current process of molding and shaping that God is doing in them and then partnering with God in that." Similarly, P1 stated, "So those are the three things I feel like equipping volunteers, yeah, it means training. But that also means identifying gifts and talents, and then promoting leadership." P5 clearly stated the goal of equipping the volunteers for ministry: "Giving people the proper tools to get the desired outcome." Each ministry had an equipping process that was unique to the task the volunteer would do (P2, P7, P9, & P10). Therefore, discipleship was not a linear process. It was complex and time-consuming, requiring special skills to perform it well (see Table 4 for additional skills volunteer managers need).

Evaluation Systems. Participants had different views on how to evaluate volunteer readiness for ministry. The large churches (C1, C2, & C6) agreed on using software to ease collaboration with volunteers, like scheduling, planning, and tracking the next steps for volunteers' spiritual growth (P1 & P6). The paid pastoral staff in medium-sized churches (C3, C5, & C7) expressed the need for evaluation systems to improve collaboration with volunteers. In support of this position, P7 reported the need for a system to evaluate volunteer performance:

> It's just trying to develop a system to make sure that you're meeting with volunteers, you're seeing how they're doing. They're able to share you know their ideas and thoughts back with you. And with a lot of different volunteers can be hard to facilitate all of that.

Likewise, P8 noted the need for a feedback mechanism: "We're about to implement is feedback, third party feedback. And that's probably more from my marketing time." Outsourcing the evaluation system was an adequate strategy in cases where volunteers hesitated to express their opinions to avoid retaliatory behavior. The staff-volunteer relationship benefitted from feedback loops, allowing both parties to express their ideas and concerns. As discussed in previous sections, the inclusive culture presented by the participants' churches thrived on open communication channels, fostering positive relationships between the paid pastoral staff and volunteers.

P9 contributed an added layer to the conversation when he articulated the ineffectiveness of the spiritual growth metric. He stated:

> We are very cautious about metrics and indicators for the church. Because in most cases, what metric can you really give them measures spiritual growth? And "Well, it's the number of hours they read the Bible." That's a garbage metric.

His observation on the metric ineffectiveness elucidated the complexity of the task to be evaluated in terms of equipping the volunteers for ministry. To ensure that the volunteer readiness metrics worked effectively, it was essential for the volunteer manager to have a clear understanding and articulation of the ministry goals. These goals aligned with the church's values and established a more effective volunteer management system.

RQ3 Summary

The participants in this study perceived it as their responsibility to equip volunteers for ministry and believed that all volunteers were equal in their relationship with God. Volunteers shared in the priesthood of all believers. The paid pastoral staff began the equipping process by providing training tailored to the specific service activity. While each ministry area had its tasks, a spiritual dimension was the common denominator. Spiritual disciplines, such as Bible study, worship, and prayer, were emphasized as crucial components of the equipping process. One area of difference between the larger churches (C1, C2, & C6) and the others (C3, C4, C5, C7, & C8) was the use of metrics and software to assess and follow up with volunteers. The larger churches employed these tools to facilitate staff-volunteer collaboration, while the others were still developing these tools. Participants also identified organizational and relational skills as essential for the volunteer manager's role. Thus, the paid pastoral staff's perceptions of volunteers impacted their investment level in equipping volunteers to do ministry.

Evaluation of the Research Design

This study explored volunteer engagement phenomenon, as perceived by the paid pastoral staff at AG churches. The data collected provided a deep insight into the participants' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences as volunteer managers. Such understanding was essential for comprehending the relationship dynamics between paid pastoral staff and church volunteers who seek collaboration. Therefore, a qualitative phenomenological approach was adopted to conduct the investigation.

Strengths

The phenomenological design was an adequate approach to understanding the experiences and viewpoints of participants related to a particular phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018). To meet the required number of participants for the research, purposeful and snowball sampling techniques were used to select 10 individuals with direct experience of the phenomenon under investigation. The research questions were used to collect information about various aspects of the volunteer manager's experience and their perception of volunteer engagement in the church's mission.

The semi-structured interviews effectively captured the volunteer engagement phenomenon, as the interview guide allowed participants to reply based on their experiences. The research participants were rather forthcoming and even excited to talk about their experiences as volunteer managers and their perception of volunteer engagement. Due to the anonymity of the study, each participant and church received a numerical identifier upon scheduling the interview.

The data collection process was efficiently carried out with the aid of software tools, such as Atlas.ti and Otter, which greatly facilitated the compilation and analysis of the collected data.

Using these tools, simultaneous recording of interviews helped ensure that transcription was completed promptly and accurately. As a result, participants were provided with interview transcripts in a timely manner for revision, allowing ample time for data analysis.

Weaknesses

According to Zeegers and Barron (2015), triangulation enhances validity because the researcher gains "more than one perspective on what is being investigated" (p. 80). This study utilized reflexivity notebooks and memos in Atlas.ti to control for researcher bias and member checking for transcript revision to meet this criterion. The data collected from participants provided a comprehensive understanding of volunteer engagement, but additional insights into the relational value of volunteerism could have been obtained through follow-up interviews. This missed opportunity will be addressed in the further research section.

Regarding RQ3, sub-question C, about whether special skills were required to equip volunteers for ministry, the researcher discovered that most participants had trouble comprehending the meaning of "skills." They misunderstood it as a personality trait. The researcher had initially assumed that the participants had a sufficient understanding of the concept of skills and how they relate to job performance. However, the researcher had to explain further to clarify the concept of skills.

This researcher observed a missed opportunity by not intentionally designing a question asking participants about the value volunteers add to the organization and mission achievement. RQ2's sub-question A (How would you describe the volunteers in your church?) elucidated a broad view of volunteer attitude but not the job-fit benefit of their engagement. Participants agreed on aligning volunteers' spiritual gifts to the volunteering task. However, the participants did not address how this job-fit benefited the church mission. Rephrasing the question would

have yielded a better understanding of this collaborative relationship between the paid pastoral staff and church volunteers in accomplishing the church's mission.

Summary

In this chapter, a comprehensive account of the compilation protocol, data analysis, and findings on the experiences of paid pastoral staff as volunteer managers in the church's mission were presented. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design, and the strengths and weaknesses of the research were evaluated. The implications of the study findings are discussed next, providing valuable insights for future research and practice in the field of volunteer management in church organizations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The objective of this phenomenological study was to gain insights into the perspectives of paid pastoral staff on volunteer engagement. Successful engagement of volunteers in the church's mission hinges on the willingness of paid pastoral staff to provide training and collaborate with volunteers. The following sections cover the outcomes of the research questions that directed this study, followed by a discussion of the implications of these findings within the context of the theoretical and empirical literature analyzed in Chapter Two. Lastly, recommendations for future research conclude this chapter.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement in missional ecclesiology. Based on Niemandt's (2012) definition of missional ecclesiology, this term was used to refer to the Christian commitment to Christ's work, engagement in the faith community, and the capacity to witness in the marketplace. For this study, paid pastoral staff was defined as one who holds a formal leadership position as a pastoral staff in the Assembly of God's (AG's) church in spiritual and organizational relationships with church volunteers. These interactions included Sunday services and daily living of spiritual values (Chester & Timmis, 2008; Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021; Hull, 2006). The theory guiding this study was the interdependence theory by Kelley and Thibaut, as it explained interactions and their influences. Collaborative relationships and interactions among paid pastoral staff and church volunteers change and grow over time. Because of this, interdependence was considered regarding the immediate results of certain combinations of actions (i.e., mutual edification), future actions (i.e., prosocial behavior), and

results made possible (rather than taken away) by conflictual relationships (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What are the lived experiences of paid pastoral staff managing volunteers to partake in the Great Commission at the Assemblies of God?

RQ2. How do the Assemblies of God paid pastoral staff describe their staff-volunteer relationship?

RQ3. How do the Assemblies of God paid pastoral staff's perceptions of volunteers impact their level of investment in equipping volunteers to partake in the Great Commission at the Assemblies of God?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

Research Conclusion

RQ1: Organizational Dimension

The paid pastoral staff agreed that being a volunteer manager was part of their role as a pastor. Their experiences managing volunteers described the complexity of the volunteer manager role. Although they could not provide a job description, they clearly articulated the expectations and responsibilities of the job (e.g., recruiting, coordinating, and retaining) with a positive attitude. Their approach to volunteer management was a privilege (P2, P6, & P10) rather than a burden. This perspective reflected the missional approach of making disciples, from which all other goals and activities were derived.

Collaborative relationships reflected the leadership dynamics within the paid pastoral staff and the senior pastor. The supportive environment permeated the staff-volunteer relationships, inviting volunteers to partake in the church's mission. This inclusive organizational culture changed the interactions in the congregations because it promoted the full

participation of its members. By providing opportunities to serve in the church, the paid pastoral staff removed serving barriers, enhancing volunteer engagement.

RQ2: Relational Dimension

The paid pastoral staff perceived volunteerism as a means of discipleship. When the paid pastoral staff engaged church volunteers in service according to the volunteer's spiritual gifts, the mission of making disciples took place. This finding was crucial in the staff-volunteer approach because it depicted the relationships fueling the volunteer engagement. Disciple relationships are personal and imply a level of reciprocity in which both parties are learning from one another as they follow Jesus. However, the reciprocal dynamics needed further development by open communication of expectations. The paid pastoral staff recognized that not all volunteers shared the same level of commitment. They perceived church volunteers as caring, generous, and teachable in the ways of the Lord. Thus, intentional recruitment, coordination, and communication fostering retention characterized their staff-volunteer relationships. It was through these efforts that participants expressed their relationship with volunteers to be positive.

RQ3: Spiritual Dimension

The paid pastoral staff's experiences as volunteer managers elucidated their responsibility as equippers. They agreed that equipping volunteers for ministry looked different because it depended on the ministry or task the volunteer did. In addition, the equipping task was twofold. The spiritual dimension called for teaching spiritual disciplines that allowed the volunteer to get closer to God—staff-volunteer relationships derived from such discipleship dynamics. The organizational dimension referred to ministerial equipping. For volunteers in the children's ministry, it consisted of law compliance to minister to children and other training tailored to the age group they served. For small group volunteers, equipping required assessing topic ideas and

leading and planning meetings, as well as spiritual discipline development. Each ministry had a particular onboarding and following up process with volunteers, and recognizing their mobility within the organization was pivotal for maintaining their engagement.

Equipping volunteers for ministry required managing both the logistical and interpersonal aspects of the position (see Table 4). Those who took on this role understood that pursuing advanced studies in organizational leadership (P2, P3, & P9) enhanced their ability to support their congregants. Hence, comprehensive training that integrated the position's spiritual and logistical facets proved advantageous in effectively managing volunteers. Figure 2 illustrates the organizational, relational, and spiritual contributions the volunteer manager's role provides to the church.

Figure 2

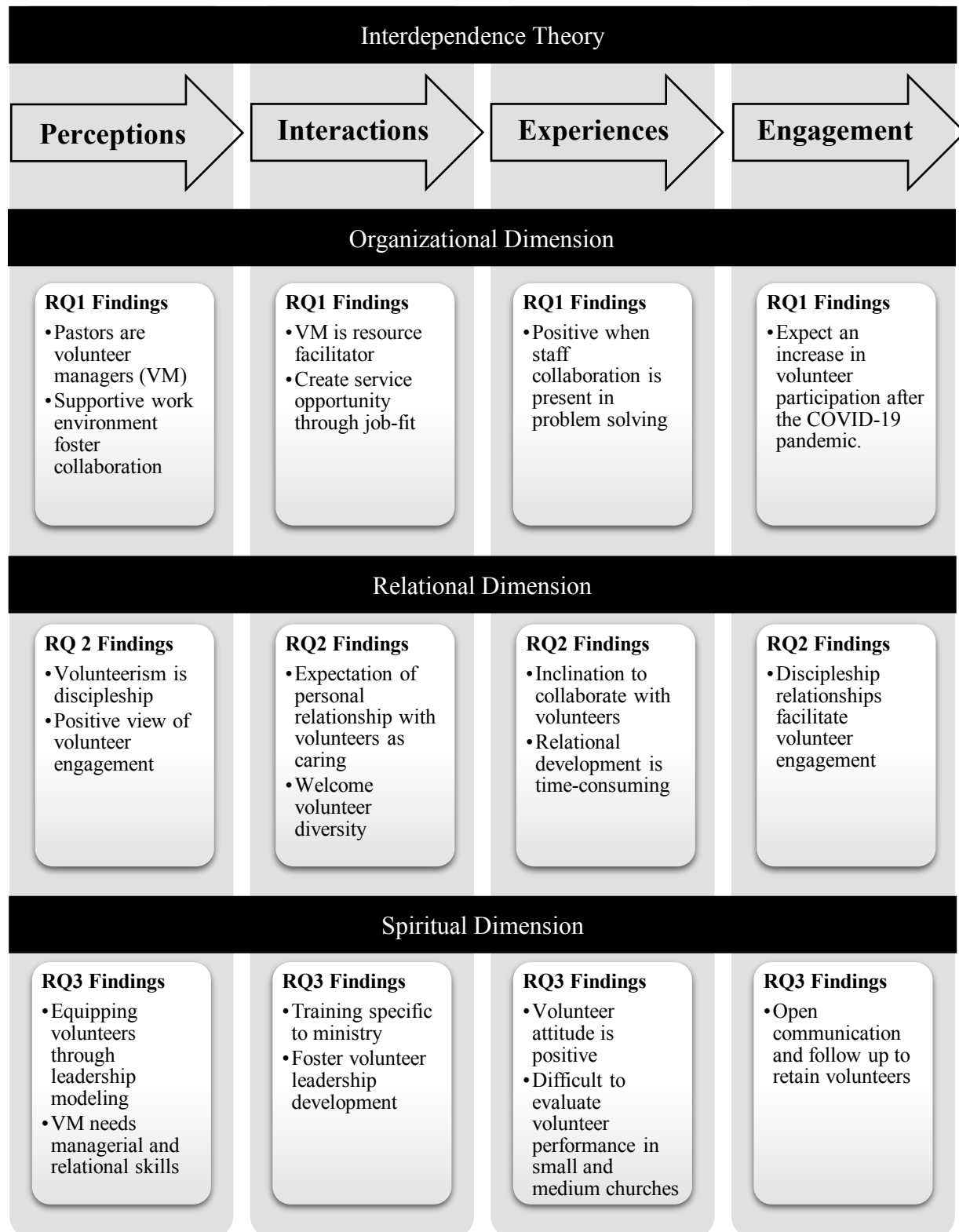*Volunteer Manager Role Contribution to Volunteer Engagement*
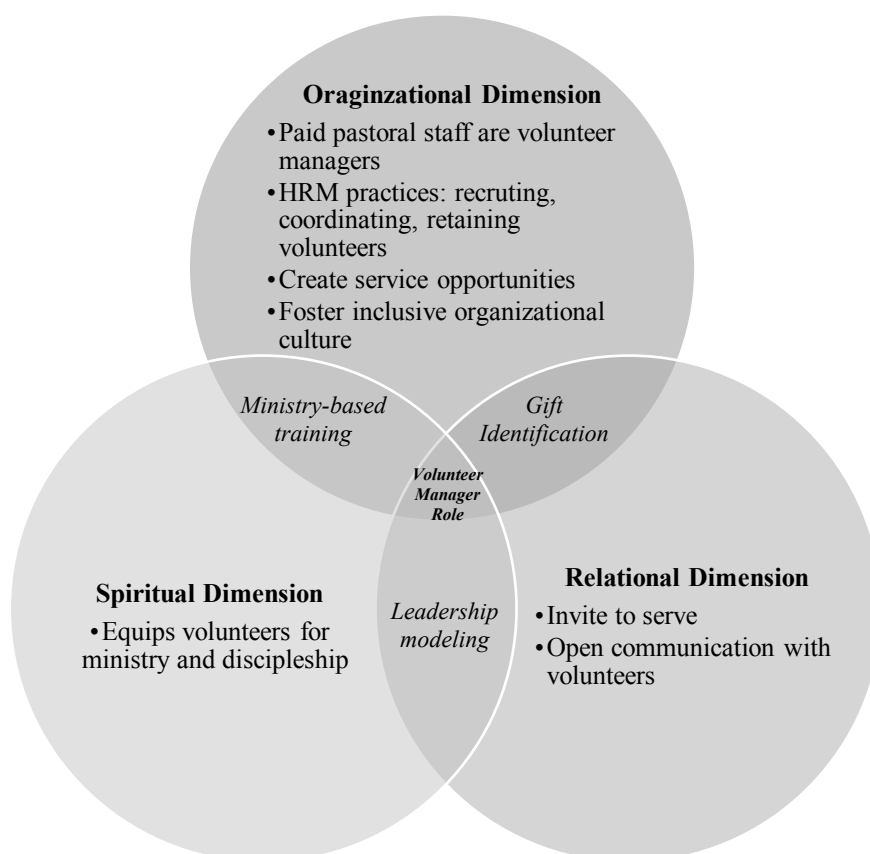
Theoretical Implications

The understanding of paid pastoral staff as volunteer managers and their perception of church volunteerism as discipleship had various implications. The theoretical implications of these findings presented a framework for improving collaboration between staff and volunteers, leading to increased volunteer engagement. Empirical implications described the three dimensions of the volunteer manager role in a church setting: organizational, relational, and spiritual. This study concluded by providing practical recommendations for pastors and church leaders to apply these findings in their ministries.

This study sought to gain insight into the perspectives of paid pastoral staff regarding volunteer engagement within the AG church. The church's objective is to achieve self-propagation as an organizational strategy to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). This collaborative approach required interdependence between paid pastoral staff and church volunteers. However, there had been a divide in the staff-volunteer relationship within the church organization (Fettke, 2011; Graham, 2017; Obiorah, 2020; Ogden, 2003), stemming from differing views on the pastoral role as the sole authority responsible for church administration and spiritual leadership and the volunteer's role as a ministry assistant and financial contributor (Fettke, 2011; Harrison, 1960; Ilyas et al., 2020; Sweeney, 2020). Consequently, this led to occupational burnout (Chavez, 2021; Jones & Gordon, 2022; Plante, 2023; White Smith, 2020) for paid pastoral staff.

The theoretical implications of volunteerism as the first step of discipleship corroborated the faith embodiment (Botha, 2021; Edge, 2022; Olson, 2008) as a volunteer motivator. García-Vázquez et al. (2022) found that spiritual experiences are "important predictors of prosocial behaviors" (p. 1834). However, it was necessary to consider the context in which volunteers

served. The findings of this study demonstrated the crucial role of volunteer managers in creating meaningful opportunities and ensuring a good fit for church volunteers. Figure 3 illustrates the four elements of the interdependence process that emerged from the findings. Understanding these interactions can help to improve the collaboration between staff and volunteers, leading to increased volunteer engagement.

Figure 3

Theoretical Implications of Paid Pastoral Staff's Perceptions

Interdependence Theory			
Perceptions →	**Interactions** →	**Experiences** →	**Engagement** →
Organizational Dimension			
RQ1 Findings •Pastors are volunteer managers (VM) •Supportive work environment foster collaboration	**RQ1 Findings** •VM is resource facilitator •Create service opportunity through job-fit	**RQ1 Findings** •Positive when staff collaboration is present in problem solving	**RQ1 Findings** •Expect an increase in volunteer participation after the COVID-19 pandemic.
Relational Dimension			
RQ 2 Findings •Volunteerism is discipleship •Positive view of volunteer engagement	**RQ2 Findings** •Expectation of personal relationship with volunteers as caring •Welcome volunteer diversity	**RQ2 Findings** •Inclination to collaborate with volunteers •Relational development is time-consuming	**RQ2 Findings** •Discipleship relationships facilitate volunteer engagement
Spiritual Dimension			
RQ3 Findings •Equipping volunteers through leadership modeling •VM needs managerial and relational skills	**RQ3 Findings** •Training specific to ministry •Foster volunteer leadership development	**RQ3 Findings** •Volunteer attitude is positive •Difficult to evaluate volunteer performance in small and medium churches	**RQ3 Findings** •Open communication and follow up to retain volunteers

Empirical Implications

Organizational Dimension

The interdependence theory stated that perceptions lead to interactions, which produce experiences (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008). The volunteer engagement increases when the experiences are positive (Denning, 2021). Lee et al. (2019) argued that organizational culture provides the tangible and informational support necessary for volunteer engagement. Both were present in the participants' experiences as a volunteer manager. They provided tangible support by facilitating resources and communicating expectations to volunteers. However, the paid pastoral staff understood that volunteers were not obligated to serve in the church because volunteers were not paid for it (P3, P8, & P9). Moreover, money was not the primary motivation for work; doing meaningful work was (P6). The volunteer experience solidified the role identity formed through the psychological contract. The psychological contract was defined by Netting et al. (2004) as a person's thoughts and assumptions about the relationship. Since the findings showed that volunteerism was regarded as the initial discipleship step, it expanded the concept of volunteers' psychological contract due to the spiritual binding of the service, which needed further study.

Volunteer engagement played a vital role in the self-propagation of the AG church (i.e., missional ecclesiology). This study adopted Niemandt's (2012) definition of missional ecclesiology, which referred to the Christian commitment to Christ's work, active participation in the faith community, and the ability to bear witness in the marketplace. Volunteers actively supporting the mission added value to the church by reducing operational costs (Hoge et al., 1998). In contrast, volunteer management was meaningless if volunteers were not valuable to the organization (Fettke, 2011; Nesbit et al., 2016). The difference was perception. When the

organization did not articulate the value volunteers added, the volunteer role was ambiguous. According to Nesbit et al. (2016), this negative attitude was exacerbated when the roles of volunteer managers and volunteers were unclear or ambiguous. This research determined the important role of volunteer managers in a church setting and how their involvement affected volunteer engagement. The results indicated that participants were highly committed to their volunteers and dedicated to identifying their unique strengths, while fostering meaningful discipleship relationships. The gift identification clarified the volunteer role in the church, providing a sense of belonging and identity.

The participants articulated the role expectations as volunteer managers with clarity. Although there was no evidence of role ambiguity, it was complex, meaning that the paid pastoral staff juggled the organizational, relational, and spiritual dimensions of volunteer management. They also articulated the need for organizational and relational skills to serve their volunteer base better. The credentialing process equipped pastors for spiritual leadership but lacked the practical aspect of the paid position in a church. To this end, this study confirmed the need for integrated ministerial education (Cuadra-Martínez et al., 2019; Embalsado et al., 2022; Ramaekers et al., 2022) that equipped pastors for the role duality as church administrators (including managing volunteers) and as spiritual leaders (Cnaan & Scott, 2021; Jones & Gordon, 2023). For the most part, the participants learned how to deal with volunteers on the job but indicated that new pastors would benefit from integrated ministerial education.

Relational Dimension

Engaging in volunteer work was an essential initial step towards becoming a disciple. The term ministry might seem daunting, but encouraging others to serve is a hospitable and friendly gesture that enables individuals to form social connections. It fosters social bonds and

creates connections among congregants, especially post-pandemic. Offering opportunities to serve within the church community can facilitate the formation of strong relationships and promote essential elements for volunteer engagement and discipleship.

The implications of the staff-volunteer collaborative relationships also confirmed previous studies on volunteer engagement as a byproduct of social ties (Lee et al., 2016; Ngo et al., 2005; Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006). The perception of spiritual equality among paid pastoral staff and church volunteers suggested organizational structure moving from a hierarchical structure (Ogden, 2003), characterized by its religious superiority divide to a more horizontal, engaging structure. The welcoming organizational culture relied on volunteers serving in leadership capacities that, according to Cnaan and Scott (2021), the collaboration depended on the volunteer personality characteristics. Conversely, the participants' perceptions on volunteer engagement were not limited to personality characteristics but rather in volunteer's spiritual gifts and its identification and development.

Spiritual Dimension

The volunteer manager role is an organizational position that requires human resources management (HRM) skills (Forsyth, 1999; López-Cabrera et al., 2020; Morse et al., 2022; Nesbit et al., 2018). The paid pastoral staff indicated that they were responsible for managing and equipping volunteers but that they had received no training for recruiting, coordinating, and retaining their volunteers. They engaged volunteers in the church's mission by inviting to serve and building rapport. The interactions of relational development provided an inclusive, supportive culture conducive to discipleship. Discipleship is the process of aligning the believer's behavior to God's expectations (Barna, 2013; Chester & Timmis, 2008; Putman et al., 2013; Shirley, 2008). It consists of Bible study, worship, prayer, fellowship with other believers,

and serving. These spiritual practices are developed into relationships that paid pastoral staff foster through service opportunities and gift identification. The utilization of spiritual gift language within the church community underlined the importance of implementing HRM practices to ensure that every individual is able to contribute their unique talents and abilities towards the betterment of the church.

Volunteer management has been an inadvertent function in church organizations. Due to their spiritual implications, this study presented the pivotal role of VMPs in volunteer engagement. Effective VMPs at church reflects the disciple-making mission by facilitating the entry points for congregants to volunteer. There are different levels of responsibility in the volunteer tasks. For example, volunteers who teach Sunday classes or spiritual doctrines in small group environments are required to have spiritual expertise in the subject. The expectation for these volunteers is task ownership (Nesbit et al., 2016), meaning that they would be responsible for recruiting class/group participants and coordinating the point of engagement (e.g., subject, time, and place for the event). For volunteers who assist in Sunday services (e.g., media production, ushers, nursery) or outreach events, the preparation for the task is minimal, and so is the level of responsibility required. Managing the fluid volunteer pool is complex. It requires trained personnel to oversee them so that the mission is accomplished. Volunteering is a significant component of the mission in a church context. Thus, the paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement as a disciple-making opportunity contributes to volunteer engagement in the church's mission.

Practical Implications

To ensure church volunteers' ongoing engagement and commitment, providing them with an effortless onboarding experience for every ministry opportunity and maintaining regular

communication with them was essential. When volunteers feel appreciated and valued (De Oliveira, 2008; Ilyas et al., 2020; Tetui et al., 2023), they are more likely to remain committed to the organization. Recognizing and encouraging their mobility within the organization fostered this sense of belonging and ultimately led to a more engaged and motivated volunteer base.

The findings indicated that paid pastoral staff perceived volunteer engagement as a way to express their Christian identity. By recognizing the importance of spiritual gift language in the church, the paid pastoral staff better understood the importance of implementing effective HRM practices to ensure that individuals are matched with roles that align with their unique gifts and talents. The gift identification acknowledged the priesthood of all believers, providing context for faith embodiment. The findings illustrated how paid pastoral staff and volunteers collaborated to carry out the Great Commission in a supportive environment, relying on the Holy Spirit to bestow them with spiritual gifts. Although this data integrated the spiritual and leadership aspects of church volunteerism, the perceptions were limited to paid pastoral staff.

The discipleship perception of church volunteerism implies relational skills often overlooked in ministry schools and seminaries (Wong et al., 2019). In order to effectively serve and manage volunteers, it is essential that ministerial training for paid pastoral staff encompasses both spiritual and practical aspects of pastoral ministry. The responsibilities and expectations of pastoral positions include the volunteer manager's role. Unfortunately, this crucial role is often overlooked and neglected. One way that church organizations can support their paid pastoral staff and help them grow in their profession is by prioritizing and promoting continuing education opportunities.

Applications

The paid pastoral staff's perceptions of volunteer engagement in the mission of the

church derived from their understanding of their role as volunteer manager. As such, they initiated collaborative relationships with congregants by extending an invitation to serve. This perspective fostered volunteer engagement but did not provide insight into the paid pastoral staff's perception of the value volunteers add to the church's mission. Therefore, pastoral staff seeking to improve their relationship with volunteers benefit from communicating vision and how the volunteers' contributions make the mission possible.

Two decades ago, Ogden (2003) advocated for a nonhierarchical ministry approach based on the priesthood of all believers. Today, the findings showed a shift in that direction. The organizational structure of the church consisted of team structures (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, & P10), in which each ministry leader provided the recruitment, coordination, and training for their volunteers. Participants engaged the volunteers in leadership roles, using terms like directors, coaches, team leaders, and small group leaders (P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, & P10). In this way, they used staff-volunteer collaborative relationships to execute Sunday services and build connections among congregants throughout the week. However, according to this study's findings, emergent leaders attending AG ministerial schools received theological training that was insufficient for the paid pastoral staff responsibilities and expectations. More integrated training, especially team leadership, could benefit emergent pastors in paid positions. Moreover, providing continual education on volunteer management practices that integrate the organizational, relational, and spiritual dimensions of the volunteer manager role would better equip ministry professionals in volunteer engagement.

Research Limitations

The study exclusively explored AG pastors' perceptions and lived experiences regarding volunteer engagement in the church's mission. It was limited to the participants' experiences as

volunteer managers and their ability to articulate those experiences. Since this understanding formed the basis of paid pastoral staff investment on volunteer engagement, the interpretative data analysis recognized the participants' and researcher's biases as co-created meaning of the volunteer engagement phenomenon (Sandberg & Targama, 2007).

As AG churches follow the same fundamental beliefs and work towards self-propagation as response to the Great Commission, this study provided valuable insights to them. However, the findings reflected the participants' perspectives and experiences of volunteer engagement through the lens of volunteer manager role, limiting their transferability.

Further Research

Further research is required to broaden the role of volunteer managers in church organizations and to explore their contribution to staff-volunteer collaboration, which can help prevent pastoral burnout. The study suggested that the following areas require additional exploration and future research:

- The concept of discipleship as volunteering involves a relational aspect where staff members are expected to do life alongside their volunteers. However, the nature of this relationship requires further investigation. A mixed-method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative research methods could identify the type of relationship that exists between staff and volunteers, as well as how these relationships impact discipleship.

- Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the way that Sunday services are conducted has changed. More people who claim to attend church are now participating in virtual services. As a result, staff-volunteer relationships in online church services will require a shift in church membership language, which can change perceptions of church volunteerism. A quantitative research design could help to answer descriptive and relationship questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A qualitative design could provide a better understanding of the online church membership phenomenon. Further study is needed to understand the implications of hybrid church membership on church volunteerism.

- Due to the increased burnout experienced by pastors, there is a need for further exploration on the topic of discipleship between paid pastoral staff and volunteers. It is essential to understand the relational value of volunteerism from a disciple-making perspective, which implies mutual reciprocity. Qualitative research that delves into the

experiences of pastoral staff and church volunteers concerning the discipleship phenomenon can provide insights into the dynamics of discipleship in the church and how it can contribute to a collaborative relationship.

- This study suggested that identifying the unique talents and skills of volunteers is an essential aspect of their engagement and satisfaction. This process of identifying gifts was aimed at ensuring that volunteers feel satisfied rather than simply achieving the organization's goals. Further investigation into the relationship between gift identification and the specific objectives of the church's mission is necessary. A quantitative research approach can provide valuable insights into the connection between these two variables, which can help improve the interactions between staff and volunteers within the church context.

Summary

So far, the focus for self-propagation as strategy to fulfill the Great Commission has been on equipping leaders to plant churches and lead ministries. Although the paid pastoral staff are entrusted to lead the church in discipleship relationship with God and fellow believers, the responsibilities and expectations for the pastoral role are not realistic. The church organism requires mutual relationships to nourish the members of the body (Ephesians 4:16; Romans 12:4–5).

However, the volunteerism as discipleship strategy showed that serving was the first step for staff-volunteer collaboration. If the church mission was to make disciples that make disciples, then the church volunteers should take an active role in church dynamics. They cannot be reduced to financial supporters or ministry assistants. Church leaders must cast the vision of value through their engagement in collaborative relationship with volunteers.

The results of this study provided valuable insights for researchers and church leaders regarding volunteer engagement. It also highlighted the expectations and contributions of the volunteer manager role in the church context. Recognizing that human resources are vital to the operation of church organizations elevated the role of volunteers as disciple-makers and spiritual gift-bearers. Just as pastors have context for their pastoral ministry, volunteers also need context

for their spiritual gifts to flourish. May church leaders appreciate the contributions of their volunteers and recognize their value and dedication towards the church community as "co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith" (*New International Version*, 2011, 1 Thessalonians 3:2).

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTER EMAIL

Date

Potential Participant
Title
Company
Address

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity 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 understand the paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement in the church's mission to foster collaborative staff-volunteer relationships and I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, holding a paid staff position as pastor in an Assemblies of God church, currently assuming a volunteer manager's responsibilities (selecting volunteers, coordinating volunteers' tasks, communicating with volunteers or training volunteers) for at least a year. Participants will be asked to take part in a one-on-one, video-recorded interview. It should take approximately 45 to 60 minutes to complete the procedure listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate, please contact me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ to schedule an interview to certify your eligibility for this study. If you meet my participant criteria, I will work with you to schedule a time for an interview.

A consent document will be emailed to you if you meet the study criteria. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign and return the document to me prior the time of your scheduled interview via email.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX B: CONSENT

Title of the Project: Perceptions of Paid Pastoral Staff of Volunteer Engagement in the Assemblies of God

Principal Investigator: Glorielba Orta Meléndez, Doctoral Candidate, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years old or older and an AG pastor with at least one year of experience as volunteer manager responsibilities (selecting volunteers, coordinating volunteers' tasks, communicating with volunteers or training volunteers). Participants must serve in a church part of the Assembly 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 gain an understanding of AG paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement in the church's mission.

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. Participate in a 45 to 60 minutes virtual interview responding to research questions. Allow for the interview to be recorded by the researcher.
2. Check the interview transcription for accuracy. It would be sent via email within 24 hours after the interview. Please corroborate within seven days.
3. Participate in a 30-minute follow-up interview if further questions are needed.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

Benefits to society include better understanding of pastors' perception of volunteer engagement in the church's mission leading to constructive collaboration between paid pastoral staff and church volunteers.

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. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked external hard drive and may be used in future presentations. The EHD will be stored in a locked safe box and kept for five years upon degree completion. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Participant will be kept confidential by replacing names with alphanumeric identifiers.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for five years and then deleted. The researcher and members of her doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality is the researcher's primary concern.

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

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher via the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Glorielba Orta Meléndez. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ▮▮▮▮▮▮ or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. May, at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

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.

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.

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

☐ The researcher has my permission to video-record (or audio-record for participants who prefer face-to-face interview) me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Organizational dimension: Paid pastoral staff as manager of volunteers

    a) How many years have you been serving in your current ministry?

    b) Can you describe the responsibilities and expectations for your current role?

    c) Do you perceive your current responsibilities as those of a volunteer manager?

    d) How would you describe your experience as a volunteer manager?

    e) How has your volunteer manager role contributed to volunteer engagement in the organizational mission at Assembly of God?

    f) What does it entail?

Spiritual dimension: Paid pastoral staff as equipper

    a) How does equipping volunteers to do ministry look like to you?

    b) Who is responsible for equipping the volunteers to do ministry?

    c) Do you need special skills to equip volunteers for ministry?

    d) How do you know a volunteer is equipped for ministry?

Relational dimension: General knowledge of volunteer engagement

    a) How would you describe the volunteers in your church?

    b) What percentage of your congregation is currently involved in ministry?

    c) How well can volunteers share their faith in their areas of service?

    d) What kinds of difficulties do they have?

APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 4, 2023

Glorielba Orta Melendez
Gary May

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-233 Perceptions of Paid-Pastoral Staff of Volunteer Engagement in the Assemblies of God

Dear Glorielba Orta Melendez, Gary May,

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

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

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

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.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX E: CODES AND THEMES

RQs	Dimension	Interview Guide	Codes	Emerging Themes
RQ1. What are the lived experiences of paid pastoral staff managing volunteers to partake in the Great Commission at the Assemblies of God?	Organizational dimension	a) How many years have you been serving in your current ministry?	Experience as volunteer manager	• Paid pastoral staff collaboration is the foundation for staff-volunteer relationships • Role description of the volunteer manager for the paid pastoral staff • From volunteer to paid pastoral position • Different credentialing requirements
			Previous experiences (family, previous job)	
			Credentialing process	
		b) Can you describe the responsibilities and expectations for your current role?	Role expectations	
		c) Do you perceive your current responsibilities as those of a volunteer manager?	Responsibility as VM	
		d) How would you describe your experience as a volunteer manager?	Experience as volunteer manager (current role)	
		e) How has your volunteer manager role contributed to volunteer engagement in the organizational mission at Assembly of God? What does it entail?	Mission	
			Their perception of VM role in church setting	
RQ2. How do the Assemblies of God paid pastoral staff describe their staff-volunteer relationship?	Relational dimension	a) How would you describe the volunteers in your church?	Volunteer description	• The Christian identity is to serve • Supportive environment fosters collaborative relationships • Positive perceptions of volunteer engagement • Hindrances of volunteer engagement
		b) What percentage of your congregation is currently involved in ministry?	Percentage of volunteers involved in ministry	
		c) How well can volunteers share their faith in their areas of service?	Share faith	
		d) What kinds of difficulties do they have?	Difficulties volunteers face	
RQ3. How do the Assemblies of God paid pastoral staff's perceptions of volunteers	Spiritual dimension	a) How does equipping volunteers to do ministry look like to you?	Equipping process for volunteers to do ministry	• Equipping components • Evaluation systems
		b) Who is responsible for equipping the volunteers to do ministry?	Responsible for training/equipping volunteers	

RQs	Dimension	Interview Guide	Codes	Emerging Themes
impact their level of investment in equipping volunteers to partake in the Great Commission at the Assemblies of God?		c) Do you need special skills to equip volunteers for ministry?	Skills needed for the VM role	
			Need for training	
			Need for systems	
		d) How do you know a volunteer is equipped for ministry?	Metrics to indicate volunteer readiness to do ministry	

APPENDIX F: RECRUITMENT FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

Dear [Potential Participant],

As a doctoral candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity 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 understand the paid pastoral staff's perception of volunteer engagement in the church's mission to foster collaborative staff-volunteer relationships. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to complete the screening survey, if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is [Date].

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, holding a paid staff position as pastor in an Assemblies of God church, currently assuming a volunteer manager's responsibilities (selecting volunteers, coordinating volunteers' tasks, communicating with volunteers or training volunteers) for at least a year. Participants will be asked to take part in a one-on-one, video-recorded interview. It should take approximately 45 to 60 minutes to complete the procedure listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate, please contact me at ███████████████████ to schedule an interview. If you meet my participant criteria, I will work with you to schedule a time for an interview.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research.

If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

███████████████████