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Led to Lead: Vocational Discernment and Emerging Pastoral Leadership in the Reformed Church in America

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LED TO LEAD: VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT AND EMERGING PASTORAL
LEADERSHIP IN THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

by

TANNER SMITH

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

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ABSTRACT

Led to Lead: Vocational Discernment and Emerging Pastoral Leadership in the Reformed Church in America

by

Tanner Smith

This mixed-methods sequential exploratory research project investigates the leadership development practices of two Christian organizations—a multi-site church and seminary—within the Reformed Church in America. The study identifies the best practices of both organizations for building vocational discernment capacity in emerging leaders, and compares the practices of the organizations in an attempt to foster dialogue that leads to collaboration in leadership development efforts.

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I am indebted to my mom, who is strong, faithful, and courageous in ways that have formed my leadership ideal. You taught me to do everything as well as I can.

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God has chased me down with love and goodness all my life. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RCA	Reformed Church in America
ELT	Experiential Learning Theory
TEEM	Theological Education by Extension Movement
SPSS	IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
NIV	New International Version
LR	Leadership Resident

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Tension of Leadership Formation

“The seminary just doesn’t produce the kinds of leaders that the church needs,” lamented Mark, an elder serving Grace Reformed Church.¹ Mark is not the only person who is articulating a perceived disparity between the leaders that the church needs and the leaders that traditional leadership development pathways are producing. This conversation has deep roots within the seminary community itself. Many professors and administrators of theological schools wrestle with the shifting realities of our culture and are striving to realign their programs to better address the needs of the postmodern landscape of the United States.² Pastors serving congregations in a world sometimes far different than the one they were prepared for in seminary also experience this tension. Concerns about the divisions caused by centuries of compartmentalization and specialization in the academy, and the growing inquiry into what kinds of leaders the church needs for the future, have led to an important ongoing conversation within both churches and theological schools.

¹ All proper names of organizations studied and individual participants in the research have been changed to pseudonyms.

² See the historical background section below for evidence of this struggle.

Historical Background

In 2013, The Reformed Church in America (RCA) identified “Equipping emerging leaders of today and tomorrow,” as one of its three strategic priorities for the next fifteen years.³ An *emerging leader* is someone who demonstrates a growing capacity for leading others and is actively developing his or her gifts and skills in this area. Emerging leaders display potential for taking on increasing levels of responsibility. These priorities have already begun to receive considerable denominational resources as the RCA grapples with, among other things, the best way to equip leaders for the 21st century. The RCA is asking questions about leadership formation as it experiences the same declining membership and shrinking resources that other mainline denominations in the United States are experiencing. The denomination is also focusing considerable resources on church planting efforts, requiring the development of more and, sometimes, different pastoral leaders than the two RCA seminaries are currently producing.

The seminary-centric paradigm of leadership development has deep roots in the RCA, but some churches in the denomination are moving steadily and intentionally away from relying on seminaries alone to train leaders. Several churches are developing internal programs and processes for cultivating leaders, especially in churches that are focused on planting new congregations. These congregations are attempting to embrace a model of leadership formation that emphasizes field-based contextualization of learning and seeks to replicate missional DNA while placing a lower emphasis on traditional areas of focus for pastoral training such as systematic theology and biblical languages.

³ Reformed Church in America, “Transformed and Transforming,” Reformed Church in America (accessed July 7, 2014), <http://transform.rca.org/>.

The RCA has developed a means for granting these congregationally-trained leaders positional authority without requiring seminary training, calling them *commissioned pastors*. Each *classis*, which is the regional governing body of the RCA, is responsible for developing its own standards for commissioned pastors. This process creates exciting opportunities for expanding ministry, but also creates tension due to lack of uniform standards, as the leadership development process can vary considerably from classis to classis. Likewise, the level of intentionality, care, and accountability provided by congregations engaged in developing emerging leaders varies. Additionally, congregations are not subject to the same accreditation standards provided by the Association of Theological Schools, to which many seminaries strive to comply in their efforts to develop emerging leaders.

The conversation about what makes good pastoral leaders and how best to develop them is being engaged seriously by an increasingly diverse number of people and organizations, as evidenced in the above description. No longer are seminaries the only voices, nor the most important voices in some circles, when it comes to this important work. Alternative perspectives are being introduced as these efforts continue to evolve in response to changing contexts, and as new organizations pursue pastoral leadership formation programs.

A broader and deeper conversation has been unfolding within the academic community at the same time that this challenge has been emerging within the RCA. The conversation began in earnest in 1981 when the Association of Theological Schools began to assess the practices and methodologies of its member schools regarding the

development of congregational leaders.⁴ Edward Farley pushed the conversation further, giving it direction with his book, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*, in 1983.⁵ From there, the conversation opened up to include other important voices, and gathered financial resources from the Lilly Endowment to help draw additional theologians and educational theorists into the dialogue.⁶

Significant among these voices is that of David Kelsey and his two books, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological about Theological Schools*, and *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate*.⁷ In the former, Kelsey asks what we talk about when we talk about God. Theological education has been professionalized and compartmentalized into areas of focus, primarily around the fourfold curricular structure consisting of biblical theology, history, systematic theology, and practical theology. These areas of focus have been approached from a scientific paradigm and have often been separated from each other by both perceived and real differences in their content and application. Kelsey simply asks where God is in the midst of the theological education process.

Kelsey further frames the conversation in *Between Athens and Berlin* by identifying two dominant and seemingly competing approaches to theological education.

⁴ The conversation was also spurred on by: Edward Farley, "The Reform of Theological Education as a Theological Task," *Theological Education* 17, no. 2 (1981).

⁵ Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

⁶ For a more full treatment of the history of the theological education debate, and key contributors and texts, see Part I of Robert J. Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), Kindle.

⁷ David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological About a Theological School*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992). David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993).

The Athens approach focuses on developing *paidea*, or the whole person growing in wisdom (character formation), whereas *wissenschaft* characterizes the Berlin approach, which is the rigorous scientific method of study that has come to typify higher academic discipline. *Paidea* emphasizes *being*, while *wissenschaft* emphasizes *knowing*. Kelsey argues for a balance between the two approaches, but falls short of recommending a way forward that weaves the two together. If Kelsey's first book asks what we talk about when we talk about God, then his second book asks how we teach people to think about God. He writes,

... the central crux, [t]he question that marks the point of divergence among partners to the conversation is this: What is theology and how is it related to human powers? Put slightly differently: What is it to 'do theology' and what do we have to do for people to capacitate them to do it?⁸

Six years later, Robert Banks published his important work, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*.⁹ In Part III of his book, Banks weaves together the theological education conversation with the missional theological conversation, marking a significant turn in the education debate. He writes,

Theological education is a dimension of mission and has a vital missiological content; it is an aspect of the teaching ministry of the church involving specialized testimony to the kingdom. It fulfills this educational service of the faith by (i) forming character, abilities, and thought, (ii) informing mind, praxis, and contemplation, and (iii) transforming values, people, and communities.¹⁰

⁸ Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate*, 189.

⁹ Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*.

¹⁰ Ibid., Kindle Location 1271-1272.

The center of theological education for Banks is missiological as it *forms*, *informs*, and *transforms* the whole person. Banks offers a way forward that neither denies the tensions between Athens and Berlin, nor assumes that one is more important than the other. Instead, Banks presents a missional model of theological education that emphasizes hands-on practice of ministry accompanied by guided theological reflection, all within the context of community. Banks repeatedly refers to the relationship between Jesus and his followers as a model for theological education.¹¹ His missional model is holistic, calling for all areas of the learner's life to be shaped by the process.¹² He moves beyond discussions of curriculum to a conversation about identity: the missional identity of God and God's church, as well as the identity and character of professors and teachers who seek to teach theology to emerging leaders.¹³

Banks' approach resembles an action-reflection model of pedagogy, attempting to weave together theory and practice into a unified, cyclical, ongoing process of *becoming*.¹⁴ Banks states it plainly,

... the "missional" model of theological education places the main emphasis on theological mission, on hands-on partnership in ministry based on interpreting the tradition and reflecting on practice with a strong spiritual and communal dimension. On this view theological education is primarily though not exclusively concerned with actual service—informed and transforming—of the kingdom and

¹¹ I explore this idea in Chapter 3, "Biblical and Theological Lenses" in the section entitled "Gathering and Sending in Luke 8-10."

¹² Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*, Kindle Location 1549.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Kindle Location 1685.

¹⁴ I explore the action-reflection and experiential learning models of pedagogy in Chapter 2, *Theoretical Lenses* in the section entitled "Action-Reflection Through Experiential Learning."

therefore primarily focuses on acquiring cognitive, spiritual-moral, and practical obedience.¹⁵

He differentiates this model from similar models where a person might watch and reflect on or critique ministry events with the intent of confronting it later in life. Instead, Banks suggests that weaving together *theory* and *practice* with an eye toward the missional nature of God provides the best framework for accomplishing mastery of both.

This brief overview is by no means an exhaustive history of the theological education debate, but it does attempt to highlight several of the key milestones in the conversation thus far, especially those that help us arrive at a missional perspective of theological education. This discussion has also helped to further uncover some of the philosophical roots of the practical challenges that have caused this debate to ripen, and that remain important in congregations today. The theological education debate attempts to address the critique with which we began this chapter that “the seminary just doesn’t produce the kinds of leaders that the church needs.” The challenges that the elder attempted to name have been a chief focus of a critical conversation among theological educators for more than thirty years.

While the questions raised by this conversation may cause anxiety, they also present a missiological opportunity if faced dialogically, which Banks’ missional model could invite. Seminaries and congregations can choose to *intentionally combine* their knowledge of pastoral leadership formation and strengthen the leadership capacity and health of emerging pastoral leaders wherever they are being formed. One approach that might be used to facilitate this cross-pollination of wisdom is to focus on the ways each

¹⁵ Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*, Kindle Location 1391-1393.

organization addresses particular aspects of pastoral leadership formation to identify and implement best practices. That is the approach of this thesis project, which focuses on building capacity for *vocational discernment* in emerging leaders.

Research Question

Before a person enters into a process of intentional pastoral leadership formation, there is some discernment that must take place. The individual considering pastoral leadership has typically engaged in conversations with family, friends, and church leaders about the external sense of call and seeks affirmation of their own internal sense of call. The RCA, for instance, has a process by which a person must come under care of the classis for a period of twenty-four months. Coming under care of the classis can only be done through the recommendation and blessing of the local congregation's elders. This process is designed to help facilitate the discernment of call to ministry, which has both an internal and external component.

However, the process of discerning vocation does not end when the formal training begins! How does a person who is currently engaged in a process of pastoral leadership formation continue to discern whether or not the pastoral life is right for them? How do they discover what aspects of pastoral leadership suit their gifts, skills, and desires, and, similarly, discover what aspects they should develop or avoid? What is the role of the seminary and the congregation in facilitating this process of discernment?

One aspect of leadership formation that remains constant whether in denominational seminaries or local congregations is the need for vocational discernment among those engaged in a formal process of pastoral leadership formation. The candidate for ministry must, at some point in the pastoral formation process, discern how and where

his or her gifts will be best utilized. How can the institutions seeking to help them develop as leaders best accompany them in the journey? My research question is:

Which of the current practices of Geneva Seminary and the New Wave Network are most effective in helping emerging leaders engage in vocational discernment?

I have engaged in a mixed methods sequential exploratory research project that assists congregations and seminaries in the RCA with living out the strategic priority of “Equipping emerging leaders of today and tomorrow.” I have focused my research specifically on the ways that these organizations help to facilitate *vocational discernment* for these emerging leaders. I investigated the vocational discernment practices implemented in the leadership formation programs of a multi-site congregation engaged in developing both commissioned and ordained pastors, as well as a denominational seminary of the RCA. This process helped me to produce a guide for congregations and seminaries to help facilitate vocational discernment with emerging leaders. My final report functions as a recommendation for a well-rounded approach to discernment of vocational ministry for those currently engaged in a process of pastoral leadership formation, and for the organizations that are facilitating their development.

Variables

The independent variable of my research is the specific practices within the leadership formation process that are used by these two organizations to facilitate vocational discernment capacity in emerging pastoral leaders. The dependent variable is the development and application of vocational discernment capacity in the lives of these same emerging leaders. I hypothesized that both organizations I studied utilize intentional practices in their approach to vocational discernment and, when combined, these practices provide a more robust process for facilitating vocational discernment. I also

hypothesized that there may be helpful practices that neither organization was utilizing, but that could be introduced. These additional practices were discovered through the literature review and in conversations with focus group participants who have encountered discernment practices elsewhere, and can be found, along with the other conclusions of this study, in chapter 5.

There are also intervening variables that affected the outcome of emerging leaders' vocational discernment process, and this study. One intervening variable is the amount of financial, time, and human resources that each organization dedicates to intentionally developing vocational discernment capacity in emerging leaders. Other intervening variables include: the demographic context of the congregation and seminary, especially in regards to such matters as the age of the leadership development program in each organization; the age of the students in each program; the level of formal education of students enrolled in the program; the level of life and ministry experience of students enrolled in the program; the level of education of those overseeing the program; the level of life and ministry experience of those overseeing the program; past occupational experience of students; the strength of the sense of vocation linked to those occupational experiences; and the gender of students.

Importance of the Research Question

This question is important to me primarily because I believe that vocational discernment is a key component in the life of faith for all people, including Christians as well as in the development of leaders for the church. Vocational discernment has been an important process in my life, and continues to be an ongoing aspect of my development as a Christ-follower and a leader in the church. I have come to understand calling as an

emerging process closely linked to identity formation and a feeling of contentment that flows from a sense of purposefulness.

Part of my calling is to support other pastors and help to develop emerging church leaders. I care deeply about helping them to experience satisfaction and contentment, which comes from purposefulness derived from a sense of vocational and missional belonging. I am also invested in seeing emerging leaders succeed in their leadership and understand where they can best use their gifts and skills, as well as experience the highest sense of purpose and belonging, because I place high value on the work of God in the church and in the world through the church. People are best able to cooperate with God when they understand their personalities, gifts, and skills and are in touch with what brings them joy, as well as what motivates them.

The question is important to my congregation because we are engaged in a robust effort to plant new churches. The congregation that I serve has embarked on an intentional, organized effort to identify and develop leaders as part of these church planting efforts. Vocational discernment is an important aspect of the leadership journey because the most effective leadership takes place where our gifts, skills, and passions meet opportunity in context. Missionally speaking, if God is at work in the world and at work in me, then there must be a way to discover where those two divine workings meet. I theorized that the place where God's activity in a person and in the world meet is the place of most experienced significance, effect, and joy. When leaders experience significance, effectiveness, and joy they are healthier and are able to be a faithful presence in the lives of others for the sake of Jesus Christ. Our organization desires to work with and develop these kinds of healthy, thriving, energized, passionate leaders.

The question is important for the larger church for many of the same reasons that it is important to me and to my congregation. When leaders understand their calling they can be more joyful, compassionate, and effective in leading others. The church needs leaders who not only understand the mission of God in the world, but also the way that they fit uniquely into the *missio Dei* in their context.

Churches that have leaders who understand their calling and the process for discovering it are also better able to accompany others in that same journey. This represents an opportunity for exponential leadership growth and multiplying ministry opportunities as increasing numbers of people are on the lookout for God's call in their lives and in their specific context. It is a fantastic thing when a person comes to understand the concept of the *priesthood of all believers* (1 Pet 2:5). When that same person knows how to *participate* in that reality it is profoundly life transforming.

Related Questions

The concept of *vocational discernment* also leads to many questions regarding the missional shape of the church and the lives of individuals who seek to follow Jesus Christ as members of the *priesthood of all believers*. If capacity for discernment is necessary for leadership, and is also a skill that can be learned over time and in concert with the community of faith, then a whole host of questions arises. Some emerge out of the theoretical understandings of core concepts surrounding vocational discernment. Others materialize around the concrete practices of discernment and the process of learning to do it together. These questions include:

- How do Christians conceive of *vocation* in the early 21st century? Do they understand it as an intrinsic aspect of the life of all Christians, or is vocation reserved only for those who are ordained?
- How does the vocational discernment practice of pastoral leaders help to positively shape and encourage the vocational discernment practices of lay people? In other words, as pastors grow in this capacity, do lay people also grow in their awareness of their own priestly calling in the world?
- Similarly, how do Christians conceive of *discernment* in the early 21st century? Is discernment thought of as something reserved only for the monumental decisions of life, or do people understand discernment as a way of life constantly seeking wisdom?
- Closely related to these questions is the question of people's conceptualization of the Holy Spirit. How do people conceive of the ways that the Holy Spirit is at work in, among, and ahead of them? How does one listen to the Holy Spirit in the midst of discerning? Do people believe that the Holy Spirit is an active part of the discernment process, or is the Holy Spirit relegated to a shelf doctrine? How do people conceive of the Holy Spirit speaking through community?
- Finally, the idea of communal vocational discernment challenges contemporary notions of individualism. Missional discernment seeks the wisdom of the community, and yet, when it comes to vocation, many people may feel that their internal sense of call carries more weight than that of the community on their behalf. The discernment process presents the opportunity for a potentially contentious exchange between the individual and his or her community regarding

vocation. What anxieties arise for individuals who engage in vocational discernment, especially regarding the role of community in that process? What practices can help to alleviate harmful anxiety and build trust so that the community can be experienced as a place of love, grace, and truth as a person discerns vocation?

While some of these questions are beyond the scope of this research project and require further study, I have attempted to attend to many of these questions in my research. I have asked questions in interviews, focus groups, and a census that attempt to address some of these secondary questions. I have also framed my study through the use of theoretical, biblical, and theological lenses which attempt to address some of these secondary questions, while mining for answers to the primary question of best practices for developing vocational discernment in emerging leaders.

Theoretical Lenses

There are many social science theories, including those from the domains of pedagogy, psychology, and leadership development theory, which might be helpful in unearthing best practices for developing vocational discernment in emerging leaders of the church. Likewise, within each domain there are specific streams, and within those streams, certain authors who offer helpful insights into this question and the subsequent questions it raises. In chapter 2, I identify and briefly discuss some of the lenses that have been most helpful to me in this research project. The theoretical lenses I have chosen are those with which I am most familiar and which I believe also hold the most promise for addressing my research question. I acknowledge here, and in the introduction to chapter

2, that these theoretical lenses function as guardrails, providing accountability and helping to identify biases.

I begin with the pedagogical perspective of *action-reflection*, and identify it as an ideal model for developing emerging leaders, especially when it incorporates experiential learning practices. Action-reflection is a pedagogical theory that utilizes an ongoing cycle of actions followed by intentional reflection, which leads to adaptation of the theory of practice, yielding more action informed by this new theory.¹⁶ Accompanying action-reflection is Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), which utilizes direct contact with ideas and tasks through direct, concrete experience.¹⁷ The theory states that people learn best when *doing, hearing, touching, seeing, and reading* accompany one another. Both the seminary and the multi-site church that I studied incorporate aspects of action-reflection and ELT as a core component of their leadership development process.

I then turn my attention to *leadership development theory*. I begin with a look at the work of Peter Northouse in *Leadership: Theory and Practice*.¹⁸ Northouse says that, “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”¹⁹ I spend a great deal of time discussing the *process theory* of leadership development and I invite other leadership voices into the conversation as framed by Northouse.

¹⁶ For more on Action-Reflection, see Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 1st American ed., A Continuum Book (New York: Seabury Press, 1973).

¹⁷ David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984).

¹⁸ Peter Guy Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004).

¹⁹ Ibid., 3.

Next, I discuss the book, *Leadership on the Line*.²⁰ Authors Ronald Heifetz and Martin Linsky frame leadership as an exercise in correctly identifying challenges and then choosing the best process to address those challenges. One of the authors' main contributions to the leadership theory conversation is the differentiation between two categories of challenges: *adaptive* and *technical*. Technical challenges exist when a person or organization already possesses the necessary knowledge to address the challenge. Adaptive challenges always require new learning, and often cause pain and anxiety in those who face them.

Following that, I turn to *The Leadership Challenge* by James Kouzes and Barry Posner.²¹ The authors identify five characteristic practices of excellent leadership that have emerged from years of study: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.²² For Kouzes and Posner, leadership is about behaviors that can be learned.

Finally, I look at the important work of Peter Steinke in *A Door Set Open: Grounding Change in Mission and Hope*.²³ Steinke utilizes systems theory to describe the church as an organism that must differentiate itself from other organizations, and also grow capacity to adapt. The book is organized into three sections, The Context (where we are), The Mission (where we are going), and The Response (how we can get there),

²⁰ Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002).

²¹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

²² Ibid., 14.

²³ Peter L. Steinke, *A Door Set Open: Grounding Change in Mission and Hope* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2010), Kindle.

which serve as a map to help congregational leaders navigate change. Steinke points to the content of his title, *Mission and Hope*, as a compass pointing the way forward. All of these leadership books cohere with Northouse's *process theory* of leadership, and maintain that leadership can be learned.

After leadership development theory, I focus on Abraham Maslow's psychological theory of motivation called *self-actualization*. Maslow first introduced the theory of self-actualization in the book, *Motivation and Personality*.²⁴ Maslow set out to study those whom he considered to be the psychologically healthiest subjects to discover what informed their approach to life. He found that a common denominator is that they are motivated internally by a desire for growth.

Finally, I discuss *sensemaking theory* and *mental models*. Organizational theorist Karl Weick was the first to identify sensemaking theory in his book *Sensemaking in Organizations*.²⁵ Scott Cormode further develops this theory by applying it to congregations. He invites congregational leaders to lead change through reimagining the stories that their organizations tell through shared narratives.²⁶ He suggests that central to good leadership is the willingness and ability to help people develop *mental models* that align with the narrative of scripture, and help us to participate in the story that God is telling.

²⁴ Abraham H. Maslow and Robert Frager, *Motivation and Personality*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1987).

²⁵ Karl E. Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations*, Foundations for Organizational Science (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995).

²⁶ Scott Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006).

Biblical and Theological Lenses

Chapter 3 offers several biblical and theological lenses, which, like the theoretical lenses above, offer accountability and direction for a project rooted in the Christian faith. First, I attend to the story of Elijah at Mt. Horeb, and the call of God on the life of his apprentice, Elisha, in 1 Kings 18-19.²⁷ The story shows the human side of leadership, which is full of both weakness and strength, and moments of both joy and darkness. Finding ourselves in a story, like that of Elijah and Elisha, helps us to see that we may not be that different from the leaders God has used in ages past.

I then take a look at a subtle linguistic rhythm in Luke 8-10, which refers to Jesus' followers alternately in terms of *gathered* and *sent*, depending on their current assignment in relation to Jesus. I suggest that this rhythm characterizes the dual vocational identity of followers of Jesus even today: as those both gathered and sent in Christ's name. This biblical narrative links closely with my first theological lens: the *missio Dei*. I define the *missio Dei* as the ongoing work of God in the world whereby God seeks to redeem and reconcile all of creation back into relationship with Godself (1 Cor 5:11-21). Next, I offer a brief overview of the role and activity of the Holy Spirit in the biblical witness, which sets up a conversation about the ways that the two organizations I have studied incorporate the Holy Spirit into their leadership development processes.

Finally, I turn my attention to the concept of vocation itself, identifying several historical Christian insights that are important to Reformed and Lutheran perspectives. I briefly discuss the Protestant conviction that vocation does not belong to religious office-holders, but is rooted in the identity of all Christians as ambassadors of God's reconciling

²⁷ All biblical references in this paper are from the NIV unless otherwise indicated.

work in the world. Martin Luther's voice is primary in creating the theological case for this principle.²⁸ Luther's voice is joined by others, including Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Scott Cormode, and Lesslie Newbigin.²⁹ I then turn my attention to the Reformed tradition, paying special attention to the work of John (Jean) Calvin and the centrality of selflessness in the Reformed understanding of discipleship.³⁰ I conclude this section on vocation with a discussion of the Heidelberg Catechism, and its perspective on the nature of belonging.³¹

Methodology

I identify the research methodology I used to conduct this study in chapter 4: *mixed-methods sequential exploratory research*. The mixed-methods approach allows for both deep investigation through interviews and focus groups, and wide investigation through a survey. When combined with the sequential method, which allows the qualitative data to inform the quantitative data gathering instruments, the mixed-methods approach is a powerful tool for creating a thick description of reality. I argue that this

²⁸ Martin Luther, *Three Treatises: An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate. A Prelude to the Babylonian Captivity of the Church. A Treatise on Christian Liberty*, trans. C. M. Jacobs (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), 13-16. Found in William C. Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), 211-212.

²⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Rev. i.e. 2d & unabridged ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 48-52, 53-55, 56-57, 60-66. Found in Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*, 389-399.; Scott Cormode, "Cultivating Missional Leaders: Mental Models and the Ecology of Vocation," in *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity*, ed. Craig Van Gelder, Missional Church Series (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2009).; Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995).

³⁰ Jean Calvin, A. N. S. Lane, and Hilary Osborne, *The Institutes of Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987).

³¹ Christian Reformed Church, *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1987).

social science methodology is compatible with a Christian ethos for four reasons: It requires *humility*, it promotes *justice*, it aids in *translating the Gospel*, and it cooperates with the *missio Dei*.

My research design was conducted in four phases, a chart of which can be found in chapter 4 (see Figure 2). In Phase I, I interviewed one faculty and one staff member of the seminary and one pastor of the multi-site church (see appendix A), all of whom are deeply involved in the development of emerging leaders in the organizations they represent. These initial interviews were analyzed and used to inform the questions I asked in Phase II, which consisted of focus group interviews with five students from the seminary and three students from the multi-site church (see appendix B). The sample from the seminary focus group was a nonprobability quota sample of three women and three men. One of the men was unable to attend the focus group and was interviewed separately one-on-one. The sample from the multi-site focus group was a nonprobability convenience sample comprised of those students available at the time of the focus group. Phase II also included one-on-one interviews with two additional students from the multi-site organization who were unable to attend the focus group interview. Finally, Phase II included a survey (see appendix C), which was conducted with the previous three graduating classes from the seminary (120 individuals). The survey questionnaire was distributed electronically via SurveyMonkey, and participants were given four weeks to respond. I received forty-three responses.

In Phase III, I coded the qualitative data using the process outlined in *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, which

includes word-by-word, line-by-line, incident-by-incident, focused, and axial coding.³² Finally, the axial codes are brought into conversation with one another through theoretical coding.³³ I also analyzed the quantitative data by importing the raw data from SurveyMonkey into the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program. I conducted various descriptive statistics and inferential statistical tests. The results from the statistically significant tests can be found in chapter 5.

In Phase IV, I brought the findings from the seminary into conversation with the findings from the multi-site church. This final dialogical step not only provides best practices for developing vocational discernment capacity in emerging leaders, but also provides a model for future conversation between these organizations. I kept the data from both organizations as distinct as possible until this final phase of dialogical analysis.

Other Matters

Definition of Key Terms

Discernment: The ability to ascertain something that is not at first apparent. A process of discovery that leads to wisdom and insight.

Emerging leader: An individual who aspires to lead others, shows competency for achieving that goal, and is taking active steps toward growing in that capacity.

Leadership: The process of an individual working with and influencing a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

³² Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 50-60.

³³ Ibid.

Leadership Formation: An intentional, on-going process of growth and transformation into becoming a person who leads others.

Missio Dei: Literally, *mission of God*. This is the ongoing work of God in the world whereby God seeks to redeem and reconcile all of creation back into relationship with Godself. It is the heart of the missional theological perspective (1 Cor 5:11-21).

Priesthood of all believers: The notion that every Christian is a *priest* and, through the process of sanctification and vocational discovery in their lives, is empowered by God through the Holy Spirit to participate in the reconciling work of God in the lives of others (1 Pet 2:9).

Self-actualization: The full realization of a person's potential associated with her true identity. This is the stage of life when *who* a person is coheres deeply with *what* she does.

Spiritual Formation: The Holy Spirit-empowered, intentional process of holistic growth through focusing on the inmost dimension of a person. Spiritual formation results in transformation of the heart, spirit, and will. It is engaged through intentional practices, both inwardly and outwardly, which change the attention from the self to God and others.

Vocation: Closely related to the *priesthood of all believers*, vocation is the theological principle that God purposefully creates all people with certain gifts and abilities. These gifts and abilities become vocational when they are used to bless God and others.

Ethical Considerations

The research for this thesis project has been conducted in a manner compliant with the ethical standards of Luther Seminary, and the guidelines offered by the

Institutional Review Board. All participants in this project were treated with respect, including every effort to maintain their confidentiality. Participants were not paid or otherwise rewarded for participation in the project, and participation was completely voluntary.

All participants received either an implied consent letter (see appendix D) or an informed consent letter (see appendix E and appendix F) prior to participating in the project. The letters assured participants that their participation was not required, that they could cease participation at any time, and that their relationship with the New Wave Network, Geneva Seminary, the Reformed Church in America, Luther Seminary, and with me would not be negatively impacted should they opt out of the project. Because this project gathered information from three groups of people who have unique power-dynamics in play between them (students, faculty, and staff), the confidentiality of participants was very important. Furthermore, in the interviews and questionnaire, I used language that sought to diminish the role of the power-dynamics that are present between those I interviewed and me. Nevertheless, these power-dynamics are always in play, particularly in the focus group interview I conducted with students at the New Wave Network since I am one of their pastoral leaders.

I obtained permission from the seminary prior to beginning the research, and as I progressed from one stage to the next. In order to gain access to current students of the seminary for the purpose of conducting the focus group interview, the seminary requested that I provide the names of the students I would be interviewing so that they might send an email that accompanied my request for an interview. I was given the opportunity to review the seminary's email and found that it did not raise any ethical concerns.

I produced video and audio recordings of the interviews throughout the process. The recordings have been and will continue to be kept in a password-protected file on my personal computer. I have been the only person to have access to the recordings. I have also provided pseudonyms for the organizations and individuals who have participated in this project. I will destroy all of the data gathered for this project after three years.

Concluding Thoughts and Hopes

I hope that this project will help the RCA, the seminary, and the congregation I studied to improve the way that they invest in emerging leaders. The vocational discernment process can be very painful, causing anxiety for many people. To form leaders effectively and lovingly, the church must accompany emerging leaders through an intentional and thoughtful process as they discern God's call. Vocational discernment is a process leaders will need to use throughout their lives as they follow Christ in mission. It is the work of congregations and seminaries to provide access and exposure to tools that help to facilitate this process. It is the aim of this research project to celebrate areas of strength, identify areas of weakness, and begin another phase of intentional conversation between congregations and seminaries. To help in accomplishing this task, I employ several theoretical, biblical, and theological lenses. It is to the theoretical lenses that we now turn in chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL LENSES

We understand the world we encounter through a complex system of integrated perspectives. We are constantly assessing the world around us with lenses through which we interpret information. These lenses are the product of our family of origin, religious upbringing, birthplace, life experiences, and a multitude of other factors that shape the way we understand, and respond to, our environment and circumstances. It is important for us to be as intentional and thoughtful as possible about the lenses we use because our lenses determine the conclusions we draw from the input we gather. A thesis project, such as this one, requires diligence in selecting appropriate theoretical, biblical, and theological lenses that can help to keep our eyes, ears, and minds open to focusing the abundant input we gather into something discernable and meaningful.

I outline in this chapter the theoretical perspectives that I have used to provide meaning to the research conducted for this project. Theoretical perspectives help us to move beyond our preconceived notions about how the world works and the meaning we give to what we experience. While we cannot obtain absolute objectivity, intentionally selected theoretical lenses can help us to identify our subjectivity and provide checks and balances by forcing us to look at information through alternative lenses. The theoretical lenses I have applied to my thesis project are: an action-reflection model of pedagogy, which utilizes experiential learning practices; leadership development theory; self-

actualization theory; and sensemaking theory. I discuss each of these theoretical perspectives below.

Action-Reflection Through Experiential Learning

Emerging leaders engaged in discerning vocational identity often find themselves in a place of ambiguity and, sometimes, conflict. Understanding who we are and where we fit in life can be stressful, especially when dealing with the substantive and intimidating idea of calling. Conflicts can arise internally, rooted in the same uncertainty and excitement that drives us to seek an answer to the question, “Where do I fit?” Conflicts can also arise externally, coming from friends and family whose own hopes, fears, opinions, and agendas are entangled with our own. It is in the midst of this conflict and uncertainty that the theory of action-reflection and the practice of experiential learning can help to provide real-world context and structure to the swirling mix of disembodied feelings and ideas.

Action-reflection is a pedagogical approach that encourages learners to examine their actions through a process of intentional reflection leading to adaptations, which result in new actions.¹ The cycle is ongoing, and represents a continual process of learning and growth, as well as improvement. Because behaviors modify thinking, rather than simply reveal it, humans can behave their way into a new way of thinking, which produces a new way of behaving, and so on. Action-reflection is one supporting rafter of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), a pedagogical approach that focuses on making meaning of concepts, theories, and tasks through direct experience of them, rather than

¹ For more on Action-Reflection, see Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*.

solely through hearing or reading about them. Experiential learning and action-reflection are based on the theory that people learn best, and most naturally, when *doing* accompanies *hearing* or *reading*, and is reinforced through intentional critical reflection.

Experiential learning is a natural and intuitive way for individuals to acquire new skills, gain understanding about how the world works, and grow in their internal and external perceptions. Our experiences teach us and shape us, whether we are intentional about them or not. Os Guinness illustrates the way that past experiences shape future actions through the life of Moses in his book, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose in Your Life*. He explains how Moses' experiences shape his leadership praxis.² We see a first glimpse of one of Moses' character flaws when he kills the Egyptian guard in Exodus 2. At times enraged, and motivated by his frustration, Moses can become volatile and disobedient, a tendency disastrous for leaders navigating complex, high-stakes scenarios like leading hundreds of thousands of people through the desert wilderness. This tension created by Moses' susceptibility to be controlled by his frustration reappears in Numbers 20, when Moses disobeys God in a seemingly minor way by striking a rock to retrieve water. This relatively small infraction comes with major consequences, as Moses is kept from entering the Promised Land because of it. God uses the experience of failure and disobedience to shape Moses into the leader God wants him to be. God's focus in that moment is not on Moses' failure to obey, but on the root cause of his failure to obey, which was a failure to trust God.³

² Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2003), 76ff.

³ Ibid., 76.

The relationship between God and God's people is not predicated on obedience that comes from fear. It is predicated on trust that produces obedience. The rock striking incident reveals deeper challenges in the relationship between God and Moses, and between God, Moses and the Israelites—issues of core importance like trust. With God, no experience is wasted. Instead, experience, even and especially failure, becomes a teacher, which God uses to further God's saving mission. Similarly, Moses' time in exile tending sheep in the Midianite wilderness becomes an appropriate framework and training ground for leading God's sheep, Israel, through the Sinai wilderness. Moses' experiences shape his learning and help to cultivate leadership capacity in him that he will need to follow where God leads him. Moses is just one example of many, both within the biblical narrative and throughout history, for whom experiences shape learning and create growth.

Identifying this common way that people learn and develop through experience, David A. Kolb developed a theory of Experiential Learning (ELT). His theory acknowledges that while people *can* learn through experience, not all experience produces meaningful growth. Kolb proposed a learning cycle that allows people to engage their experiences deliberately and maximize the opportunity they present for development. This cycle includes four stages: experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting (see Figure 1).⁴ Kolb defines Experiential Learning as, “the process whereby

⁴ David A. Kolb and Bauback Yeganeh, “Deliberate Experiential Learning,” in *Contemporary Organizational Behavior in Action*, ed. C. D. Kayes K. Elsbach, A. Kayes (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2012), 3-4.

knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience.”⁵

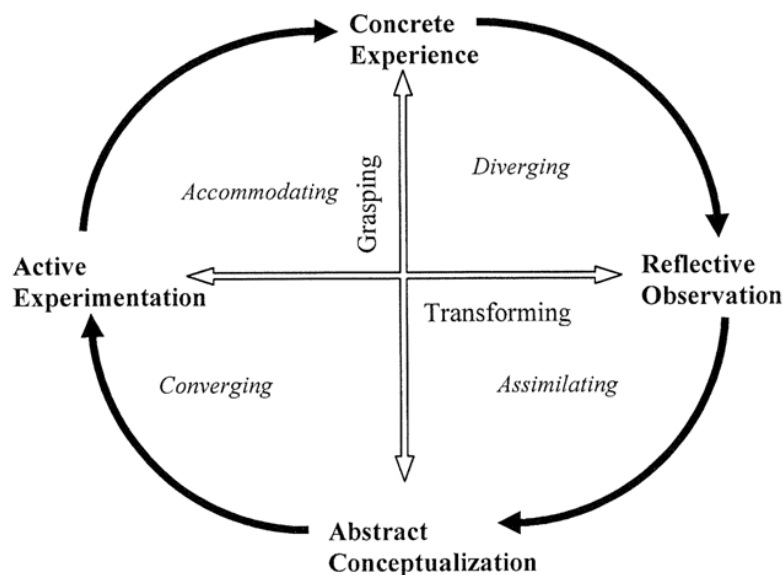


Figure 1. Experiential Learning Cycle⁶

ELT has no end point, instead being imagined as a continuous spiral of growth and development moving from stage to stage. However, each cycle does begin with concrete experience. In this way, ELT is rooted in praxis, allowing theory to develop out of practice through a deliberate process of attentiveness and critical thinking. Kolb describes this process as full of “creative tension,” in which,

Immediate concrete experiences (experiencing) are the basis for observations and reflections. These reflections are assimilated and distilled into abstract concepts (thinking) from which new implications for action can be drawn. These

⁵ Ibid., 3.; Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, 41.

⁶ Godpower Enyi, “Experiential Learning Cycle,” Figure, February, 2013, <http://cpdgcenyi.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/experiential-learning-cycle.png> (accessed November 7, 2014).

implications can be actively tested and serve as guides in creating new experiences.⁷

In order to fully engage the ELT process and become deliberate about transforming experiences into learning, one must embrace humility and the wisdom of failure. Let's return to Moses for a moment. Moses failed when he murdered the Egyptian guard. He failed again when he struck the rock in the desert rather than simply speaking to it as God had commanded him. Moses allowed anger, rather than trust in God, to control his actions in both scenarios, and he failed in a way that launched him into dramatic forms of punitive exile; the murder sending him to live in a foreign land, and the rock incident disqualifying him from entering the Promised Land. It is not a stretch to imagine that Moses failed with frequency in this arena, and yet, this character flaw does not exclude Moses from leadership, or, more importantly, from fellowship with God. Failure does not define Moses. Instead, God uses Moses' failures to accomplish what Moses alone could not through his very best efforts and successes.

Likewise, when God first approaches Moses, asking Moses to participate in the rescue mission of Israel from slavery in Egypt, Moses offers reasons why he is dangerously unqualified, and explains that he will most certainly fail at this task. God is unwilling to accept that Moses' shortcomings exclude him from God's redeeming mission of abolition and reconciliation. But God does not engage Moses in a philosophical or theoretical conversation about these issues. God simply asks Moses to act, to obey, to be faithful by taking a step of action in alignment with what God wants to do. Moses will learn as he goes, through failure and success alike. Kolb and Yeganeh

⁷ Kolb and Yeganeh, "Deliberate Experiential Learning," 3.

identify the need to “redefine [our] relationship with failure,” as a key component to engaging in the process of ELT, calling it, “an inevitable part of doing something new.”⁸ But in order for emerging church leaders to fully engage ELT, and for the church to “do something new,” emerging leaders must be given the opportunity to fail in the crucible of actual practical ministry. This requires risk on the part of both theological institutions and congregations alike. That risk must also be accompanied by an intentional and guided process of action and reflection, like that laid out by Kolb and others in ELT.

The voices calling for the church to do something new, specifically in regard to how it understands its purpose, and how it forms leaders to join God in pursuing that purpose, are numerous. Robert Banks, in his book *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, states the need for, “a more immediate connection between action and reflection,” in the development and training of emerging congregational leaders.⁹ Elsewhere in the same text, Banks makes the case that seminaries must come to understand themselves more as supplemental agencies to the formation already taking place within the context of practiced ministry in congregations. He sites the work of the Theological Education by Extension Movement (TEEM) as a convincing example.

Banks explains that the TEEM was actively looking “for a way to keep being, knowing, and doing together.”¹⁰ The model they developed helped them to focus on developing leaders that would actually lead, rather than attempting to address matters associated with achieving ordination. TEEM emphasizes the *priesthood of all believers*

⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁹ Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*, Kindle Location 1659.

¹⁰ Ibid., Kindle Location 1313-1318.

and “regards formation as a process more than a program. In other words, theological education can only enhance ministry in progress, not prepare people for ministry.”¹¹

TEEM seeks to build congregationally-contextual mentoring relationships that approximate apprenticeship, and aims to grow students in areas of “maturity, wisdom, and influence.”¹²

Historically, seminaries have focused on teaching the four-fold curriculum, which includes Bible, church history, systematic theology, and practical theology.¹³ Theological institutions have engaged these curricular foci in ways that have been largely divorced from practice, focusing instead on the theory behind each. But if Banks’ critique is convincing, and *something new* is required of theological education, because *something new* is required of churches, then ELT is a viable model for engaging the four-fold curriculum in a way that maximizes opportunities for learning and the internalization of these core areas of knowledge in the lives and practice of emerging congregational leaders. Banks offers a five step process for engaging more deeply in a pedagogical method rooted in action-reflection,

We can do this in five stages: (i) encourage people to express or name their present praxis; (ii) engage in critical reflection on this; (iii) bring the results into contact with the Christian story and vision; (iv) allow a genuine conversation to take place between the two; (v) follow this through to a new or renewed praxis.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid., Kindle Location 1313-1318.

¹² Ibid., Kindle Location 1313-1318.

¹³ Craig Van Gelder, “Theological Education and Missional Leadership Formation: Can Seminaries Prepare Missional Leaders for Congregations?,” in *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity*, ed. Craig Van Gelder, Missional Church Series (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2009), 35.

¹⁴ Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*, Kindle Location 1578-1579.

He continues, making the point that, “praxis refers here not just to actions but to the reflection that lies behind and within them.”¹⁵

ELT provides a way for the practice of ministry in congregations to come into direct contact with the theory of ministry, so roundly developed in theological institutions, and is accompanied by the expectation that both will be transformed by their interaction. When a model of action-reflection as embodied in ELT is embraced in seminaries, emerging church leaders will carry with them the true nature of praxis, which is the inseparability of action and reflection as two sides of the same coin. As they carry praxis into congregations, their leadership will take on the shape and character of action-reflection, and as they embody their praxis, the congregation itself will be challenged to engage its own praxis through this lens. Craig Van Gelder calls for this intentional interaction between congregation and seminary as a necessary step toward realizing a missional theological practice of congregational leadership. He says,

Missional theology requires that a deep connection be made between theological education and congregations in context as students engage in the process of understanding how to lead congregations into participating in God's mission in the world.¹⁶

When addressing questions of vocational discernment in emerging congregational leaders, one must consider concrete experiences as formational, as well as evidentiary. Students should be led through an ongoing process of action-reflection that helps them to understand in new ways their own strengths, weaknesses, hopes, fears, gifts, and callings. As this process is engaged, new self-knowledge, as well as new understandings of

¹⁵ Ibid., Kindle Location 1579.

¹⁶ Craig Van Gelder, ed. *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity*, Missional Church Series (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2009), 42.

ministry and leadership, will be formed. This deeper knowledge of both self and ministerial practice will help to coalesce vocational identity. It is not enough to simply feel called to the idea of ministry, or the theory of ministry, because ministry doesn't happen in theory, but in practice. Ministry happens in the midst of the lives of real people, and takes places in the theater of real consequences. Missional leadership development must be done in the context of God's mission being enacted in God's world, which is the object of God's missionary venture.

Both the seminary and the church network I studied utilize action-reflection and experiential learning models as a core component of their formation of emerging leaders. This lens helped me to examine the importance and perceived effectiveness of the action-reflection cycle in vocational discernment, specifically in regards to building core competencies for congregational leadership. Studying the experiential learning practices of these two organizations also helped me to understand the desired outcomes each organization is attempting to produce in its emerging leaders, a subject I address in the next section.

Leadership Development Theory

What is leadership? This is a question with no clear answer. It is a question whose multiple answers shift throughout history, and alongside circumstances. Banks points out that

Leaders in churches are 'managers' and 'directors,' 'counselors' or 'therapists,' 'orators' or 'lecturers,' more than 'leading servants' in the household of God or 'community builders' among the people. While recent discussions of the 'professional' model of ministry refer to facilitating community as an important

element in pastoral work, they do not define community primarily in terms of relationships, and they continue to view leadership individualistically.¹⁷

Craig Van Gelder describes the history of theological education in the United States in his chapter of the book, *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation*. He explains that not only have the methods of theological education changed, but also the desired outcomes have evolved over the years. Expectations of pastors have morphed alongside and often in response to broader cultural shifts, perceived and real societal needs, and a changing ecclesiological perspective.¹⁸ He says that at various times throughout history the pastor has been:

- Resident theologian - colonial period
- Gentleman pastor - early 1800s
- Churchly pastor - late 1800s to mid-1900s
- Pastoral Director - post-World War II period
- Therapeutic Pastor - transition period, 1970s-1980s
- Entrepreneurial Leader - transition period, 1980s-2000¹⁹

To invest in emerging leaders, and to develop leaders for the church, one must answer the question, what kind of leaders does the church need? We have to be able to define the desired outcome if we are going to attempt to help people move toward it. For my research, I wanted to understand a historical view of leadership theories and definitions, as well as the particular definitions out of which the two institutions I studied

¹⁷ Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*, Kindle Location 2216-2218.

¹⁸ Van Gelder, "Theological Education and Missional Leadership Formation: Can Seminaries Prepare Missional Leaders for Congregations?," 38-41.

¹⁹ Ibid., 42.

operate. While many have attempted to define leadership, very few have outlined such a comprehensive theory of leadership, its practices, and development as has Peter Northouse.

Leadership Theory and Practice

In his book, *Leadership Theory and Practice*, Peter Northouse offers an in-depth look at the research that has been conducted on leadership. In the first few pages, Northouse gives a quick summary of the various ways that people have conceived of leadership and finally presents his own summary of the core elements of leadership, which include: “(a) Leadership is a process, (b) leadership involves influence, (c) leadership occurs within a group context, and (d) leadership involves goal attainment.”²⁰ These core elements describe an environment of group movement from one location, whether tangible or intangible, geographical or philosophical, to another. Each aspect takes on a different emphasis and form based on the various contexts in which leadership is practiced, but, according to Northouse, these four aspects are always present in true leadership. He sums up his statement with this definition: “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”²¹

Northouse’s definition points toward the unique nature of leadership in that it is relational and multi-perspectival because it straddles the line between the individual and the community. While the individuals engaged in the process, including the leader, must participate from their own unique perspectives, making leadership a multi-perspectival

²⁰ Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 3.

²¹ Ibid.

process, the focus of the process is on the common good, or the common goal. The process does not exist for the accomplishment of the goals of the leader, but must be engaged in honoring and working toward a commonly held value or belief through action. The agenda, then, is not set by the leader, but by the shared value(s) of the individuals gathered together to engage in the task of movement. The leader has responsibility to facilitate the discernment and decision making process, but does so in light of and in respect to the common goal.

One important distinction for Northouse's definition of leadership is the difference between what he calls "trait" and "process" leadership.²² Trait leadership is formed on the assumption that leadership is largely related to innate characteristics that certain people have that make them leaders of other people. The implication, is that leadership is only available to certain people who possess these traits. Trait leadership focuses on the leader, rather than on both the leader and the followers, or the situation that the leaders and the followers are addressing. Some of the most prominent traits that research has indicated are associated with leadership are intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability.²³

Northouse, in calling leadership a process, does not reject the idea that certain traits make leadership easier or more accessible for some, but moves intentionally away from the commodification of leadership necessary in the trait-oriented definition.²⁴

²²Ibid., 21.

²³ Ibid., 19.

²⁴ This is not to imply that certain traits or characteristics are not necessary or desirable in leaders. Northouse identifies several strengths of the trait approach on pages 22-23, including the statement that, "the trait approach has given us some benchmarks for what we need to look for if we want to be leaders." The trait approach is not malevolent or unethical, but it is incomplete.

Instead, Northouse says, “The process viewpoint suggests it is a phenomenon that resides in the context and makes leadership available to everyone.”²⁵ Trait-based leadership definitions run the risk of missing out on the gifts of all those who do not fit a preconceived notion of what it means to be a leader. Throughout history the wisdom of countless women, minorities, introverts and so many others have been ignored because they did not possess the preferred characteristics that superficially identified a person as a leader. When leadership is available to everyone, the opportunity for a rich dialogue through multiple perspectives increases the likelihood that the chosen actions will produce outcomes that do the most good for the most people. Leadership that is trait-oriented is limited, and stunted. However, when we assume that leadership can be learned, and that everyone can do it, we also invite the multiple perspectives of all individuals to inform and reform the leadership process in new ways that maximize the gifts of a diverse community.

When God invites Moses to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt, Moses argues that he is unqualified because he doesn’t have the necessary traits to complete the task. He begins by asking a question of identity in Exodus 3:11, wondering, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” He proceeds with concerns about the content of his message, and his ability to say the right things (Ex 3:13). Next, he is concerned with his ability to command the Israelites’ attention and to garner their trust (Ex 4:1). He moves quickly to concerns about his lack of oratory skills (Ex 4:10). Finally, Moses simply pleads with God to send someone else

²⁵ Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice.*, 4.

(Ex 4:13). At every turn, no matter Moses' objection, God consistently reassures Moses that the success of this mission does not rest on Moses.

No matter how prepared Moses feels, or the skills he possesses, the mission will be impossible without God's ongoing activity. Moses' vocation is to respond to what God is doing within, through, and ahead of the Israelites. To do this, he will need the considerable gifts and skills he has developed while growing up in the royal palace, and herding sheep in the wilderness of Midian (experiential learning). As he brings these gifts and skills to bear on the missional task that God invites him to join, he will also need to engage the gifts and skills of other leaders within the community (process view of leadership).²⁶ Together, Moses and his fellow leaders will join in God's ongoing missional activity among them, achieving an outcome that is miraculous and defines the Israelite narrative for thousands of years.

For all of its benefits, the process view of leadership is not without challenges. Leadership resides in the place of relationships—where individuals come together—and the process approach to leadership emphasizes the importance of those relational interactions. The process approach to leadership takes very seriously the role of both leader and followers, as well as the situation and context at hand. When individuals come together, conflict arises. Further, when a group sets out to undertake change, failure, and the need to adapt in the face of it, are almost guaranteed.

²⁶ In Exodus 18, Jethro visits Moses and explains the need for Moses to share the burden of leadership with some capable, trusted leaders. Moses wisely listens to his father-in-law, and selects some men to help him govern and lead. In another example of expanding leadership, Joshua is referred to as Moses' aide in Exodus 24:13 and 33:11. Joshua then becomes Moses' successor in the first chapter of the book of Joshua, after Moses' death.

Much of the leadership literature available, including most of *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, addresses these two challenges: conflict and failure. Northouse does this by addressing the various ways that leaders and followers interact. He discusses assigned and emergent leadership, and writes about the various ways that power and influence can be both healthy and destructive.²⁷ He does this through describing and assessing various approaches to leadership, including the skills approach, the style approach, and the situational approach, all of which emphasize various aspects of the challenge of leadership. The skills approach addresses the challenge of competency and capability of the leader.²⁸ The style approach addresses the challenge of how leaders act with and toward followers.²⁹ The situational approach addresses the challenge of a leader's ability to adapt to the needs of various situations.³⁰ Each of these approaches shares a noteworthy feature with the trait approach: a focus on the leader. In contrast, Northouse's approach to leadership focuses on both leadership and followership, and the process of leaders and followers moving together toward a common goal while managing conflict and failure.

This approach to leadership suits a missional ecclesiology well. First, the process approach, by addressing and valuing the work of both leaders and followers, coincides with the Protestant notion of the *priesthood of all believers*, which removes the false dichotomy of sacred and secular work and announces that all Christians, together, form a

²⁷ Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 39ff.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 69ff.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 89ff.

priesthood with a sacred vocation, which is participation in the Gospel. A missional understanding of vocation embraces the notion of God's working in, through, and ahead of all people. Arguing convincingly for the *priesthood of all believers*, Martin Luther writes, "It is pure invention that pope, bishops, priests and monks are to be called the 'spiritual estate'; princes, lords, artisan and farmers the 'temporal estate.' That is indeed a fine bit of lying and hypocrisy."³¹ Luther continues by citing 1 Corinthians 12:12 and 1 Peter 2:9, making the argument that the only difference between one Christian and another is that of office because, "Gospel and faith alone make us 'spiritual' and Christian people."³²

The second reason that the process approach coheres with a missional ecclesiology is because the process approach focuses on the location of decision making as the place where leaders and followers come together, what we might refer to as communal discernment. Communal discernment maintains the missional ecclesiological value that the church is the gathering of individuals who, together, constitute the body of Christ, which exists for the mission of Christ. By emphasizing the communal and relational nature of leadership, the process approach allows for the church to function like an organic, growing body where the cooperation of many parts is necessary for healthy functioning, rather than as a hierarchical institution that exists for its own survival. Certainly, leadership requires leaders who act on behalf of the community for the sake of the community. Hierarchy is not in and of itself immoral, unethical, or counterproductive

³¹ Luther, *Three Treatises: An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate. A Prelude to the Babylonian Captivity of the Church. A Treatise on Christian Liberty.*, 13-16. Found in Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*, 211-212.

³² Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*.

to the mission of God in Christ. Many examples of healthy hierarchy can be identified in Scripture. But the process approach identifies the reciprocal relationship between followership and leadership, which together yield healthy, life-producing outcomes.

Leadership, however it is enacted, is challenging especially regarding the two inevitabilities I mentioned earlier: conflict and failure. Two books that deal most clearly and practically with these twin leadership difficulties are *Leadership on the Line* by Ronald Heifetz and Martin Linsky, and *The Leadership Challenge* by James Kouzes and Barry Posner.³³ Peter Steinke is also helpful, especially his book, *A Door Set Open: Grounding Change in Mission and Hope*.³⁴ These works are discussed below.

Leadership on the Line

Leadership is worth the risk because the goals extend beyond material gain or personal advancement. By making the lives of people around you better, leadership provides meaning in life. It creates purpose. We believe that every human being has something unique to offer, and that a larger sense of purpose comes from using that gift to help your organizations, families, or communities thrive.³⁵

With these strong, principled words, Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky introduce us to the art of leading with purpose, integrity, and character. In the pages that follow, they invite us to lead by engaging both followers and detractors, by enlisting allies and confidants, and knowing the difference between the two, and by moving between the action on the dance floor of decision making, and the balcony of observation where a different perspective can bring new insights. While never acknowledging or naming what

³³ Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*.; Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*.

³⁴ Steinke, *A Door Set Open: Grounding Change in Mission and Hope*.

³⁵ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, 3.

Northouse refers to as the process approach to leadership, Heifetz and Linsky certainly seem to embrace it with the practical advice that they offer.

According to Heifetz and Linsky, central to the leadership task is the work of identifying the nature of the challenge you face. The authors distinguish between two different kinds of challenges. The simplest kinds of challenges are technical in nature. These are the challenges we face for which we already have the necessary knowledge and methods.³⁶ This does not mean that technical challenges are easy, or trivial; they simply do not require new learning. Adaptive challenges, on the other hand, “require experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments from numerous places in the organization or community.”³⁷ These challenges are often costly and difficult for the community of people who face them because the solution is not clear and, once finally discovered, it must be embodied. Further, the solution is typically accompanied by the experience of loss.³⁸

The authors encourage leaders to remain both differentiated, and connected to others as they lead change. They acknowledge the courage it takes to lead well, while also offering specific practices that can help a leader avoid stasis, such as thinking and behaving politically. But perhaps the strongest sections of the book are those where the authors encourage strength of character. They remind the reader that accepting responsibility is as important as being seen as competent.³⁹ They encourage leaders to

³⁶ Ibid., 13.

³⁷ Ibid., 13 and 119.

³⁸ Ibid., 26.

³⁹ Ibid., 90.

model the behavior they hope to see, rather than preaching an unachievable idealism.⁴⁰ They remind leaders, in numerous ways, that varied perspectives are often the key to the very best solutions.⁴¹ Finally, they encourage leaders to avoid over-functioning, reminding the reader to trust others to do the work that they can and must do.⁴²

While all of these nuggets of advice might seem disparate, they cohere around the central principle of the process approach to leadership: that leadership takes place through the collaborative work of leaders and followers. To this end, seminaries and congregations who wish to invest in emerging leaders must demystify the role of the leader as sole hero who holds the keys to a hopeful future through his or her knowledge, competency, charisma, and perspiration.

The final section of *Leadership on the Line* encourages leaders to enlist in self-care through self-knowledge and self-discipline.⁴³ The heart of leadership is located in knowing yourself and being able to control yourself. The authors fall well short of prudish pietism, recognizing that human desires are natural, and good, but also acknowledging that leadership requires strong character, and commitment to values such as innocence, curiosity, and compassion.⁴⁴ Heifetz and Linsky also devote a section to a subject of particular relevance for pastors: distinguishing role from self. They warn,

Confusing role with self is a trap. Even though you may put all of yourself into your role—your passion, values, and artistry—the people in your setting will be reacting to you, not primarily as a person, but as the role you take in their lives.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 95.

⁴¹ Ibid., 101-102.

⁴² Ibid., 123.

⁴³ Ibid., 163.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 225.

Even when their responses to you seem very personal, you need to read them primarily as reactions to how well you are meeting their expectations.⁴⁵

Congregations and theological institutions that are investing in emerging leaders need to spend as much time developing the core components of character as they do the classic four-fold curriculum of bible, systematic theology, church history, and practical theology. Kyle J.A. Small writes, “I argue that theological education should not attempt to function primarily as professional education; rather, it should orient itself toward Athens while carrying a passport from Berlin.”⁴⁶ Athens represents the pedagogical objective of personal character formation, whereas Berlin represents the ambition of increased theological knowledge. Small wisely rejects an either-or duality, opting instead for a holistic vision of pastoral formation somewhat akin to the highly practical advice offered by Heifetz and Linsky. I contend that a holistic approach to leadership formation, such as this, will help emerging leaders discern their calling. As the true challenges of leadership become clear, leaders will be better able to interpret their own gifts, and discover the role that God is inviting them to play, if they are personally and spiritually mature and have a developed capacity for theological understanding. These two aspects of leadership formation must then interact and mutually inform one another in order to produce authentic missional discipleship that makes for the kinds of leaders that the church needs.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 188.

⁴⁶ Kyle J.A. Small, “Missional Theology for Schools of Theology: Re-Engaging the Question ‘What Is Theological About a Theological School’,” in *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity*, ed. Craig Van Gelder, Missional Church Series (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2009), 46.

The Leadership Challenge

Similar to *Leadership on the Line*, the work of James Kouzes and Barry Posner in *The Leadership Challenge* fits within Northouse's definition of leadership as a process that necessarily focuses on the role of both leaders and followers working together for the achievement of a common goal.⁴⁷ The purpose of this work is to identify and describe the five characteristics of excellent leadership that emerged from twenty-five years of research by the authors. The book is organized into sections, each focusing on one of these five characteristic practices, offering insights into the theory of their importance, and providing examples of ways that each has been lived out. These five characteristic practices are: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.⁴⁸

These five practices of what Kouzes and Posner call "exemplary leadership" reveal their basic theory of what leadership is and why a person would engage in it. In short, "Leadership is not about personality; it's about behavior."⁴⁹ In the introduction the authors write, "[Leadership] is a process ordinary people use when they are bringing forth the best from themselves and others."⁵⁰ Leadership is a process of striving together for positive change that represents a common good. Perhaps a Christian might refer to this *common good* as abundant life, or *shalom*. However we frame the desired outcome, or the *why* of leadership, some of the most prominent voices in leadership literature say the

⁴⁷ Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 3.

⁴⁸ Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 14.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid., xii.

same things. Leadership is about behavior, and it involves collaboration. Leadership takes place in the context of action, and is discerned together.

A Door Set Open: Grounding Change in Mission and Hope

Peter Steinke is another author who is helpful in assisting leaders, and particularly pastors, to navigate through conflict and failure. His books *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*, and *A Door Set Open: Grounding Change in Mission and Hope* approach leadership from a unique and valuable perspective.⁵¹ These books combine Steinke's expert knowledge of systems theory with his rich theological insight, and practical congregational knowledge as an ELCA pastor. This makes his work helpful for learning to lead through, and cope with the complexities, difficulties, and perils of congregational leadership. For the purposes of this project, I focus on *A Door Set Open*.

Conflict and failure experienced in organizations comes as a result of change, whether change that is intentionally engaged to pursue mission and vision, or change that is thrust upon an organization from either internal or external sources. Change is experienced as loss and is accompanied by grief, and one of the tasks of a leader is to help followers to navigate the loss and grief in ways that produce health. In *A Door Set Open*, Steinke argues that the best way for leaders to help move people through change is, as the title suggests, by offering them an anchor in mission and hope for the future. He draws on the work of Rabbi Edwin Friedman and Murray Bowen, two systems theorists,

⁵¹Peter L. Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006); Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006); Steinke, *A Door Set Open: Grounding Change in Mission and Hope*.

and offers insights using the language of environments and organisms. Steinke, referencing Friedman, says that the hostility of the environment is equal to the response of the organism ($HE=RO$) and he builds much of the book on that simple equation.⁵² In short, the key component to the vitality of an organism or organization is not the volume or strength of the hostility it encounters, but the response that it offers in the face of that hostility.

The book itself is full of hopefulness for the church as an organism. *A Door Set Open* is organized into three helpful sections: *The Context* (where we are), *The Mission* (where we are going), and *The Response* (how we can get there). Early in the book Steinke lays out the cultural conditions we now face and, as many have indicated before him, at first glance things are bleak and difficult for the church. But Steinke sees opportunity for hope instead of despair and new life instead of death. The key is in how the church responds, whether with anxious reactivity or thoughtful responsiveness.

Steinke rejects quick answers, instead urging the church to engage in authentic discipleship, which is maturity in Christ. He invites Christians to recommit themselves to the invitations to mission throughout the Bible, and quotes many missiologists, including Koyama, Bosch, and Van Gelder, as well as other biblical scholars and theologians. Through them, he builds the case that the raw materials for a fruitful future are fully present, but the church's ability and willingness to access them comes from its ability to respond thoughtfully rather than react anxiously. Steinke writes, "One cannot be a leader and be as anxious as everyone else. Sabotage need not come from others."⁵³

⁵² Steinke, *A Door Set Open: Grounding Change in Mission and Hope*, Kindle Location 68.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Kindle Location 312.

Steinke borrows from Bowen's systems-related concept of differentiation, a term that comes from embryology. Differentiated cells have a specific identity like a heart or brain cell, as opposed to a stem cell, which is still immature and has no identity.⁵⁴

According to Steinke, the church must know who and what it is, becoming differentiated, as do individual Christians. The core task of leadership is one of discerning and attending to questions of identity, and then making decisions out of the ethos of the organization. Attending to a missional ecclesiology and making decisions based on that identity opens up the possibility for a bright future, which is rooted in the promise of Christ's return and in the hope of the new creation.⁵⁵

According to Steinke, the church is differentiated, or finds its identity, in mission, specifically God's mission in the world—the *missio Dei*. He says, "Either a church is missional or it is not the church. Mission is the nature and purpose of the church, not some list of qualifiers. Because God has a mission, a church arises. Apart from mission, the church is meaningless. The mission has churches."⁵⁶

Steinke also draws considerably from a journey motif, explaining that movement and change are part and parcel with being alive. Thus, the church that is alive is the church that is being sent, and is, therefore, moving and changing. Steinke is careful to note, however, that the church cannot do everything, but it must do something, and so the responsibility of the local church is to discover opportunities to join God in God's recreating mission and then join in. He writes, "Touch whatever aspect of mission is

⁵⁴ Ibid., Kindle Location 102-107. Steinke provides a brief description of the core concepts of systems theory in this section of his book.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Kindle Location 92.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Kindle Location 792.

within reach.”⁵⁷ To gain a fuller understanding of what aspect of mission is within reach, the church and its leaders must understand who they are. The work of identity formation and character development are paramount to grasping missional calling. For this, we now turn to the work of psychologist Abraham Maslow.

Self-Actualization Theory

Self-Actualization theory holds that people are internally motivated to realize their full potential and that they derive a sense of meaning and purpose from that accomplishment. Abraham Maslow brought the theory to prominence in what has been popularly referred to as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.⁵⁸ Self-actualization is the pinnacle stage in Maslow’s pyramid of human needs, and is a mark of maturity. The need for self-actualization comes from the desire human beings have to become increasingly the person they already are. Maslow’s theory is well known among educators and educational theorists, and states that people find fulfillment when they are able to pursue their potential in life, striving to become all that they are capable of becoming. Self-actualization is closely connected to a process of identity-formation. As people grow in their understanding of who they are, they can grow in their capacity to *be and do who they are*.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid., Kindle Location 1210.

⁵⁸ Maslow and Frager, *Motivation and Personality*, 15-22.

⁵⁹ See Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000). Palmer writes about the importance of inner work and its impact on outer work in chapter 5 of this book on vocational discernment. To close this chapter, Palmer writes on page 94, “We have places of fear inside of us, but we have other places as well—places with names like trust and hope and faith. We can choose to lead from one of those places, to stand on ground that is not riddled with the fault lines of fear, to move toward others from a place of promise instead of anxiety.” See also Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*, 20-26.

The quest for vocational discernment is, in large part, a quest for self-actualization and identity formation. Emerging leaders must attend to questions of identity and capacity before and while they wrestle with what they want to do with their lives occupationally and vocationally. I have used this lens to examine how the seminary and the multi-site church help emerging leaders address questions of identity and capacity for leadership in order to help them pursue self-actualization through vocational discernment.

Maslow's research was conducted in response to his conviction that the field of psychology was left anemic by only studying the unhealthiest human subjects. Maslow set out to discover the central characteristics held in common by exceptionally healthy people. Maslow called these healthy people *self-actualized*, because the motivation for their actions was growth that would help them to increasingly become their authentic selves. Some of the characteristics of the self-actualized person are: an accurate perception of reality, acceptance of circumstances, spontaneity, problem centering, solitude, autonomy, fresh appreciation for life, deep friendships, humility, respect for others, strong ethical sense, humor, creativity, strong values, the ability to resolve dichotomies, and resistance to enculturation.⁶⁰

Maslow makes it clear that he is not describing a perfect person. He goes to lengths to describe the failures and shortcomings that self-actualized people possess, just as all people do.⁶¹ Maslow simply proposes to describe healthy characteristics that inspire, while remaining realistic about the human condition. In Maslow's own words,

There are no perfect human beings! Persons can be found who are good, very good indeed, in fact, great. There do in fact exist creators, seers, sages, saints,

⁶⁰ Maslow and Frager, *Motivation and Personality*, 128.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

shakers, and movers. This can certainly give us hope for the future of the species even if they are uncommon and do not come by the dozen. And yet these very same people can at times be boring, irritating, petulant, selfish, angry, or depressed. To avoid disillusionment with human nature, we must first give up our illusions about it.⁶²

How are characteristic descriptions of self-actualized people relevant to a discussion on the vocational discernment of emerging leaders? First, this list and the psychological research it is founded upon offer us a glimpse of what has been effective in human motivation and growth. Maslow describes mature people with mature motivations and desires. The characteristics he describes are characteristics that we hope emerging church leaders will possess. Second, Maslow's descriptions of these characteristics give context and flesh to otherwise nebulous concepts of *good* or *desirable* human qualities. Many descriptions of the ideal leader emerge based upon competing values in the marketplace of leadership development. Maslow's list of characteristics possessed by self-actualized people simply *describes* healthy people—presumably, the healthiest of people—whose characteristics are worthy of admiration. Yet, the work of discernment does not originate solely from within a person. It is also the result of complex interactions with other people, the stories they tell, and the mental models they use to make sense of concepts like *leadership*, *calling*, and *ordination*. Sensemaking theory offers insight into the ways that groups of people make meaning, and how that meaning can influence the vocational discernment of an emerging leader.

⁶² Ibid., 146-147.

Sensemaking Theory

Emerging leaders engaged in discerning vocational identity often find themselves in a place of ambiguity and, sometimes, conflict. Understanding who they are and where they fit in life can be stressful, especially when dealing with the substantive and intimidating idea of calling. Conflicts can arise internally, rooted in the same uncertainty and excitement that drives people to seek an answer to the question, “Where do I fit?” Conflicts can also arise externally, coming from friends and family whose own hopes, fears, opinions, and agendas are entangled with their own. It is in the midst of this conflict and uncertainty that the theory of sensemaking and a grasp of mental models can be helpful.

Organizational theorist Karl Weick was the first to identify sensemaking theory in his book *Sensemaking in Organizations*.⁶³ He posited that human experiences are made meaningful not only through individual perspectives, but also through encountering the perspectives of other people within communities and organizations. Sensemaking is a process for gaining understanding of life events and framing them in concert with others’ values and perceptions to create a shared awareness, especially in times of conflict and uncertainty.

In his book, *Making Spiritual Sense*, Scott Cormode invites Christian leaders to utilize the tools of sensemaking and collaborative narrative to find meaning in their experiences of life.⁶⁴ Cormode’s sensemaking process encourages people to discover biblical narratives that help people to adopt a way of life consistent with Christianity by

⁶³ Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations*.

⁶⁴ Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters*.

finding themselves in God's unfolding story of redemption. For Cormode, one of the keys to making sense of how you experience and understand life is for a person to evaluate the *mental models* that they possess.⁶⁵ In a Christian context, for instance, congregations can grow in their understanding of who they are and what they should do when they are able to find themselves within the story that God is telling. They can make sense of their experiences by discovering how those events fit in that same portion of the biblical narrative. This is the work of meaning-making. It relies heavily on narrative and, with introspection, it can help people and communities to find purpose that leads to faithful action. As a community's mental models change, often through encountering the perspectives of others, so does the community's means of interpreting the events of its corporate life. Likewise, individuals can find fresh meaning and purpose emerging alongside of the change occurring within their community.

Sensemaking and mental models relate to questions of vocational discernment for emerging leaders because emerging leaders experience uncertainty as they discern God's call in their life. As they navigate that uncertainty they require the help of colleagues, mentors, and loved ones who shape their perceptions and help them to make meaning through the lenses of shared narratives (mental models). Part of an emerging leader's uncertainty, for instance, is connected to the mental models that they and others utilize to define what constitutes pastoral leadership. Those models may be different based on any number of factors such as gender, race, or socio-economic status both of individuals and of the community that accompanies them on their journey.

⁶⁵ Scott Cormode, "Cultivating Missional Leaders: Mental Models and the Ecology of Vocation." in Van Gelder, ed. *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity*, 107.

Vocational discernment is a process of identity formation and identity realization, which does not emerge from a vacuum. As much as individuals are the product of genetics and individual choices, they are also the product of a community that has developed a complex method of making sense of life. People see themselves through lenses created by the community in which they live. Identity formation is an iterative and ongoing process involving continuous feedback from one's surroundings. A conversation, a story, a passing comment, and even body language have the power to shape self-perceptions, as well as the perceptions of what it means to be a particular kind of leader, or to fill a particular role in the community.

Sensemaking and the mental models that a community uses greatly influence who people think they are, and how they believe they are expected to fit in. Yet, even as self-perceptions grow and change, so do the shared mental models of complicated concepts like vocational ministry. Sensemaking and mental models are viable theoretical lenses to aid in examining evolving aspects of vocational discernment. As the mental models of this concept change, so must the practices that organizations undertake to accompany emerging leaders. Further, an increased understanding of the mental models that organizations use to make sense of pastoral leadership, calling, and discernment allows these same organizations to become intentional about shaping those models in line with scripture.

Conclusion

I have identified several key texts that have been influential in framing the definition and practice of leadership. All of these texts understand leadership as a *process* that involves both leaders and followers collaborating for the sake of outcomes that

achieve a common good. These texts also understand leadership as a set of behaviors, or practices; leadership is embodied. I have also discussed an influential educational psychology model of understanding human motivation, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and have focused on the pinnacle of his developmental pyramid, self-actualization.⁶⁶ Maslow set out to identify the characteristic behaviors of people that society considers healthy examples of human potential. I followed Maslow's theory of human psychology and motivation with a brief overview of sensemaking theory and the mental models that are created by communities and appropriated by individuals to understand life experiences. To begin this section, I outlined the pedagogical theory of action-reflection as practiced in the experiential learning methodology. This is a method that embraces concrete practices as formational and evidentiary, seeking to reinforce certain behaviors, and to foster discovery not only in the realm of theory, but also praxis.

Together these theoretical lenses point toward a key component in the development of emerging leaders for the church: practices that shape behavior. Organizations that wish to engage in the work of developing emerging leaders must understand practices not as a tool to be utilized when convenient, but as an end in themselves, and the primary organizational principle of their pedagogical approach. These behaviors form the matrix out of which decisions are made. They form theory and create paradigms for understanding and engaging the world, which Scott Cormode refers to as *mental models*. Quoting Peter Senge, Cormode describes mental models as "the ways people see the world" and "the images, assumptions, and stories which we carry in

⁶⁶ Maslow and Frager, *Motivation and Personality*.

our minds of ourselves, other people, institutions, and every aspect of the world.”⁶⁷ I would add *practices* to this list of things that shape the way we see the world. Our practices shape the motivations for, as well as the answer to, the question, “What is God inviting me to do with my life?” The practices we employ create observable rhythms in our lives. These rhythms influence not only the discernment processes we engage, but also the outcomes of those processes. Addressing these questions involves deep biblical and theological considerations, to which we now turn in chapter 3.

⁶⁷ Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 235, 237. As found in Cormode, “Cultivating Missional Leaders: Mental Models and the Ecology of Vocation,” 104.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL LENSES

I describe below the biblical and theological perspectives that I have used for my thesis project. Biblical perspectives are important because they help to frame the information we gather in the context of a larger biblical narrative. I use the story of Elijah at Mt. Horeb and the subsequent call of Elisha as an example of a call story that includes several prototypical elements of the journey to vocation and leadership. A story is an appropriate alternative way to approach understanding vocational discernment because people experience their lives as a story: a chronological narrative with events that provide meaning, many of which are understood only in light of other, larger themes. Next, I turn my attention to a discussion of the unique linguistic rhythm used to describe the followers of Jesus in chapters eight through ten of Luke's Gospel. I propose that the two different ways that Jesus' followers are referenced at that particular time in his ministry offer a clue as to the dual vocational identity of all followers of Jesus throughout history, including today.

I then shift my focus to a discussion of several pertinent theological concepts that inform my understanding of vocational discernment. Theological perspectives give us a coherent framework within which we can speak about God's character and activity. They allow us to build upon the insights of the saints who have gone before us, and give voice to wisdom that stands outside of the limited perspective offered by our own context. First, I address the concept of the *missio Dei*, which I define as the ongoing work of God in the

world whereby God seeks to redeem and reconcile all of creation back into relationship with Godself (1 Cor 5:11-21). The *missio Dei* is at the heart of the missional theological perspective. Next, I discuss the Holy Spirit, taking a look at the activity of the Holy Spirit in the biblical witness. Finally, I turn my attention to the concept of vocation itself, focusing on historical Christian perspectives.

Elijah and Elisha

One of the most intriguing and enlightening biblical stories of emerging leadership and calling is found in the narrative of Elijah and Elisha in the books of 1 and 2 Kings. Their story offers unique perspectives on the leadership and mentoring journey. It recounts a stunning moment in which call is made clear, and the mantle of leadership is literally passed from one generation to the next. The story reminds the reader that leadership is successful if it continues from one generation to the next, and that the need for leadership continues even after a great leader is gone. The journey of Elijah and Elisha also reveals concrete practices of leadership formation, such as the importance of cross-generational mentoring relationships. The story addresses leadership failures, and the role of doubt and resistance among leaders called by God. The story fosters hope that as leadership capacity grows, so does the sense of calling.

We are introduced in 1 Kings 17 to Elijah the Tishbite; an unpredictable, moody, powerful, God-fearing prophet of *Yahweh*. He served during the time when the land of the Hebrews was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Elijah dealt with substantial threats and challenges in Israel during his lifetime, all of them emanating from Israel's King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Jezebel is blamed for luring the Hebrew people away from worshipping *Yahweh* and into worshipping the

Canaanite god, Baal. Elijah's tenure of leadership was fraught with danger and had its share of both success and failure. While Elijah is far from perfect, he regularly demonstrates persistence, righteousness, creativity, conviction, and faith.

The Dark Side of Leadership

We pick up the story in 1 Kings 19 as Elijah is running from Jezebel, who has threatened to kill him because of his actions. Baal has been exposed as a fraud and Elijah has killed the prophets who served Baal. The focus of his prophetic leadership is in calling the Israelites back to *Yahweh*. As he runs out into the wilderness, he collapses under a broom bush, and asks God to take his life because he feels that he is "no better than my ancestors" (1 Kgs 19:4). The Israelite story is marred by centuries of failure, and in this moment as he descends from the manic euphoria of his miraculous and very public victory on the top of Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs 18), Elijah is in despair. After experiencing God doing something miraculous and overwhelming, Elijah is running scared, feeling faithless, and expecting history to repeat itself in his own utter failure. Yet, anyone who has led for any amount of time can recognize himself or herself in Elijah as he sits despondently under the broom bush. This common experience in leadership threatens to destroy many emerging leaders who do not expect it to come and who often take it as a sign of irresolvable brokenness. Fortunately, in the case of Elijah, God intervenes, providing for Elijah's immediate needs of food and water. God then instructs Elijah to continue to pursue his purposeful calling.

The Need for Solitude

Elijah continues on from the broom bush to Mt. Horeb, also referred to as "the Mountain of God" (1 Kgs 19:8). It is there in the silent place of solitude that Elijah

experiences God and finds renewal of his vocational identity. To hear God, Elijah must get away from the noise of the conflict because discernment is primarily about listening. After *Yahweh*'s voice was not found in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire come these famous lines,

And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kgs 19:12-13)

The Hebrew phrase translated as "gentle whisper" in 1 Kings 19:12 means, "the sound of a soft nothing." How appropriate that the God who enters the world as a poor infant from an obscure village in northern Palestine would also be found communicating most clearly in the sound of a soft nothing! God's call often is found in the silence between the many words we use. God is present and speaking, if only people will be present and listen. In the sound of a soft nothing, God speaks. One task of the emerging leadership journey is to learn to listen, to be silent enough to hear God's voice in the gentle whisper, and to expect that God is inviting us to join the *missio Dei* in a thousand quiet ways every day.

The First Question

The question posed in the gentle whisper of God, "What are you doing here" (1 Kgs 19:13), often functions as a catalyst for discovering vocational identity. The simple answer to that question for Elijah was that he was hiding in the wilderness because he was afraid of losing his life. Yet, the question invites Elijah to examine himself, his motives, and his assumptions, and it leads to many other questions. Why is Elijah hiding in a cave after experiencing such a tremendous victory? What is it about Jezebel and Ahab that Elijah fears? How is this fear controlling Elijah and drawing him away from

his calling? Before Elijah can face the challenges plaguing Israel, he must deal with these and other similar questions within himself. Elijah must do the internal work of leading himself before he can invest in another leader who will follow in his footsteps. This must be taken a step further, however, if the question is going to be truly missional. It is not simply that leaders must learn to lead themselves, but that they must learn to allow God to lead them, and they only do this when they understand their own weaknesses. David J. Bosch reminds us, “[Jesus] wishes his community to know that mission never takes place in self-confidence but in the knowledge of our own weakness, at a point of crisis where danger and opportunity come together.”¹

God Guides

Elijah responds to God’s question with self-justification, and no small amount of self-pity, claiming that he is the only person in Israel who still worships the LORD. This is untrue, but his hyperbolic response reveals the loneliness and despair that he feels as a leader with great conviction and onerous responsibility. Elijah tells the truth about his perspective, flawed as it may be. He gives voice to reality as he perceives it, and in that honesty, God provides a way for Elijah to move beyond his fear-induced stasis. God does this in two ways. First, God does not reveal the complete road map to vocational success for Elijah, something for which many leaders may wish. Instead, God reveals several very simple next steps to Elijah that set him on a path toward faithfulness. Vocational identity is not found in grasping the entire narrative arc of some grand epic. It is found in doing the simple things, the things that are here and now, the things that are necessary. In

¹ David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series; No. 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 76.

the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus points out that the people who faithfully follow him are those who share food and water, practice hospitality and generosity, and extend mercy to all they encounter (Mt 25:31-46).

Second, God corrects Elijah's perception of reality, reminding him that, "I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him" (1 Kgs 19:18). Elijah may feel alone, but he must remember that he is not. Elijah may feel as though the success of God's plan rests solely on him, but he must remember that it does not. Elijah's journey into the wilderness reveals a hidden arrogance that plagues many leaders, a narcissism that infects pastoral leaders as much as, if not more than, other leaders. Elijah must deal with this potentially fatal flaw, and part of the cure is found in being confronted with reality.

Graciously, God does not just point out Elijah's flawed perspective; God also helps Elijah take concrete steps to correct it. God addresses the issue of Elijah's feelings of loneliness, first by commanding him to anoint two kings who will serve as allies in the cause of righteousness. God also commands Elijah to anoint a successor, Elisha, indirectly reminding Elijah that the work of reconciling God with God's world will not be completed in Elijah's lifetime. The work of reconciliation is the work of God throughout multiple generations. Refuting the *great-man* theories of leadership and human history, God's work is accomplished through many people, throughout many generations.² Each generation has the responsibility to pass on the wisdom garnered both in the heights of victory like those of Mt. Carmel, and the depths of failure like those found in the cave of

² The great-man theory was first introduced in Thomas Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero Worship* (Washington, DC: Ross and Perry, Inc, 2002).

Horeb. All along the journey toward healthy leadership and vocational identity, the mentor must call attention to God's ongoing faithfulness in both places; a faithfulness that leads to the fulfillment of God's indefatigable mission of reconciliation.

Passing the Mantle: Apprenticeship

After Elijah hears God's instructions, he locates Elisha, who is busy plowing a field, and places his outer cloak on Elisha's shoulders. Elisha interprets this act as an invitation to follow Elijah, and begin a journey toward joining God's purposive mission. It communicates to Elisha that he has been set-aside for a special purpose. Elisha is invited to follow in the footsteps of Elijah; taking on the same vocational identity, assuming the same responsibilities, and wielding the same authority. The casting of the mantle upon Elisha is a form of empowerment and a blessing conferred by one generation onto another.

The blessing, however, is accompanied by the call to leave one way of life, and to pursue another. Elisha is invited into a long-term commitment, which begins by following Elijah as his assistant. Wherever Elijah went, Elisha went. Where one was welcomed, the other was welcomed; and where one was endangered, so was the other. Their lives became intertwined so that the days were not broken up into times of formal instruction and regular life. *The living of Elijah was the learning of Elisha.* Both Elijah and Elisha commit to this way of living so that Elisha can grow into his new vocational identity. In casting the mantle, Elijah *commits* to lead by allowing Elisha to be by his side, and participate in everything he does. Elisha learns how to be a prophet of God by praxis, not only by hearing or reading. Elijah's pedagogical approach was akin to Experiential Learning, which was discussed in Chapter 2.

Elisha is aware of the implications of what has been done to him, and he requests to kiss his father and mother goodbye before following Elijah into a new future. Elijah allows this, adding the clarifying statement, “What have I done to you?” The addition of this idiom invites Elisha to consider the deeper meaning of what has just happened to him. Elijah does not initiate the call; it is the gift and prerogative of God. Elisha must *commit* himself to a life of following God, which he will do for a period by following Elijah, as one who will engage and take responsibility for his emerging vocational identity. To signal his commitment, and to celebrate this great gift, Elisha slaughters his oxen and burns his plow; the tool that would allow him to eschew his new vocation. He draws the community together with a feast, which signifies both an end and a beginning. “Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant” (1 Kgs 19:21b).

External Confirmation of Internal Call

Elisha was certainly unaware of the specific trials that awaited him on this path; the details remained a mystery as he began his journey. Following Elijah was simply the next faithful step on the trajectory toward vocational integrity. We are not made aware of Elisha’s life before Elijah finds him in the field, but based on Elisha’s strong response to this clear call we might assume that this was not the first step of faithfulness that Elisha had taken in his life. When this *call* came, Elisha was prepared to say yes to the invitation. Perhaps his response communicates that Elijah’s actions are an affirmation of what he, and others, had already known—an affirmation of Elisha’s observable character, gifts, and convictions. It is possible to misidentify calling as an obscure, hidden treasure that can only be located through incantations and mystical appointments (like the gentle whisper at the mouth of a cave). More typically, it comes as an (often profound)

affirmation of an extant pattern in the life of a person. Likewise, calling does not usually have a moment of absolute fulfillment. Vocation unfolds in life as a continually emerging pathway determined by character, capacity, conviction, choice, and circumstance. It is precipitated by being prepared, as both Elijah and Elisha are in 1 Kings 19, to say *yes*.

Gathering and Sending in Luke 8-10

In chapters eight through ten of Luke's Gospel account, Jesus practices a pedagogical method much like that described in the story of Elijah's mentoring of Elisha in 1 and 2 Kings, and above in Chapter 2. Today we might identify Jesus' methodology of training emerging leaders, from the first time he said "Follow me," until he ascends in Acts chapter one, as action-reflection through the practice of intentional experiential learning. Like Elijah and Elisha before them, *the living of Jesus will be the learning of the disciples*.

In Luke 8-10, the disciples have already spent considerable time watching and listening closely to Jesus as he ministers. To this point in Luke's narrative, they have been relatively passive recipients of Jesus' work. They have watched him heal the sick, forgive sins, calm storms, cast out demons, and even raise people from the dead. They have seen and heard him preach, debate with religious leaders and lawyers, and eat with the wealthy and educated as well as with the poor and destitute. They have watched Jesus break several social mores and human laws. All of this they have observed with frequent delight, occasional fear, recurring confusion, and ceaseless awe.

In Luke 9, the time has finally come for them to be sent out to do as they have seen Jesus do, and to bear witness of the one they have been *with*. Christian discipleship is not merely about amassing knowledge, interesting experiences, or positive feelings—

three demigods of contemporary, postmodern American society. Central to the purpose of discipleship is learning the ways of Jesus so that one may do the things that Jesus does, teach the things that Jesus teaches, know the things that Jesus knows, loving what Jesus loves, and hating what Jesus hates. As Christians grow in this way, they witness to the transformation that they have experienced in the presence of Jesus. To do this, a person must encounter Jesus so that he or she can learn his ways. This is why Jesus points his disciples to himself, claiming true authority within himself, rather than to the Law, which he fulfills. To know the Law is admirable, but to know the one who fulfills the Law leads to righteousness.

The disciples followed Jesus around for approximately two years doing nearly everything he did; eating when and where he ate, sleeping when and where he slept, running when he ran, and sitting when he sat. They listened when he taught, when they weren't talking over him or correcting him, at least enough to capture many of his teachings in writing years later. Jesus' goal for his disciples was that they would become like him, taking on his wisdom and making it their own so that they could be sent out into the world to do the same work that he did. Disciples are *gathered* so that they can be *sent*. They *follow* so that they can *lead*. The method for the training of disciples, the path that leads followers of Jesus to live fully into their vocational purpose, is to *know* Jesus by having a relationship of *intimacy*, in addition to one of *intellect*. In knowing Jesus, and not only knowing what he knows, the disciples are able to be sent into the world to introduce others to him so that they might know him, too.

All too easily, discipleship that seeks to know only what Jesus knows and not the character and ethos of Jesus, and the Father to whom he points, can become shallow

Gnosticism. It can produce a faith that is always seeking to fill itself up with facts and measures, but that is devoid of the kind of transformation that comes from being *with* the one who transforms. Being with Jesus helps to avoid Gnosticism, which assumes a conflicted duality between the *good* spiritual realm, and the *bad* physical realm. Jesus locates himself in the world, taking on flesh, becoming corporeal, and joining the two realms together again within himself. As David J. Bosch points out, the Gospels of both Matthew and Luke can only be comprehended through the lens provided by each Gospel's final pericope (Matthew 28:18-20, and Luke 24:46-49); distinctively missional calls issued by Jesus, which culminate in the sending of those who have been with him out into the world.³

Keeping in mind the missional focus of the discipleship that Jesus was enacting, an interesting pattern emerges in the language used to define Jesus' inner circle of twelve in chapters eight through ten of Luke's Gospel. This linguistic pattern attests to a *gathered and sent* rhythm of life that was embraced by the early community that Jesus created around himself. In Luke 8:22, the twelve are referred to as *mathetes*, which is the Greek word for disciples, learners, or pupils. After the twelve have been sent out, they are referred to in Luke 9:10 as *apostelloi*, which is translated in English as apostles and derives from the Greek word *apostello*, meaning, sent ones. This is the same Greek root word that is used in Luke 9:2 when we are told that Jesus *sent* the disciples out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and heal the sick. Thirty-three verses later in Luke 9:43, the twelve are identified as *mathetes* again because they have been gathered as pupils once more. Shortly after that, in Luke 10, we once again find the language of *apostello*

³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 91.

being applied to Jesus' followers as he sends seventy-two of them out into the world to do what they have learned from him, and to learn from doing. It is important to note here in this final use of *apostolic* language that the text only applies the distinctive linguistic rhythm of gathering and sending to the twelve. The seventy-two are, indeed, sent in a way similar to the twelve, but there is no subsequent cycle of gathering recorded for the seventy-two as there is for the twelve.

One other important distinction between the process that the twelve undergo and the one that the seventy-two participate in is the level of training that each group is given by Jesus. Whereas the twelve receive extensive life-on-life training in the constant presence of Jesus, we hear nothing of the sort regarding the seventy-two. It appears that they do not have the same level of access to Jesus, or the benefit of the insights he offers as he teaches *along the way*. It is likely that the seventy-two were present as Jesus taught in synagogues and in other public places. Perhaps the twelve serve as examples for the seventy-two in their sending. Perhaps the seventy-two received some other form of training that is not recorded, both before their sending and upon their return. Whatever the case, the fact remains that there are differences in the training given to the twelve and the seventy-two.

More importantly, however, is that Jesus does not deem the seventy-two unfit to serve because of their lack of formation as leaders. Jesus sends them out to proclaim the good news about the coming of the Kingdom of God even though the seventy-two have not experienced the same level of training as the twelve. Further, no matter the level of formal or informal training acquired, the rhythm of the life of at least some followers of Jesus in the first century was one of gathering to learn from Jesus, whether as close-knit

disciples or from the public ministry of Jesus, so that they could be sent into the world to proclaim, practice, and learn from their actions, and then be gathered again to continue their learning. This remains the rhythm of discipleship today.

It seems that one deficiency in pastoral leadership formation throughout the past century is that the focus has been primarily on gathering to learn (*mathetes*) without an adequate emphasis or opportunity to be sent in mission (*apostello*). Seminaries and congregations in the United States have appropriately emphasized orthodoxy, but have mistakenly neglected orthopraxy, which has helped to create a leadership crisis for the church. Thankfully, many seminaries and churches are striving to correct this imbalance, including the two organizations studied for this thesis. As the church seeks to develop leaders in the pattern of Jesus, the rhythm embedded within the language of Luke eight through ten, a rhythm of *gathering and sending*, is helpful.⁴

This rhythm has served as a lens for this thesis project by giving focus and insight into the practices of both organizations studied. This research has sought to discover whether these organizations practice both gathering and sending, or one at the expense of the other. One aspect of the research has asked if these organizations' gathering and sending practices are integrated, and if so, how. Finally, the research seeks to identify the best practices that facilitate both gathering and sending. The answers to these questions can be found in the final chapter.

⁴ See Luke 8:22; 9:1, 2, 6, 10, 12, 13, 14, 43; 10:1 for examples of this linguistic rhythm, revealed more clearly in the Greek text.

Missio Dei

All of this gathering and sending is the product of the *missio Dei*. The *missio Dei* is the theological doctrine stating that God is active in the world and is pursuing the redemption and reconciliation of all creation to Godself. This reconciliation and redemption is made possible through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's Son, and through the work of God's Holy Spirit. The Triune God works to bring about the reign of God on earth as it is in heaven. In response, those who confess with their mouths and believe in their hearts that Jesus is Lord (Rom 10:9) of all creation are invited to join God's mission and live into their full identity as members of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27). This constitutes the primary, universal vocation of all Christians. The church is the body of Christ on earth when, and only when, it participates in God's ever-unfolding creative plan to reconcile all things to Godself. In the words of an oft-repeated refrain, God has a mission, and God's mission has a church.⁵

The process of Christian vocational discernment is enhanced when it is founded in the reality of the *missio Dei*. In the *missio Dei*, Christians are empowered to relax into the process of vocational discovery through trust, because the mission is God's, the plan is God's, and the work is God's. It may be helpful to think of the *missio Dei* as a dinner party—a banquet put on by God. God invites guests to the feast, and they do not have to plan the menu, prepare the food, set the table, or even invite the other guests. The vocation of a dinner guest is to receive, partake, share, and give thanks, just as it is when gathered around the Communion table.

⁵ Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 30.

Once the guests have joined the dinner party, however, and have begun to notice the rhythms and practices of which it is comprised, the host invites them to help with the work of hospitality. When the creative insights and skilled gifts of the guests are used in concert with what the host has planned, their ability to enjoy both the host and the other guests is magnified as they discover a greater purpose in service. Jesus' instruction to his disciples only hours before he is arrested and crucified places service as fundamental to a life of faithful discipleship (Jn 13:12-16). Other biblical passages also highlight the centrality of service to Christian discipleship, such as 1 Peter 4:10, which says, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." The work of *missional hospitality* is not only the work of Christian leaders, but is the privilege and responsibility of all Christians as a core component of basic discipleship and spirituality. Eugene Peterson writes,

The assumption of spirituality is that always God is doing something before I know it. So the task is not to get God to do something I think needs to be done, but to become aware of what God is doing so that I can respond to it and participate and take delight in it.⁶

The process of developing an awareness of what God is doing (noticing the rhythms of the banquet) is the Christian practice of *discernment*. It is difficult work requiring many conversations, much prayer, and study, as well as the sometimes-painful work of introspection. The work of discerning God's active will when viewed through the lens of the *missio Dei*, however, sets people free from the harmful paradigm of viewing vocation as a buried treasure that must be discovered or lost. God's mission is all around, within, and ahead of human effort and perception. The *missio Dei* is not *over there*, but is

⁶ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1993), Kindle Location 47-49.

here and now at all times. Vocation, when viewed through the lens of the *missio Dei*, becomes the constant state of becoming and being *who* God has made a person to be, *where* God has positioned them, *with* those whom God has placed them.

The *missio Dei* is not primarily about what the church *does*, but about what the church *is*. The missional conversation seeks to focus on the identity of the church, and then discover the practices of the church as they emerge from a more full sense of the church's identity rooted in God's mission in the continually evolving contexts in which the church is located. Van Gelder defines the church as, "a community created by the Spirit and that it has a unique nature, or essence, which gives it a unique identity."⁷ A church can only move into strategic activity, and discovery of purpose, after it understands its identity.

Until leaders of congregations understand that the primary question they must address in their leadership is one of identity, both personally and organizationally, they will not be able to proceed to discerning faithful strategic action, because the activity of the church flows out of its missional identity. The missional identity of the church is what makes it unique from all other organizations, including those who seek to do *good work* in the world. A group of people may gather together voluntarily and seek to join in promoting the common good. They may all even be Christians who are joined together in the name of Jesus, sharing in the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments. They are only being the church, however, when they place the *missio Dei* at the center of their identity. The missional conversation is concerned with addressing

⁷ Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), Kindle Location 164-169.

questions not only of practical theology, but also questions of ecclesiology. The *missio Dei* gives direction to what the church *is*, and out of that understanding emerge the practices that embody the church's vocation.

Just as the body of Christ must first appropriate its vocational identity, so must individual Christians. They are then freed to discover practices in *response* to that identity. Van Gelder writes about spiritual gifts as described in 1 Cor 12, explaining,

They all come from the same Spirit (12:11), which means that there is an inherent unity in their presence and in their use in relation to the wide-ranging diversity of their various ministries. They are given to believers based on the Spirit's choosing (12:11). This means that members need to discern and discover their gifts and find their place in the body of Christ in light of this.⁸

The Spirit is the one who distributes spiritual gifts, and thus determines vocational identity for the sake of the *missio Dei*. Out of that identity, and those gifts received, the practices of each Christian emerge. Our vocation is not the result of pure individual prerogative, nor is participation in the *missio Dei* in a specific way an entitlement we can commandeer for ourselves through sheer force of will. Ultimately, it emerges only as a response to the gifts of the Spirit, and the context in which people find themselves. When the unique gifts of individuals are brought to bear on their unique context for the sake of participating in the reconciling work of the *missio Dei*, they experience the holistic convergence that is vocational fulfillment.

This theological lens is foundational to this project. *Missio Dei* has informed all other theoretical and theological lenses. It is one of the fundamental assumptions made about God's character and the way that God interacts with Creation in this research. Vocational discernment is shaped significantly by the *missio Dei*, because participation in

⁸ Ibid., Kindle Location 637-640.

it requires that Christians understand who they are and how they fit in to what God is doing in the world. A missional understanding of God begins with the idea that God is active, and has a mission, and that God invites human beings to participate in that mission as members of the body of Christ.

Missio Dei belongs in this thesis project because it is biblical, finding its roots in the creation narratives in Genesis, God's covenant with Abraham, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, throughout the letters of Paul regarding reconciliation and redemption, and in many other texts. Any discussion about Christian leadership development would be remiss without a discussion of this core theological concept that describes who God is and what God is doing in the world. This research project attempts to uncover what role the *missio Dei* plays in the leadership formation processes of the two organizations studied, and what practices lend themselves to planting an awareness of the *missio Dei* in the lives of emerging leaders. It also inquires as to how leaders who graduate from these two programs perceive themselves and their vocation in light of the *missio Dei*. Chapter five reveals the findings of the research regarding these important questions, as well as an exploration of the language that points toward the *missio Dei* in the coding of the data collected.

The Activity of the Holy Spirit

Central to participation in the *missio Dei* is the work of the Holy Spirit within, through, and ahead of the church as well as within, through, and ahead of each individual Christian. Bosch writes,

The gift of the Spirit is the gift of becoming involved in mission, for mission is the direct consequence of the outpouring of the Spirit ... Moreover, the Spirit not

only *initiates* mission, he also *guides* the missionaries about where they should go and how they should proceed.⁹

The Holy Spirit creates the church in an ongoing way through the Spirit's power, and the church that the Spirit establishes exists for the mission of God. Outside of God's mission, the church has no purpose. Galatians 5:25 says, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Thus, congregations that are led by the Spirit, and are keeping in step with the Spirit, are those who are actively engaged in the *missio Dei*. They are constantly seeking to discover what God is doing, and continue to ask how they might join God in God's reconciling work.

The original Pentecost, called *Shavuot* in Hebrew, took place during the Jewish celebration called the Feast of Weeks. At this annual festival, the Hebrew people celebrate the gift of the Law that was given by God to the people at Mount Sinai. There, God revealed the way that communities could live the life God wanted them to live. They were invited to pursue *shalom* (wholeness, abundance, and peace in their relationships with God and neighbor) through basic rules of order. Similarly, at the Pentecost celebration we find recorded in Acts 2, God gives the people not a new Law, but God's very self, the Holy Spirit. Whereas the gift of the Law revealed the way to obedience through laws, the Holy Spirit gives people the power that they need to live a life of obedience through the permanent indwelling of God's own presence. The Spirit empowers a life of *shalom* that the Law could only point toward as a sign.

In John 16:7, Jesus makes the seemingly outlandish claim that his departure is good because it allows for something better to happen, namely, that the Holy Spirit would

⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 114.

come. The Holy Spirit's arrival, Jesus promises, "will guide you into all truth" (Jn 16:10). Clearly, Jesus expects that the Holy Spirit will empower a new way of living, doing, and being among the community of his followers. As missiologist Lesslie Newbigin writes, "The presence of the Spirit will make them witnesses."¹⁰ The Holy Spirit transforms the followers of Jesus into something they could not be on their own. The Spirit introduces a way of living that works toward the *shalom* promised in the *missio Dei*. A Christian might wonder, what could be better than to have Jesus himself walking the earth today? Jesus seems to say that having the Holy Spirit living in and through a person to guide their way is preferable.

The letters of the Apostle Paul draw deeply on the significance of this gift as the guiding reality of living in step with God in the world. In 2 Corinthians 3:6 Paul writes, "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." The Law is impossible for humans to keep, and only sets them up to fail while also pointing to their weakness as participants and inheritors of the fall. The Law is disempowering, whereas the Holy Spirit is empowering. The Spirit reveals who humans can be, and the mission they can join. The Spirit gradually transforms people into the body of Christ, both for their own benefit and for the benefit of the world that God loves.

God loves the world! Love is God's motivation for God's mission of reconciliation. Love is the economy of the Trinity. Love is fuel of the *missio Dei*. Love is what the Holy Spirit fulfills in human lives. The Apostle Paul moves from the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12 to the centrality of love in 1 Corinthians 13, highlighting the

¹⁰ Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, 58.

connection between the Spirit and love in the body of Christ. Similarly, in Romans 8:2-3 we find,

And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. The Law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

This passage offers an implicit connection between God's gift of Godself through the Son, and through the Holy Spirit, and the ability to live the life that God intends for people to live—what Jesus refers to as *life to the full* (Jn 10:10). Again, Galatians 5:25 lays out God's intention most simply and directly: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

God transforms human lives from the inside out: not through human efforts in reading and keeping the Law, but through the gift of God's own real presence inside of them through the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit transforms, and calls people to participate in the *missio Dei*. Transformation has always been the outcome for those who respond to God's call. Transformation is exactly what happens to the disciples when the Holy Spirit invades the house where they are resting during Pentecost. At certain points in the Scriptural witness the disciples are embarrassingly timid and confused, lacking clarity and vocational purpose, but after the Holy Spirit arrives and makes a home with them and within them, they become bold and confident witnesses of the good news about Jesus. The Holy Spirit reveals their vocation and empowers them to live into it in ways that are beyond their human capacity. The *missio Dei* remains elusive until the Spirit descends, filling the disciples with the Spirit's own ethos and power, and releasing within them capacity that was non-existent. Michael Welker observes that

through the Holy Spirit, “consciously or unconsciously we are taken into God’s service.”¹¹ Whether or not the disciples made a conscious decision to engage the *missio Dei*, they do participate in it. They are earthen vessels who carry a great treasure of “all-surpassing power that comes from God” (2 Cor 4:7).

The Holy Spirit continues to do this work to this day. God gives the church a purpose beyond anything humans can conceive for themselves through the gift of the Spirit. Rather than leading Christians to reject the world or retreat from it, the Spirit reveals the deeper relevance and importance of everything in creation, uncovering God’s intention for it, and transforming Christians into ministers of reconciliation in this world (2 Cor 5:11-21). The gift of God’s presence in the Holy Spirit empowers us to catch a glimpse of the kinds of lives that God means for us to live here and now in this world. Through the Holy Spirit, we can “seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly,” (Mic 6:8) even if imperfectly.

A Practicing Community

At Pentecost, God not only gives the church an identity as the community led by the Holy Spirit, God also gives a tangible picture of how this community led by the Spirit should function. The Holy Spirit creates a *differentiated unity* that is much stronger than superficial homogeneity and allows the church to pursue God’s mission in various contexts.¹² But this unity has its roots in certain concrete practices of faith. First, the Spirit descends when “they were all together” (Acts 2:1). The Spirit comes in the context

¹¹ Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, 1st English-language ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 228.

of community, revealing the necessity of an interrelated pneumatology and ecclesiology. Christians find a fuller understanding and appreciation of the Holy Spirit in the context of community, helping each other to grow in discipleship and understanding of God's call to mission. The Spirit is not merely given to individual Christians who must navigate the Spirit's disruptive presence by themselves. The Spirit is given to the body of Christ, which is responsible for navigating life in the Spirit together. The second chapter of Acts concludes by revealing that these Spirit-empowered followers of Christ "had everything in common" (Acts 2:44) meaning that they practiced an economy of abundance through communal resourcing. Love for neighbor manifested concretely through sharing all things becomes an early mark of the Christian ethos, and a sign of the Spirit's presence.

Second, the Spirit is working both within the body of Christ and outside of it. In the Pentecost narrative, the Spirit creates a supernatural bridge between those within the church and those outside of it by accommodating those on the outside. The Spirit empowers the believers to speak in languages not their own. It would have been just as simple for the Spirit to open up the ears of all who were present to understand the Gospel in Hebrew. Instead, the Spirit accommodates those on the *outside* by transforming the capacity of the body of Christ to reach the needs of the outsider on terms that most accommodate the outsider. The Spirit meets them fully where they already are.

Extrapolating this event and applying it as a principle to the *missio Dei*, Newbigin writes, "The mission of the church is in fact the church's obedient participation in that action of the Spirit by which the confession of Jesus as Lord becomes the authentic confession of every new people, each in its own tongue."¹³ The Spirit must be fully

¹³ Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, 20.

present with those “outside” the church to accomplish this work. Kyle Small skillfully explains that, “A missional theology argues that God's Spirit is at work in actual cultures, organizations, and persons. The Spirit is not merely an emotive presence in worship; rather, the Spirit is the dynamic, liberating, transforming presence of God in the world, both inside and outside Christian communities.”¹⁴ The task of Christians is to pursue faithfulness to God’s Spirit at work in all places and all times. Small reassures that, “Our actions, faithful or otherwise, encounter God's activity. Yet, even if one's actions are unfaithful, God is the victor, and what "we intend for evil, God intends for good. (Gen. 50:20)”¹⁵

Finally, we must notice the unique way that the Spirit works within the body of Christ. In a stunning act of egalitarianism that fails to impress us today as it perhaps did in first century Palestine, the Spirit falls on everyone, regardless of spiritual pedigree, intellectual capacity, financial status, perceived gifts, or positional authority (Acts 2:4). Those who enthrone Jesus Christ as Lord and entrust their lives to him receive the Holy Spirit without exception. God’s transforming power becomes immediately available to all who believe. As Jesus says in Luke 11:13, “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

The work of vocational discernment, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, is the work of every Christian because of the way that the Spirit indwells all Christians equally.

¹⁴ Small, “Missional Theology for Schools of Theology: Re-Engaging the Question ‘What Is Theological About a Theological School’,” 62.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Just as each Christian receives the Holy Spirit, so each Christian receives a vocation. The Holy Spirit enlists the individual gifts of members of the church and creates clarity for how to utilize those gifts for the sake of the *missio Dei*.¹⁶ Certainly, all do not receive homogeneity of spiritual gifts or even sensibilities. All do, however, receive the Spirit who enlivens us to new life, and empowers us to participate in the *missio Dei*.

This transformation occurs within the context of the body of Christ. The work of the Spirit confronts all perceptions of spiritual gifts and discipleship that are rooted in hyper-individualistic, narcissistic narratives. Much like the trait theories of leadership mentioned in chapter two, the notion of private spiritual gifts is the product of hubris, not of scripture. Scripture always understands the gifts of the Spirit in light of the body of Christ and for the sake of the world that God loves. Spiritual gifts serve the *missio Dei*, and as the Holy Spirit reveals spiritual gifts and provides clarity on how they can be utilized, the sense of vocational identity also grows.

The work of the Holy Spirit raises two questions in relation to this research project. First, what do the emerging leaders who are considering how God is calling them to serve perceive to be the role of the Holy Spirit in their discernment? Second, how do the institutions that train them support this process through practical pneumatology? The tremendous role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church, as testified in scripture, makes it necessary to consider the ways that the two organizations studied conceive of and incorporate the work of the Holy Spirit into their training of emerging leaders.

¹⁶ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 241.

Vocation

I have already offered a brief historical perspective on the theological concept of vocation in chapter one, but it is worth giving attention to it again here theologically because vocation is at the center of my thesis question. It is necessary to clearly state, as I have previously, that vocation, or calling, belongs to all Christians and not to a select group of people holding religious offices. I quoted Martin Luther in Chapter 2, who wrote, “all Christians are truly of the ‘spiritual estate’ ... for baptism, Gospel and faith alone make us ‘spiritual’ and Christian people.”¹⁷ Luther argued forcefully against the false dichotomy between sacred and secular, deconstructing notions of clerical exceptionalism, and inviting all Christians to understand themselves as priests. Scott Cormode builds on Luther’s Reformation-era proclamation centuries later, writing,

All Christian mission begins with God’s prior work, work that proceeds from the very nature of God. All that we do as Christians flows from God, who, according to Second Corinthians, was ‘in the world reconciling the world to Himself in Christ’ (2 Cor. 5:19).¹⁸

Cormode emphasizes the relationship between the mission of God, which begins with God’s work ahead of human participation, and an understanding of the core of Christian vocational identity: ambassadors of reconciliation. All Christians, whether they are pursuing an ecclesial office or not, should find this to be foundational to their identity because of God’s prior and ongoing activity. The *missio Dei*, by its very existence, defines for Christians the nature of their vocation. Because God is a missionary God who

¹⁷Luther, *Three Treatises: An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate. A Prelude to the Babylonian on Captivity of the Church. A Treatise on Christian Liberty.*, 13-16. Found in Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*, 211-212.

¹⁸ Cormode, “Cultivating Missional Leaders: Mental Models and the Ecology of Vocation,” 100.

is working on reconciling all things to Godself, God's people are missionary people, who are ambassadors not of their own work, but of the reconciling work of God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer suggests that calling and discipleship are not two separate things, but that discipleship is a form of calling. Bonhoeffer writes, "The commandment is plain and straightforward: 'Follow me.'"¹⁹ The call of God is to the person of Jesus, and, "To follow in his steps is something which is void of all content. It gives us no intelligible program for a way of life, no goal or ideal to strive after."²⁰ Newbigin agrees as he echoes Bonhoeffer, writing, "The commitment is not to a cause or to a program: it is to a person. At the heart of mission there must always be the call to be committed to Jesus Christ in his community."²¹

According to Bonhoeffer and Newbigin, Christ *is* the call and the vocation, for that is what it means for him to be *the way*. When Christ offers his followers *abundant life*, he offers them nothing less than the surprising invitation of himself, and when he invites them to *follow* him, he offers them nothing less than the invitation to come and die.²² If they come and die, however, he promises that they will find a new life, oriented in a new purpose, producing more in the way of reconciliation than they could as a single solitary "seed" living for itself (John 12:24-26). True discipleship, which is *following*

¹⁹ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 48-52, 53-55, 56-57, 60-66. Found in Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*, 398.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 390-391.

²¹ Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, 120. Newbigin makes this same point on page 37 regarding the reign of God, "It is not a program for private deliverance but is the hidden reality by which the public history of humankind is to be understood."

²² This is one major thesis of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1963).

Jesus Christ, produces ambassadors of God’s reconciliation. In a broad sense, this is the vocational identity of all Christians. This is the lived reality of the *reign of God* made apparent in the lives of those who are found in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The Reformed theological tradition identifies the gradual exchange of selfishness for selflessness, or dying to self, as central to the journey of sanctification.²³ It is at the heart of what it means to follow Jesus. To understand this aspect of this particular view of vocation, however, one must first understand the central role that *gratitude* plays in the tradition. The theologically Reformed perspective understands human faith as *grateful* response to God’s *gracious* initiative.²⁴

John (Jean) Calvin identifies both a “general calling” and a “special calling” which are rooted in God’s gracious initiative that leads to grateful response, and come from Calvin’s understanding of predestination.²⁵ The general calling, according to Calvin, is God’s invitation to all people who hear the Gospel to respond with faith in Christ.²⁶ Calvin’s view of the “special calling,” is the work of God in the lives of the elect to bring them to a place of faith.²⁷ The elect—those who have put their faith in Christ

²³ For an example of the centrality of self-denial in the Reformed understanding of discipleship see Calvin, Lane, and Osborne, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, section 3.7.2.

²⁴ Consider, as an example of this, one of the central works of Reformed Theology: The Heidelberg Catechism. The structure of this catechism is often described as beginning with human *guilt*, proceeding to God’s *grace*, and ending with human *gratitude*. The Heidelberg Catechism remains a central teaching tool in many Reformed congregations today, and is often used as a guide for preaching throughout the year.

²⁵ Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*, 232.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

through the work of the *special calling*—are not called to privilege or status, but to use their lives for sacred purposes. Being elected by God draws Christians into a life of self-forgetfulness.²⁸ Calvin writes,

We are not our own: let not our reason nor our will, therefore, sway our plans and deeds. We are not our own: let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own: in so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours.²⁹

Calvin's point is that, since we do not belong to ourselves, the only right *response* to God's gift of grace is *gratitude*, made manifest in self-forgetfulness. Gratitude is a lived expression in light of the truth that we belong to God. True discipleship, which is a response to God's call, and is a function of faith in Christ, produces ambassadors of God's reconciliation out of this lived gratitude. On this point, Bonhoeffer and Calvin wholeheartedly agree! The first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism highlights this central doctrine of the Reformed perspective,

Q. What is your only comfort
in life and in death?
A. That I am not my own,
but belong—
body and soul,
in life and in death—
to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.
He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.
He also watches over me in such a way
that not a hair can fall from my head

²⁸ Newbigin expends great effort to explain the importance of the doctrine of election to grasping the *missio Dei* in chapter 7 of *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*. He acknowledges that the doctrine of election brings with it significant baggage because it has been frequently misused. He explains, however, "This is the pattern throughout the Bible. The key to the relation between the universal and the particular is God's way of election. The one (or the few) is chosen for the sake of the many; the particular is chosen for the sake of the universal," (68).

²⁹ Calvin, Lane, and Osborne, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*. As quoted in Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*, 233.

without the will of my Father in heaven;
 in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.
 Because I belong to him,
 Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
 assures me of eternal life
 and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
 from now on to live for him.³⁰

The Heidelberg Catechism begins not with guilt or obligation (although it does proceed to the issue of human guilt in Question 2), but with the pastoral question of the source of comfort in a fallen world. People need comfort, both in this life and in the next, and that comfort comes only in Jesus Christ, and in *belonging* to him. When a person has found their comfort, security, and identity in belonging to Christ they are set free through the transformation of the will to live as a disciple. Newbigin asserts, “The calling of men and women to be converted, to follow Jesus, and to be part of his community is and must always be at the center of mission.”³¹ Vocational identity begins with understanding that you belong to Christ and his community, are secure in his finished work, and are empowered to respond to his call, which is a call to forget oneself. Following Christ takes the shape of ambassadorship to God’s work of reconciliation in the world, which is taking place ahead of us, even while it takes place within and through us.

Understanding how several Christian theological voices have defined vocation provides a framework for analyzing the vocational discernment practices of the organizations studied for this project. It also helps uncover the basic understanding and usage of vocation in the conversation and theory of emerging leaders. Do emerging leaders conceive of vocation in ways that are consistent with historical Christianity? Do

³⁰ Christian Reformed Church, *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions*, 13.

³¹ Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, 121.

emerging leaders understand discipleship and vocation to be the obverse and reverse side of the same coin? Do they appropriate self-denial and service as primary components of calling? Finally, what practices, if any, have helped to grow leaders' understanding and engagement with the theological concept of vocation?

Conclusion

I have presented a biblical and theological framing in this chapter of some of the central issues pertaining to the study of vocation in emerging Christian leaders. I began by telling the story of Elijah and the call of Elisha. The story provided some common elements of the journey toward vocational discernment including: failure, despair, the necessity of solitude, the reality of God's guidance, the importance of apprenticeship, and the essential question that all leaders must deal with; *what are you doing here?* I then discussed the linguistic rhythm in Luke 8-10, which refers to the disciples alternately as disciples (gathered pupils) and apostles (sent messengers) depending on whether they are being gathered to Jesus or sent out into the world. I argued that this rhythm supports the notion that discipleship must continue to follow the same rhythm today.

I then proceeded to examine several theological lenses. I began with a discussion of the *missio Dei*, arguing that in understanding God as a missionary we gain a more robust understanding of vocational identity and Christian leadership. The *missio Dei* means that disciples are ambassadors of God's reconciling work. I proceeded from there to outline the ways that the Holy Spirit works to transform followers of Christ into ambassadors of God's reconciling work, primarily through the context of the body of Christ. Finally, I offered a brief look at some theological perspectives that are helpful in understanding vocation. I looked specifically at the Reformed contribution, which may be

summed up as receiving God's grace, leading to an experience of gratitude, resulting in self-forgetful service of God and others.

In order to operationalize the theoretical frames from chapter 2, and the biblical and theological frames from this chapter, I had to engage in an intentional process of social science research. The dynamic concepts in this chapter and the previous one needed to be tested through interaction with those who are most engaged in the intentional development of emerging Christian leaders; students and teachers. It is to this implemented methodology that I now turn in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Mixed-methods Sequential Exploratory Research

I conducted mixed-methods sequential exploratory research to discover the best practices for assisting emerging church leaders in discerning God's call in their lives. I believe that this method helps to answer the question,

Which of the current practices of Geneva Seminary and the New Wave Network are most effective in helping emerging leaders engage in vocational discernment?

There are several reasons that this methodology is an effective tool for exploring this question. First, I chose the *mixed-methods* approach because it has allowed me to investigate *deeply* through qualitative interviews and *widely* through quantitative surveys. The data, when triangulated, have given me a fuller picture of the issues surrounding my research topic.

Second, I chose the *sequential* method because I intuited that the data gathered from one group of participants (teachers and facilitators of the programs I have studied) should inform the questions I asked to another group of participants (students and former students who have been involved in those programs). Utilizing the data from the primary interviews enabled me to focus the questions in the second round, which in turn enabled me to compare and contrast the data gathered in both phases, which I further explain below. Likewise, the data gathered in the Phase I and II interviews and focus groups enabled me to craft a more purposeful census survey in Phase III, which in turn allowed

me to compare and contrast the data gathered in all three phases. I have chosen the exploratory approach for my project because I did not anticipate a definitive conclusion to my research. Rather, I anticipated that my research would aid in better defining the topic as a whole, and providing some practices that may help to facilitate vocational discernment in the two organizations that I studied.

Finally, I wanted my research to function dialogically. I viewed this research project as a unique opportunity to compare the perspectives of teachers and students, exploring the ways that they cohere and deviate. To create a dialogical aspect to my research, I first performed qualitative interviews with teachers and allowed those data to inform the qualitative and quantitative data collection that I administered with students. This approach has helped me to gain insight into the perspectives of those leading the programs I studied in order to form effective and appropriate questions for the students who have engaged the curriculum that the organizations have designed. The students' responses then provided insight into the perceived effectiveness of the practices of these programs. Likewise, the insights that I gained from the qualitative interviews with both teachers and students helped me to explore the quantitative data more effectively by providing anecdotal evidence that has functioned as color commentary to the quantitative findings. The entire process provided me with a substantive, while not conclusive, picture of the effective practices of vocational discernment utilized by these two organizations.

This project was also a unique opportunity to compare and contrast the practices of the seminary and the multi-site church. I have sought to bridge the perceived gap highlighted by the anecdote of the elder who commented that "the seminary just doesn't produce the kinds of leaders that the church needs," by bringing the two organizations

into dialogue with one another around practices of vocational discernment. I have sought to discover opportunities for mutual edification, as well as celebration, through this conversation. This dialogical process (sequential mixed-methods exploratory research) also coheres with many biblical and theological principles, which I discuss below.

Biblical and Theological Grounding for this Methodology

Humility

When pride comes, then comes disgrace,
but with humility comes wisdom.
(Proverbs 11:2)

A fundamental aspect of the human experience is that we face challenges. Whether as an individual or as part of an organization, like the congregation and seminary studied for this project, circumstances occur which raise questions about how to proceed faithfully. In addition to attending to questions of effectiveness and efficiency, distinctively Christian organizations pursue faithfulness to God's calling. They should ask what it means to be faithful to God's will, and pursue discovery of what God is already doing in the world so that they can join in. Missional Christian leaders ask what it means to say, "yes," not only to effectiveness and efficiency, but also to the *missio Dei*, which sometimes seems neither effective nor efficient according to human rationale. The ability to ask these kinds of questions, and to frame challenges in this way, comes from the virtue of humility.

Jesus embraced humility, leading to the cross, which appeared foolish. Instead, Paul's letter to the Philippians reminds us that Christ's humility, which led to an act that appeared to be devastatingly foolish, turned out to be the conduit of God's will in accomplishing the fulcrum of restoration in history.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
 Who, being in very nature God,
 did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
 rather, he made himself nothing
 by taking the very nature of a servant,
 being made in human likeness.
 And being found in appearance as a man,
 he humbled himself
 by becoming obedient to death—
 even death on a cross!
 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
 and gave him the name that is above every name,
 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
 to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:5-11)

Christian wisdom is rooted in the virtue of humility and the ability to ask meaningful questions about God, whose ways are often mysterious, although never random. God's ways are higher than our ways, although not entirely inaccessible (Is 55:8-9). God wants to be known by human beings, and God makes Godself known through self-revelation.¹ Scripture also reminds us that God is holy and extraordinary, even while being personal and immanent.² Embracing this essential paradigm of Christian doctrine produces within us the responsive virtue of humility.

This is where the social sciences can aid the Christian quest for meaning-making, understanding, and faithful direction. The first reason to embrace social science research, and particularly a mixed-methods exploratory approach, is that Scripture reveals our need for humility. The qualitative and quantitative tools that are available to us in social

¹ Scripture is brimming with evidence of God's desire for relationship with human beings. Consider the relational quality of the very first chapters of Genesis as God creates and then walks with humans in the Garden of Eden, the Incarnation of Christ where God is *with* humanity, and the last chapter of the book of Revelation where the people of God will "see his face" (Revelation 22:4).

² Consider the example of God's epic holiness exhibited in Isaiah 6.

science research are based on the assumption that there are things that we do not know but that we can learn through humble investigation.

The mixed-methods approach to research helps us to ask questions in ways that acknowledge our perspectives and biases, which is one important step toward embracing a posture of humility. It also allows us to ask the same questions in a multitude of ways, offering multiple perspectives on the same topic. A multi-perspectival approach to seeking truth is wise. Similar to the way that God's people have relied on the voices of others in the community, so we find wisdom in approaching complex questions with the intent to hear as many relevant voices as possible.

We abide by certain boundaries that allow us to see aspects of reality that we were otherwise unaware of or unwilling to see when we use the rules set out for both quantitative and qualitative research. The social sciences allow us to identify our subjectivity, which creates opportunities for deeper humility in drawing conclusions. When asking questions through the instruments of the social sciences, we are led to even deeper questions that we previously did not know that we had. We are made aware of the things that we did not know that we did not know. This provides for an opportunity to practice humility that frees us from making decisions based in pride or conceit, and opens us up to discover what God is already doing in the world around us, as well as inside of us.

Justice

Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless.
(Exodus 22:22)

The mixed-method approach also challenges us to include the voices of people with varying degrees of power in our decision-making; a value that Scripture affirms is

close to the heart of God.³ The mixed-methods approach challenges us to ask questions of many people that we might not ordinarily select if we only utilized qualitative methods because of the ability to conduct a survey so widely. In the case of this research project, the quantitative questionnaire was distributed to all graduates of the seminary, with no bias due to grade point average, gender, race, or other factors that might lead a researcher to ignore one population in preference for another. All graduates of the seminary in a particular year were given the opportunity to make their voices heard. This particular application of the sequential approach also creates an opportunity for the perspectives of those in power—leaders of seminaries and congregations—to be tested in concert with the perspectives of the students they lead. This is the dialogical aspect of the research that I have sought to enact, and that creates the opportunity for change based on the joining of these various perspectives.

Congregations, denominations, and other ecclesial bodies have a long history of taking action that affects people they did not consult, often with terrible consequences.⁴ Good social science practices that include the voices of those involved on both sides of the issue being studied helps to avoid repeating the many mistakes of the past. When problems and people are approached through the lens of patriarchy, or in the frame of benefactors and clients, it degrades a core Judeo-Christian conviction: God has created all people in God's image as deeply loved children. When one group comes to another in a patronizing way, assuming that they know what is best for the other, they remove the

³ For examples see Psalm 140:12; Isaiah 25:4, 41:17; Jeremiah 9:23-24; Amos 5:24; Luke 1:52-53; and James 2:5.

⁴ The lingering effects of colonialism still mar many relationships between the church and indigenous populations around the world, for instance.

God-given dignity of the other. Choosing to move slowly and deliberately, and including stakeholders in the strategic discernment process through multiple means, allows for the development of a robust solution to challenges. In embracing a dialogical approach to research, I have sought to enact Ephesians 5:21, which instructs us to “submit yourselves to one another out of reverence to Christ.” This sequential mixed-methods exploratory approach has enabled the voices of students to be heard, and has provided an opportunity for mutual submission that leads to service if both teachers and students will learn from the data that they have provided and embrace the wisdom of one another.

The Translatability of the Gospel

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”
(Romans 10:14-15)

Sequential mixed-methods exploratory research is also an appropriate methodology because it provides tools for uncovering context, which is essential for translating the Gospel into a new culture. The body of literature articulating a missional perspective consistently communicates that the Gospel must be translated into every new culture it encounters.⁵ Scripture agrees with this position. In his final words to his disciples before his ascension in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus is recorded as sending them out to cover the earth with the good news about everything he has taught them and done (Mt 28:16-20). Jesus’ words are a commission to a Gospel-spreading lifestyle. Fifty days after Jesus gives this commission, the disciples are overcome by the Holy Spirit and begin to

⁵ For an example, see Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 454.

speak in languages that are foreign to them but are the mother tongues of many who are listening (Acts 2:1-13). In this moment, the Holy Spirit literally translates the Gospel for many tribes and nations.⁶

The good news about the *good news* of Jesus Christ is that it *can* be translated and, when translated well, it can be believed unto salvation! Unfortunately, this translation work has not always been easy or obvious for the church because the work of translation goes beyond linguistics into acculturation. Through trial and error, Christians have learned in the 2,000 years since Pentecost that not only must they translate the Gospel into other languages, but it must also be appropriated by various cultures within their linguistic and cultural traditions, by each successive generation, by various classes within various cultures, and so on. This work, which is the responsibility of the church, is ongoing and will not end so long as new cultures are birthed.

In order to translate the Gospel and other important Christian concepts like vocation and discernment, Christians must also understand the context into which they are called to translate them and how people appropriate these concepts in a way that is intuitive to them. The mixed-methods sequential methodology that I have engaged in has revealed the nature of various interpretations of these same core concepts of vocation and discernment. I have gathered data that help to better understand how these concepts might be translated and appropriated in a contemporary context. The quantitative and qualitative instruments that I used gave me the opportunity to flesh out the context of both students and teachers. The instruments have helped me to probe beyond the surface of the

⁶ For a more detailed exploration of this event and its implications see the section on the Holy Spirit in chapter 3.

questions surrounding emerging leadership, vocation, and discernment, and beyond my own assumptions about these same topics and the institutions that are seeking to train emerging leaders. These tools have helped me to mine valuable information that I would not have found on my own, nor, I believe, through using only one method. Qualitative and quantitative methods have worked together to provide a well-rounded picture of some of the present realities in the formation of future church leaders from the perspectives of both students and teachers. This description of present realities as perceived from various pertinent perspectives suggests ways that Christians can most effectively translate the meaning of the core Christian concept of vocational discernment today in the particular cultural context studied.

Missio Dei

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose.
(Romans 8:28)

Finally, the mixed-methods sequential exploratory research that I have employed coheres with biblically-theologically framed research because I have conducted it in an attempt to discover what God is doing in the world. As described in chapter 3, I began with a theological assertion that *God is active*. This is no small thing! Research conducted by Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, in their book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, found that most teenagers in the U.S. adhere to a form of functional deism that identifies life's purpose as the pursuit of being subjectively moral and happy, but not much more.⁷ Many of the

⁷ Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

teenagers studied believe that God exists, but that God is not actively involved in the world. Unfortunately, these adolescents have learned this perspective from the generation that precedes them and from the culture in which they are growing up. This means that there exists not only a generation of young people who are functional deists, but probably a generation of parents who have taught functional deism to their children.

Missional theology confronts the deism that comes packaged with life in postmodern America. In his essay, "The Hermeneutics of Leading in Mission," Craig Van Gelder articulates six core concepts that a missional theological perspective must hold. These concepts are:

1. A Triune, perichoretic God who created all that is.
2. A God in mission to all creation seeking to be in relationship with all things.
3. A redeeming God who through Christ seeks to reconcile all in a fallen world.
4. The kingdom of God as the center of God's reconciling work in the world.
5. The church living in the *now* of the kingdom as the sign, foretaste, and instrument of redemption in the midst of unmasking the principalities and powers.
6. The church anticipating the *not yet* of the kingdom in the final consummating work of God.⁸

Notice that all of the concepts above assume one core reality: God is active! God is active within the Triune relationship; God has been active throughout human history in the past, and is active today and will continue to be active through God's "final consummating work." Mixed-methods research grounded in a biblically-theologically framed worldview assumes that God is active, too, not only in churches, but also in the world and in the lives of all people. We can catch a glimpse of what this *active* God is up to in the lives of people by asking questions about their lives and experiences and allowing these same people to respond and teach us the wisdom of their perspectives.

⁸ Craig Van Gelder, "The Hermeneutics of Leading in Mission," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 3, no. 1 & 2 (2004): 157.

Social science research conducted with a missional framework has helped to uncover what God is already doing in the world, particularly in the lives of emerging leaders of the church. In this way, this research has rejected deism in a concrete way through specific practices of inquiry and discovery that assume that *God is active* in the lives and stories of all people.

Practices of discernment and discovery, embodied in the questions asked, reveal theories about who God is and how God works. Christian researchers must ask questions about what God is already doing and where God might be inviting people to join. Failure to do so creates functional deism, which assumes that God has no plan, no mission, and no activity, and that progress can only be achieved through human activity. Deists see themselves as the primary actors on the stage of life, with God passively observing from a distance. Conducting social science research, and particularly mixed-methods research grounded in a missional perspective, has been a concrete way to operationalize the missional principle that God is truly active.

Summary of Research Design

The design of my research was complex because I investigated the leadership formation practices of two different organizations, evaluating their practices independently, and then comparing and contrasting their practices with each other. I have illustrated the design in Figure 2. The research processes for the Geneva Seminary and the New Wave Network are illustrated as vertical, parallel flow charts, indicating that while they were concurrent, they only intersected in Phase IV through intentional dialogue.

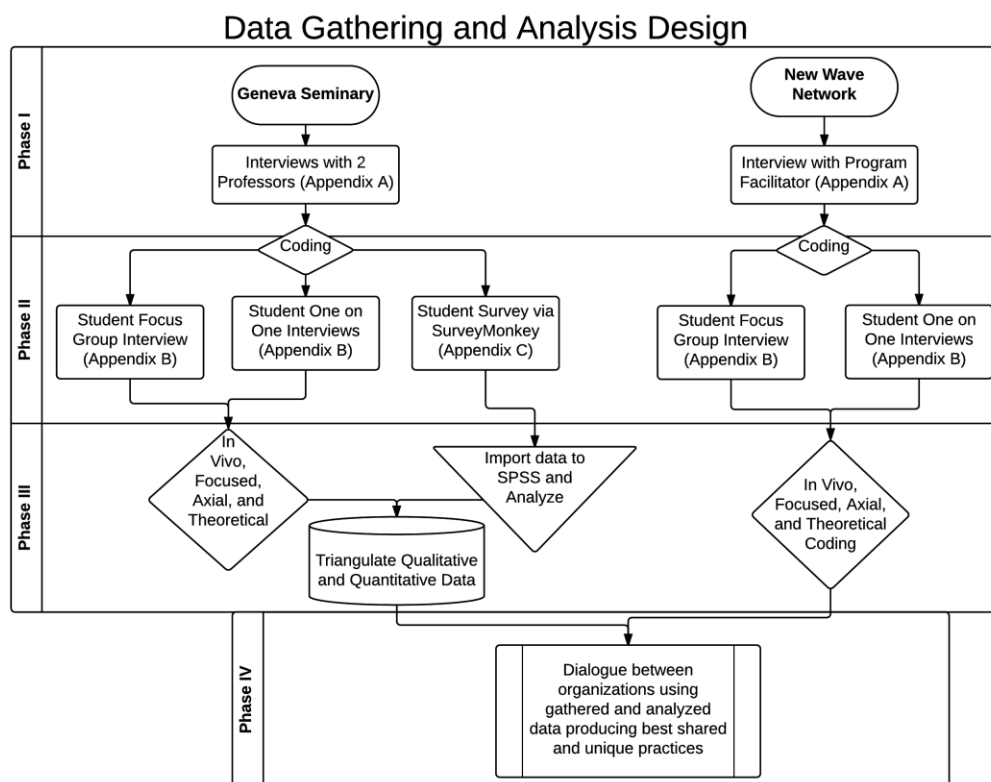


Figure 2. Design of Data Gathering and Analysis

I field-tested all instruments (Phase I interview protocols and Phase II focus group and interview protocols and survey questionnaires) by distributing them to four fellow pastors prior to beginning my data collection. I edited the protocols and questionnaires based on the feedback I received to improve content, readability, length, and flow as well as to improve validity and reliability.

Phase I of my research began in November and concluded in December of 2014 and focused on interviewing key staff involved in the pastoral leadership formation programs at both Geneva Seminary and the New Wave Network, asking them to identify the practices intended to grow students' capacity for vocational discernment. The sample was purposive, and the participants were one faculty member and one staff member from the seminary, and one pastor from the New Wave Network, all who are well-acquainted

with and offer leadership to this particular aspect of the leadership formation programs of the organizations they serve. I invited the seminary to suggest two faculty or staff members who they felt were most knowledgeable about this topic, and I followed their recommendation. I interviewed the pastor who created, continues to refine, and oversees the leadership development program at the New Wave Network. My interview protocol gave special attention to uncovering the practices of the organizations that develop vocational awareness and discernment (see appendix A).

I coded the interview data using the process outlined in *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*.⁹ I used initial coding beginning with word-by-word, then line-by-line, and finally incident-by-incident coding. These first levels of coding are *in vivo*, meaning that they use the actual words of the participants to identify patterns. This initial coding provided a foundation that allowed me to engage in focused coding, and then axial coding, which allow for abstraction on the part of the researcher. In focused coding, I aggregated the *in vivo* codes into broader concepts and themes. In axial coding, I further combined the focused codes through analysis of their general connections with one another. I asked how the various concepts were related, and whether their relationship was strong enough to warrant combining them. The resulting axial codes were then brought into conversation with each other through the process of theoretical coding, which identified *relationships* between the various concepts that emerged in the interviews.¹⁰ The data from these interviews were then used to create a focus-group interview protocol and a questionnaire, which were used in Phase II.

⁹ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*.

¹⁰ Ibid., 50-60.

In Phase II, which began in January of 2015 and concluded in April, I used the information collected from the initial interviews with the seminary faculty and staff, and New Wave Network pastor to conduct two focus group interviews comprised of three current students from the leadership program of the New Wave Network, and five current students from the seminary. I also conducted additional individual interviews using the same protocol with one student from the seminary and two students from the multi-site church.

I used the protocol created as a result of the data collected in the Phase I interviews (see appendix B). The questions I asked the students in the focus groups and interviews concentrated on their perceptions of the specific practices named in the Phase I interviews, probing about their effectiveness, the level of engagement they experienced with these practices, and the level of awareness they had that they are being trained to engage in vocational discernment. I also asked about the students' definitions of the concepts of vocation and discernment, and invited them to reflect on additional practices that they felt have been helpful to them in their journey of vocational discovery.

The sample for these focus groups was drawn from those who would be considered in-residence seniors at the seminary, or in the final phase of the leadership development program at the New Wave Network, called Leadership Residency. The sample for the focus group interview plus the one individual interview at the seminary included a nonprobability quota sample that ensured that I gathered information from three women and three men. There were two men and three women in the focus group, and I then interviewed one man separately. Unfortunately, at the time of my research, the New Wave Network leadership program only had one woman in the final phase of the

leadership development program, and I ensured that she participated in the focus group.¹¹ The sample from the seminary was drawn using a nonprobability stratified quota sample of three men and three women. The sample from the New Wave Network included all available participants engaged in the final phase of the program, which at the time of this interview were two men and one woman. The one-on-one interview participants from the New Wave Network were selected because they were the two remaining Leadership Residents who were unable to attend the focus group. They were both men. The number of focus group and interview participants was limited to eleven total because of the amount of time allotted to gather data, transcribe it, and code it for this research.

The analysis of the data collected from these focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews with students was conducted using the same coding process outlined above for the Phase I interviews. I kept the data collected from each organization distinct throughout the coding process in both Phase I and Phase II so that I could compare and contrast it in the final analysis portion of my research design. I have made every effort to maintain the dialogical nature of this study to bring the two organizations into conversation with one another in the final phase.

I also created a questionnaire as a concurrent aspect of Phase II, which I distributed as a census to all individuals, both in-residence and distributed learners, who have completed the seminary's Master of Divinity program within the past three years (see appendix C). I did not distribute this questionnaire to those in the New Wave Network program because the program has not yet had the equivalent of a graduating

¹¹ It is worth noting that several women are currently engaged in the leadership development program at the New Wave Network as overall participation in this program grows.

class. Through the census, I invited the recent graduates of the seminary to reflect on the perceived effectiveness of the practices mentioned in the Phase I interviews with the faculty and staff, as well as several other suggestions of practices that might be used in vocational discernment. I also invited them to add other practices that were not mentioned in the questionnaire. In addition, I gathered demographic information of those responding to the census in order to better understand the intervening variables mentioned above.

The questionnaire was distributed via email using SurveyMonkey and participants were given one month to complete the questionnaire. They received three emails (one per week) after the initial request, reminding them of the invitation to participate in the survey. The size for the census was 120 individuals from the seminary. I received forty-three responses, a return rate of 35.83%.

Phase III began in April of 2015. I began this phase by importing the quantitative data from SurveyMonkey into the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) computer program. I analyzed the data from the questionnaires using the SPSS computer program, and descriptive statistical methods. In addition to descriptive statistics that included calculating means and frequencies on all data, I also conducted independent t-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests. I used the t-tests to compare the means of two groups' responses to various questions. T-tests were mostly used to compare the responses of women and men to the questions in the survey. I employed ANOVA tests to compare various means of more than two groups' responses to each other, for instance to compare the way that people in several different age groups responded to the same questions. I also combined some groups as necessary in order to perform either an

ANOVA or a t-test because there were occasionally too few responses (two or less) from a particular demographic to enable mathematical calculation for the analysis. Where this has been done it is made explicit in the reporting of results in chapter 5.

I compared the data from the surveys with the analyzed data gathered and previously coded from the interviews with faculty and staff, and the focus groups and interviews with students at the seminary. I also analyzed the data gathered and previously coded from the interviews with the pastor and the focus group and interviews with students of the multi-site church. I conducted another round of theoretical coding on both sets of qualitative data, ensuring that the theoretical codes I had identified were, in fact, the most appropriate categories in light of the larger perspective offered by interactions with these multiple sources.

In Phase IV, which began in June 2015, I compared the coded data from the seminary to the coded data from the multi-site church to gain a more complete picture of the effect of the vocational discernment practices of each organization, and the ways that they cohere and deviate. I used this dialogical method to identify the best practices of each organization, those practices that are shared by both organizations, and those practices that are unique to each organization. The results of these data can be found in chapter 5.

Next Steps

When the project was complete, I presented my findings to the leaders of the Geneva Seminary as well as to those at the New Wave Network, inviting them to utilize aspects of the research that they find useful and welcoming further conversation should they have questions or wish to offer feedback. The findings of this research are being

implemented in the leadership formation program of the New Wave Network. I have also offered to share my findings with the RCA denominational staff member in charge of the strategic goal of *equipping emerging leaders of today and tomorrow*. It is to the results of this research that we now turn in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS OF STUDY AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents the results of the research project that I have described in the previous chapters. I begin by reviewing the research question and methodology. Next, I proceed to describe the data gathered from the qualitative instruments from each organization, the resulting codes from the coding process, and the internal comparison of codes between groups of participants within each organization. To conclude the qualitative section, I compare the responses of participants from each organization with one another to find cross-organizational similarities and differences. I then present the data gathered from the quantitative instrument conducted with the seminary. Finally, I discuss the implications of the quantitative data on the qualitative data from each organization.

Research Question Review

Before looking at the data and digging into the analysis, it is helpful to review the specific question I sought to address, and the organizations that served as the context for the investigation. I examined the leadership development process of two organizations in the Reformed theological tradition. Both organizations dedicate substantial energy and resources to developing emerging leaders for the church. The New Wave Network is a multi-site church that employs a largely internal leadership pipeline and focuses on multiplication of disciples, leaders, ministries, churches, and even other multi-site

networks. Geneva Seminary is a denominational seminary of the Reformed Church in America that focuses on developing pastors through various certificate and graduate programs. Most of its focus, however, is on the Master of Divinity degree.

Both organizations are invested in helping leaders to discern their vocational identity, and are intentional about formation for ministerial leadership. The way that each organization approaches vocational formation has both similarities and differences that can be mutually edifying. To that end, my research question is:

Which of the current practices of Geneva Seminary and the New Wave Network are most effective in helping emerging leaders engage in vocational discernment?

My hope in conducting this research has been that it may foster dialogue between local congregations and seminaries for the sake of nurturing emerging leaders. These organizations can learn from one another. They can help each other through identifying best practices, reporting new learning that comes through innovation, and sharing resources (including human resources). This mutual edification will only come through intentional dialogue, similar to that which informs this project's methodology.

Methodology Review

I provided great detail in chapter 4 to explain the research methodology I used to conduct this study, but I am reviewing it again briefly here. I conducted *mixed-methods sequential exploratory research*. The mixed-methods approach allows the researcher to conduct a deep investigation through interviews and focus groups, and a wide survey of data through a census. The sequential method allows the qualitative data to inform the quantitative data gathering instruments, which makes the mixed-methods approach a powerful tool for creating a thorough description of reality. This social science methodology is compatible with a Christian ethos for four reasons: It requires *humility*, it

promotes *justice*, it aids in *translating the Gospel*, and it cooperates with the *missio Dei*. More on these four reasons can be found in chapter 4.

My research design was conducted in four phases. A chart can be found in chapter 4 (see Figure 2). In Phase I, I interviewed two employees of the seminary (one faculty and one staff person) and one pastor of the multi-site church (see appendix A), all of whom are deeply involved in the development of emerging leaders in the organizations they represent. These initial interviews were analyzed and coded using *in vivo* coding, focused coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding methods. I used these codes, especially the focused codes revolving around specific practices, to inform the questions I asked in Phase II. This phase consisted of focus group interviews with five students from the seminary and three students from the multi-site church (see appendix B). The sample from the seminary focus group was a nonprobability quota sample of three women and three men. One of the men from the sample was unable to attend the focus group and was interviewed separately one-on-one. The sample from the multi-site focus group was a nonprobability convenience sample comprised of those students available at the time of the focus group. Phase II also included one-on-one interviews with two additional students from the multi-site organization who were unable to attend the focus group interview. Finally, Phase II included a survey (see appendix C), which was conducted with the previous three graduating classes from the seminary (120 individuals). The questionnaire was distributed electronically via SurveyMonkey, and participants were given four weeks to respond. I received forty-three responses.

In Phase III, I coded the qualitative data using the process outlined in *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, which

includes word-by-word, line-by-line and incident-by-incident coding, which produced *in vivo* codes. These were then clustered into focused codes. These focused codes underwent a second level of abstraction, producing axial codes.¹ Finally, the axial codes were brought into conversation with one another and produced theoretical codes, explaining their interrelationship.² I also analyzed the quantitative data by importing the raw data from SurveyMonkey into the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program. I ran various descriptive statistics and inferential statistical tests, including independent t-tests and ANOVA.

In Phase IV, I brought the findings from the seminary into conversation with the findings from the multi-site church. This final dialogical step not only provides best practices for developing vocational discernment capacity in emerging leaders, but also provides a model for future conversation between these organizations. I kept the data from both organizations as distinct as possible until this final phase of dialogical analysis.

Qualitative Data

Phases I and II began with qualitative research. The demographic makeup of the qualitative research I conducted is represented in table 1, below. The interview participants were 28.57% female, and 71.43% male. The lack of female participation in the research is largely due to the lack of female students from the New Wave Network, and predominantly male staff interviewed within both organizations. The sample also

¹ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 50-60.

² Ibid.

lacked racial diversity, as 100% of qualitative research participants were Caucasian. Both organizations that I studied are predominantly white.³

Table 1. Demographics of Qualitative Research

Organization	Student Focus Group	Student interview	Faculty/Staff Interview	Total
N=2	N=8	N=3	N=3	N=14
New Wave	3 1 Female (NWF1) Age 30-39 2 Males (NWM1, NWM2) Age 20-35	2 2 Males (NWM3, NWM4) Age 20-29	1 1 Male (NWP1) Age 30-39	6
Geneva Seminary	5 3 Females (GSF1, GSF2, GSF3) Age 20-29 2 Males (GSM1, GSM2) Age 20-29	1 1 Male (GSM3) Age 30-39	2 2 Males (GSS1, GSS2) Age 55-61	8

Qualitative Data from the New Wave Network

I interviewed one pastor from the New Wave Network. He holds primary responsibility for designing and implementing the leadership development process for the entire family of congregations. I also interviewed five students from the New Wave Network, all who hold positions as *Leadership Residents* at various New Wave Network campuses. Each Leadership Resident has varied responsibilities according to his or her gifts, skills, and interests, and is paid for their work. I conducted one focus group interview with three students, and two one-on-one interviews with two other students.

³ The quantitative data gathered from the Geneva Seminary contains a slightly more racially diverse sample.

New Wave Network Pastor

Thirty-nine *in vivo* codes emerged during the analysis of the interview with the New Wave Network pastor (see appendix I). These *in vivo* codes were grouped into twelve focused codes, which were once again combined to form six axial codes. Table 2, below, illustrates the connections between the focused and axial codes.

Table 2. New Wave Pastor Axial and Focused Codes

Axial Codes	Focused Codes
I. Multiplying and reproducing at all levels while transmitting cultural DNA.	Fa. Multiplying and reproducing at every level Fh. Transmitting organizational and cultural DNA
II. Fostering relationships of access and accountability with mentors and peers	Fc. Providing individualized training and coaching Fe. Providing a clear pathway and goals accompanied by accountability Ff. Offering access to the lives of mentors and coaches who are actively leading
III. Individualized training within the context of experiential learning	Fb. Emphasizing contextual leadership formation Fc. Providing individualized training and coaching Fg. Providing experiential learning with guided reflection through project-based learning
IV. Innovation driven by experimentation, participation, and constant improvement	Fc. Providing individualized training and coaching Fg. Providing experiential learning with guided reflection through project-based learning Fi. Innovating through constant improvement and permission-giving experimentation
V. Assessing calling within the organization through observing fruitfulness, competency, chemistry, and character	Fd. Facilitating three kinds of leadership development: spiritual, ministerial, reproductive Fj. Observing fruitfulness in emerging leaders and ministries Fk. Assessing character, competency, and chemistry of emerging leaders
VI. Pursuing the organization's mission of Helping People Find Their Way Back To God.	Fh. Transmitting organizational and cultural DNA Fl. Pursuing the organization's mission of Helping People Find Their Way Back To God.

The axial codes that emerged can be summed up in three key words: *reproduction*, *relationships*, and *context*. The goal of the New Wave Network is *reproduction* of disciples, leaders, ministries, churches, and networks of churches. This is often appropriated within the organization as the content of a *movement*. Reproduction is primarily accomplished through *relationships* and systems that support fostering *relationships*. The *context* in which the reproductive efforts are undertaken factors significantly into the myriad decisions being made, and impacts the outcomes that are realized. To *reproduce* leaders, students are invited into *relationships* within a particular *context* and are given responsibility, authority, and accountability to bear fruit. Success is evaluated based on observable outcomes (fruit) within the ministry context and is monitored through relational connections.

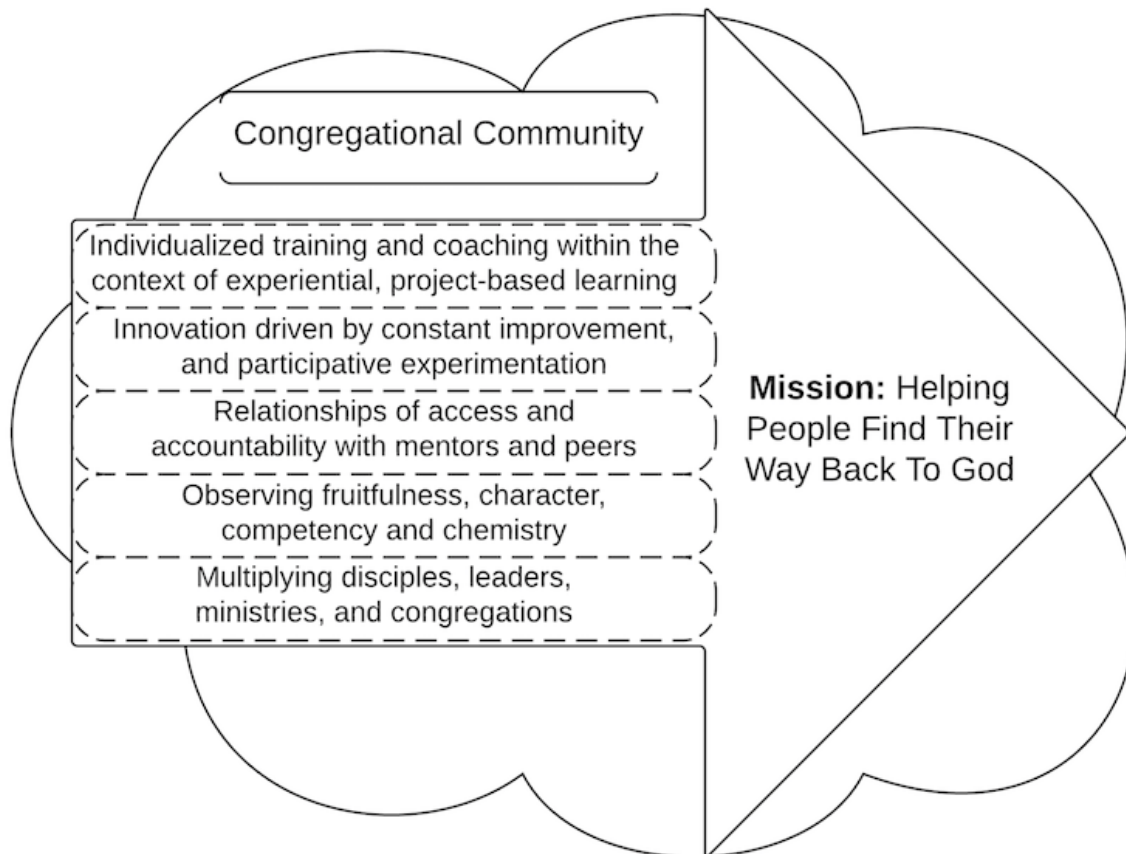


Figure 3. New Wave Network Pastor Theoretical Code Diagram

The above diagram (figure 3) expresses the interrelationships between the axial codes in the form of theoretical codes. The cloud surrounding the arrow represents the primary context of relationships for leadership residents, which is the congregation in which they serve. The arrow represents the structured, focused, goal-oriented nature of the New Wave Network. The organization is focused on its mission, which is to *Help People Find Their Way Back To God*. Leadership development serves the purpose of moving this mission forward, rather than existing for its own sake.

The five dashed ovals comprise various values or objectives of the leadership development strategy, also referred to internally as a *leadership pipeline*. These are not necessarily stated values, but are concepts that emerged in coding the interview with the New Wave Network pastor. This organization is primarily attempting to develop leaders for its own network of congregations, which allows it to be focused in its implementation. This ability to be focused affords the New Wave Network with distinct advantages over a seminary. For instance, this allows the organization to offer individualized coaching and training, and to create space for participatory innovation. Students are given the opportunity to pursue areas of interest, as each is hoping to become a pastor, worship leader, youth director, children's director, or to focus on adult discipleship. They are provided with the opportunity to focus on areas of interest and to develop expertise in that particular area through concrete experience and opportunities to experiment. Leadership Residents are given authority to take actions in their areas of responsibility within the organization, keeping in mind the organization's mission.

Authority and responsibility require the presence of accountability, which plays a major role in the leadership development process, too. Leadership residents are closely

observed by their mentor pastors and are given feedback in the form of both encouragement and areas for growth. The mentor pastors are vetting the leadership residents based on their fit with the organization's values, including areas of competency and character as well as chemistry. Accountability takes place within the context of real-life experience rather than in the arena of theory alone, so students are assessed based on what they have done, rather than only on what they have read or what they think.

Leadership Residents are given the opportunity to thrive or fail. Failure is not understood to be permanent, however. Students are encouraged to take risks for the sake of faithful innovation, and risks necessitate the opportunity for failure. Instead, the New Wave Network desire to learn from failure, and innovate based on these new gleanings. Students are given access to mentors' lives, and mentor pastors are expected not only to offer feedback on what they observe in the lives of the leadership resident, but also to share their own stories of thriving and failure with students. Students are, however, expected to produce fruit as they lead themselves, others, teams, and ministries. As fruitfulness is observed in these areas, more responsibility may be given to students. Eventually, leadership residents become staff with the New Wave Network, settle back into a volunteer leadership role, or leave the organization. The entire leadership formation process functions as the vocational discernment process for students and their mentors and teachers. This might be referred to as *formation as discernment*. The goal, however, always remains the organizational mission: *Helping People Find Their Way Back To God*.

New Wave Network Students

The codes that emerged from the interview with the New Wave Network pastor informed the protocol utilized in the focus group and individual interviews with the New Wave Network students. Thirty-nine *in vivo* codes emerged during the analysis of the interviews with the New Wave Network students (see appendix I). These were combined into ten focused codes, which were categorized again into five axial codes.

Table 3. New Wave Network Students Axial and Focused Codes

Axial Codes	Focused Codes
I. Engaging in and reflecting on practical experiences with mentors, peers, and congregation members leads to self-knowledge in areas of passion, and competency.	Fa. Engaging in practical experiences and receiving practical training drives growth. Fb. Building relationships with students, mentor pastors, and congregation members creates an environment for growth. Fh. Growing self-knowledge happens effectively through guided reflection on actual experiences. Fi. Receiving encouragement from members of the congregation, peers, and mentors clarifies areas of giftedness and joy.
II. Relationships of grace and trust that include transparency and accountability, as well as opportunities for increased responsibility.	Fc. Being given access to leaders' lives provides real-life perspective of ministry leadership. Fd. Being invited to take on more responsibility generates self-confidence as one experiences increased trust from leaders. Fe. Receiving accountability within a goal-oriented culture makes it easy to know how to succeed. Ff. Belonging to a community of grace and trust makes one feel safe.
III. Multiplying disciples, leaders, ministries, and churches is a clear goal of the organization.	Fg. Multiplying at all levels remains a clear goal for all. Fe. Receiving accountability within a goal-oriented culture makes it easy to know how to succeed.
IV. Being given access to leaders' lives creates a realistic vision of ministry leadership.	Fc. Being given access to leaders' lives provides real-life perspective of ministry leadership. Ff. Belonging to a community of grace and trust makes one feel safe.
V. Desiring to make a difference in the world by helping people find their way back to God.	Fj. Desiring to make a difference in the world by helping people find their way back to God.

Table 3 illustrates the connections between the axial and focused codes. Two focused codes lent themselves to shaping more than one axial code. *Fc*, “*Being given access to leaders’ lives provides real-life perspective of ministry leadership*,” is prominent because students spoke frequently about their desire for *access* to leaders’ lives and the impact it made when they received it. *Fe*, “*Receiving accountability within a goal-oriented culture makes it easy to know how to succeed*,” was also featured in many of the students’ comments. Students wanted to know how to succeed and desired to have clear feedback that continued to guide them. Some expressed anxiety about times when they were unsure if they were succeeding, while others mentioned feeling relief at having clear goals.

The axial codes were brought into conversation with one another, creating theoretical codes. Figure 4, below, shows the interconnections between the five axial codes. The New Wave Network Student diagram looks similar to the New Wave Network pastor theoretical code diagram because two values significantly shaped both diagrams. The first is the congregational community where ministry takes place in context, represented by the cloud within which everything else takes place.

Second is the goal-oriented nature of the organization, signified by the large arrow. For students, the primary goal seems to be realizing their own personal leadership aspirations through growth in self-knowledge, rather than in pursuing the organizational mission as it was with the New Wave Network pastor. This is not to say that the mission of the organization is unimportant to students, as it is one of the six things that play into the overall leadership development journey of the leadership residents (represented by the dashed ovals within the arrow). However, the organizational mission plays a second-tier

role to students' primary concerns, which are focused on realizing their own leadership aspirations.

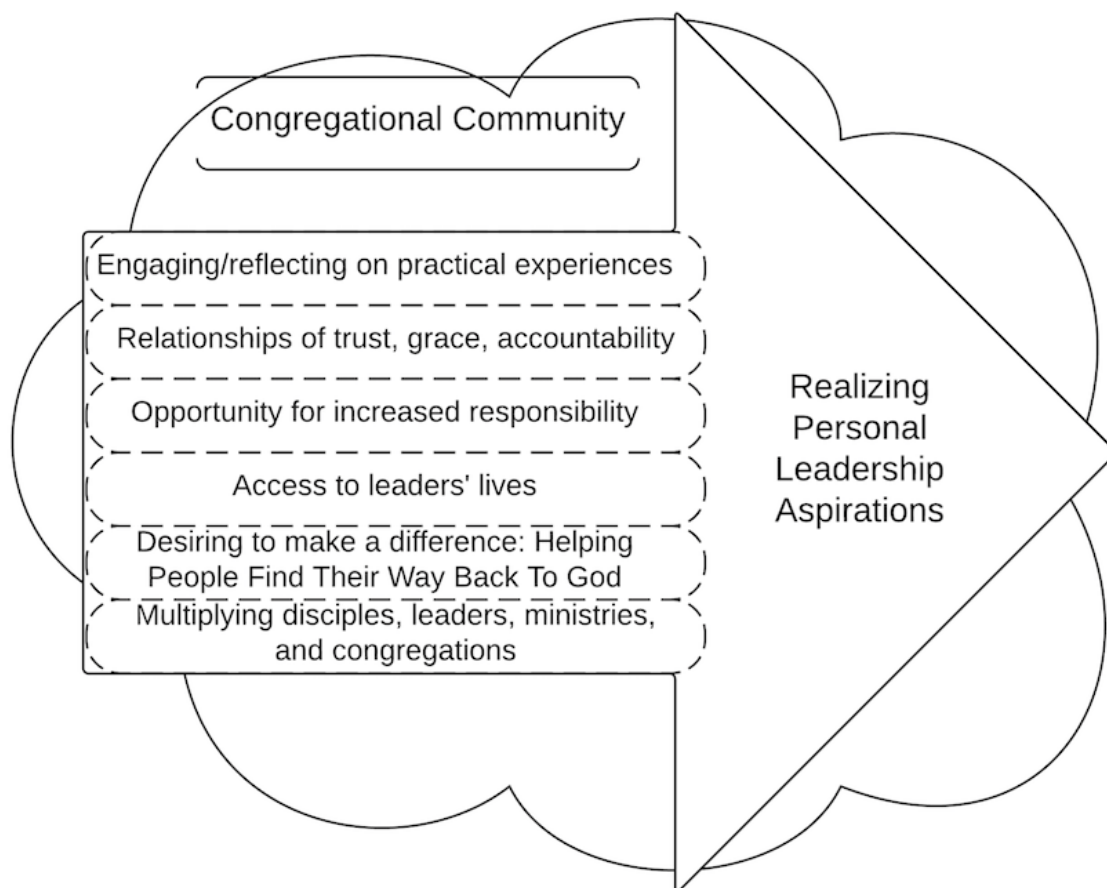


Figure 4. New Wave Network Student Theoretical Code Diagram

Practical experiences were also important to students, and were viewed primarily as a means to grow in their capacity to know themselves better. Relationships play an important role for the students as well, and the kinds of relationships that they describe as most desirable are based on a degree of intimacy rooted in grace, trust, transparency, and accountability. New Wave Network students are not satisfied with traditional models of student/teacher and mentor/mentee relationships. They desire *access* to the lives of their teachers and mentors, and find that their learning transcends classrooms and reading

materials when they observe leadership modeled in the life of a leader they respect and into whose life they have been invited.

Comparing the New Wave Network Pastor and Students

When comparing the theoretical code diagrams of the New Wave Network pastor and students, the similarities should be most noticeable. Both give preference to the community in which contextual leadership formation takes place, represented by the cloud. Rather than *an aspect of* the leadership formation process, the congregation is *the environment within which* leadership formation, and thus, vocational discernment, takes place. Leadership formation is inconceivable in the New Wave Network paradigm without the congregational environment.

Second, the large arrow represents the second encompassing feature of the New Wave Network culture, which is focus on goals. While the specific goals of the pastor and students are different—students focused on realizing their personal leadership aspirations while the pastor focuses on the organizational mission—both are goal-oriented, and understand their actions as building toward a desired result. The New Wave Network is an organization focused on what is practical and achievable. The strength of this approach is that much can be accomplished with efficiency and effectiveness. The weakness of this approach is that not everything in the *missio Dei* is efficient or effective from a strategic standpoint. Focus on goals may assist in achieving results, but it may also become a blinder to peripheral opportunities to join God’s movement in the world, or to act in prophetic ways. The New Wave Network is fairly homogenous, which creates efficiency. Homogeneity can also create tunnel vision, as diverse perspectives are absent. This is not to imply that the New Wave Network intentionally avoids diverse

perspectives, but the focus on strategic goals, both personal and organizational, tends to marginalize diverse perspectives in favor of speed and efficacy.

Many of the *in vivo* and focused codes that were shared by both the pastor and students point toward desired outcomes, meaning that the students and pastor often agree on what they hope will happen through the leadership development process. For instance, both identified planting churches, becoming a pastor, making disciples, and becoming a leader as outcomes they hope to see realized. They also find frequent agreement around many of the key elements that produce those desired outcomes. Mentoring, risk-taking, fostering intentional relationships, receiving feedback, and learning through hands-on experiences are examples of these shared codes that benefit the process of vocational discernment.

Students made it clear that they are engaged in this development process because they want to *make a difference*. Their desire is to find purpose and belonging that create observable impact in the world around them. The pastor, on the other hand, expressed a desire to identify each student's character, capacity for leadership, and level of initiative so that the organization he helps lead can continue to grow leaders for the future.

Understanding motivation can sometimes help to identify certain practices that might be more effective in addressing those motivations, and meeting the expectations that undergird those motivations. They can also help us to identify practices that one participant finds more valuable than the other. Students appreciate help in processing their family of origin and the patterns they have learned through the home in which they grew up because they are interested in how their pasts shape their present and future.

They may be discovering for the first time the impact of their family on the way that they

view and interact with the world. Understanding that this is a primary motivation and desire for emerging leaders could be an invitation for the pastor who leads this development program to spend more time engaging this topic and helping students to reflect on it.

One area where the New Wave Network excels is in providing accountability that is rooted in relationships of trust, grace and mutual respect. Students appreciated the clear expectations that define success, and the pastor clearly stated that this is a high value for the organization. The New Wave Network seeks to give appropriate authority and responsibility to all staff, including Leadership Residents, believing that this is how innovation and progress toward common mission are accomplished. Authority and responsibility require accountability. Without accountability, an organization runs the risk of being pulled in too many directions, and individuals become vulnerable to the pitfalls of leadership. Accountability must be conducted within an environment of trust and grace, creating a safe place for everyone to pursue God's call. Access to leaders' lives helps to produce trust, as do opportunities to engage in increased leadership responsibility. Grace is experienced when failure is met with gentle guidance through reflection and an opportunity for innovation. All New Wave Network participants indicated that this is the kind of environment within which they want to serve and grow. It is also the kind of environment within which they can most clearly hear God's invitation to join the *missio Dei*.

Qualitative Data from Geneva Seminary

The data gathered from interviews with the faculty, staff, and students of Geneva Seminary were coded in the same way as the data from the New Wave Network. The

outcomes, while not identical, did take a similar shape. The interview questions for the faculty and staff were the same questions that were asked of the pastor from the New Wave Network. Likewise, the questions I asked the students from Geneva Seminary were the same questions that were asked of the students from the New Wave Network. I interviewed members of the Geneva Seminary faculty and staff first, as I did with the New Wave Network pastor, and then I created the questionnaire for the students based off of the data from those first interviews.

Geneva Seminary Faculty and Staff

Forty *in vivo* codes emerged during the analysis of the interviews with the Geneva Seminary faculty and staff (see appendix I). These *in vivo* codes were grouped into ten focused codes, which then underwent another level of abstraction, creating five axial codes (table 4).

Some focused codes influenced more than one axial code. The first focused code, *Fa*, “*Conveying the multiplicity of locations from which call originates (internal, external, practical)*,” influenced three axial codes because it speaks to the origins of vocational discernment in a general way. Focused code *Fd*, “*Providing experiential learning opportunities*,” influenced four axial codes because of the frequency with which it appeared in the interviews, as well as the strong emphasis that this pedagogical approach has on the overall leadership formation process at the seminary. Similarly, focused code *Fe*, “*Facilitating community in multiple contexts (congregational, academic, and peer)*,” influenced two axial codes because community was a frequent topic of conversation in interviews with faculty and staff, and was also explicitly identified as one of the most important aspects of the Geneva Seminary experience.

Table 4. Geneva Seminary Faculty and Staff Axial and Focused Codes

Axial Codes	Focused Codes
I. Providing the opportunity for call to emerge within and through the process of formation in the context of at least three interwoven communities (congregational, academic, peer).	Fa. Conveying the multiplicity of locations from which call originates (internal, external, practical). Fd. Providing experiential learning opportunities. Fe. Facilitating community in multiple contexts. (congregational, academic, and peer)
II. Facilitating the formation of a person's character and competencies through practicing spiritual disciplines and addressing pathologies.	Fb. Addressing weaknesses and pathologies of emerging leaders. Fc. Developing spiritual disciplines that will sustain and continue to form leaders in the years after seminary. Ff. Shaping self-understanding by asking questions that a person may not ask him or herself.
III. Challenging emerging leaders to think theologically and make theologically informed decisions within the ministry context.	Fd. Providing experiential learning opportunities. Fe. Facilitating community in multiple contexts. (congregational, academic, and peer) Fg. Cultivating a growing ability to make biblically and theologically informed decisions.
IV. Practicing and reflecting on experiential learning opportunities to grow leadership competencies and aid in ongoing vocational discernment.	Fa. Conveying the multiplicity of locations from which call originates (internal, external, practical). Fd. Providing experiential learning opportunities. Fi. Developing the capacities and character to lead others through influence. Fj. Developing awareness in emerging leaders that vocational discernment is an ongoing spiritual discipline rather than a one-time event.
V. Aiding in the clarification of passions and joys	Fa. Conveying the multiplicity of locations from which call originates (internal, external, practical). Fd. Providing experiential learning opportunities. Ff. Shaping self-understanding by asking questions that a person may not ask him or herself. Fh. Identifying areas of joy and desire within emerging leaders.

To demonstrate the interrelationship between these five axial codes, I produced a diagram containing the theoretical codes that emerged when I brought the axial codes into conversation with one another (figure 5). The foundation of the diagram is the convergence of three overlapping communities that create several communal dynamics in

which various aspects of the emerging leader's journey unfolds. The three communities are the peer community (dashed line oval), academic community (solid line oval), and congregational community (dotted line oval).⁴

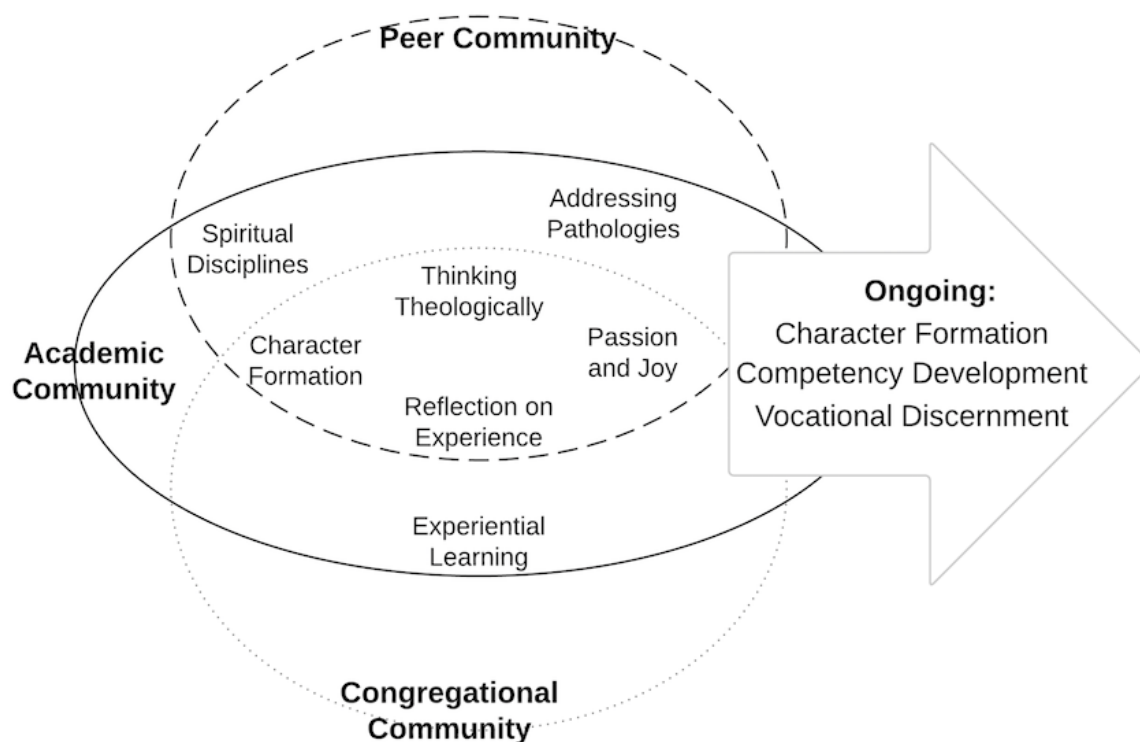


Figure 5. Geneva Seminary Faculty/Staff Theoretical Code Diagram

All three communities converge in the center of the diagram where four aspects of the emerging leader's journey take place: thinking theologically, discovering and pursuing passion and joy, reflection on experience, and character formation. In this center space, students find the opportunity to combine the multiplicity of perspectives they encounter in their various communal circles and can attempt to make sense of how they might inform one another. This space is marked by formal practices, and is often forged through intentional guidance by faculty and staff from the seminary. Throughout the

⁴ A cloud shape represents the concept of community in the other theoretical code diagrams. Ovals were used in this diagram because three overlapping clouds created confusion and rendered the diagram less intuitive.

interviews with faculty and staff persons, the value of community and concrete experience formed the ideal backdrop for facilitating the kind of formation the faculty and staff desired to see take place. Call emerges within the process of this formation, rather than as a distinct aspect of it.

One axial code that is practiced at the crossroads of these three communities, *thinking theologically*, gives a compelling argument for the importance of academic rigor in theological education. The ability to think theologically, and make decisions based on that ability, distinguishes good leadership from good *Christian* leadership. Theological capacity helps to empower the church's leaders to identify and join God's activity in the world, or to identify God's heart in the face of injustice and to act with spiritual authority. Theological capacity empowers leaders to lean not only on their own perspective or understanding, but to engage the vast wisdom of Christians who have gone before them, and who have encountered many of the same challenges they have faced. It also imbues courage as leaders reflect on God's ability to provide, even when things have appeared dismal in the past. Theology emerges as one goes about living one's life, and, therefore, must take place in the context of the convergence of all three communities. It does not reside only in the academic, or practical congregational setting, but also happens on back patios, while sipping a beer, gazing at stars, or singing a lullaby to a newborn baby.

A second communal dynamic is formed in the convergence of the peer community with the academic community. In this space, emerging leaders practice spiritual disciplines such as daily community worship and *Lectio Divina*, and also deal with pathologies such as narcissism, and abuse of power, or while discussing instruments like the *Enneagram*. While the communal dynamic created by these two communities is

not completely divorced from the congregational community, it does emerge as distinctive because of the level of vulnerability necessary to engage the inner-work of facing pathologies, and exploring new spiritual practices. These require a vulnerability that many emerging leaders may not be comfortable engaging in the teaching church context. In addition, some of the topics addressed within this communal dynamic may cross the boundaries of professionalism.

A third communal dynamic is formed when the congregational community overlaps with the academic community, but not necessarily the peer community. It is in this space that students engage in experiential learning through *teaching churches*, which are congregations that provide at least ten hours per week of employment each semester to students who function as interns. The teaching church experience varies for each student based on the teaching church environment and the capacity and investment of the teaching church's pastor who serves as the student's mentor. While students often reflect on teaching church experiences with one another in both formal and informal settings, there are elements of the experience that are distinct for each student.

Finally, there are likely three other communal dynamics that exist where the three communities do not overlap with one another. For instance, there are aspects of the peer community that do not directly interact with the academic or congregational communities, but which are still important for students' experience of seminary as a whole. These three communal dynamics are outside the scope of this study, but they are represented in the diagram because they do exist and contribute to the overall ethos of the development of the emerging leader and his or her sense of vocational identity.

The diagram concludes with an arrow representing the motivations of the Geneva Seminary faculty and staff for the development of emerging leaders. The faculty and staff members each indicated the desire for students of the seminary to be able to continue the formation that takes place in the seminary in the years after they leave the intentionally formed community that comprises the seminary experience. *Character formation*, *competency development*, and *vocational discernment* are ongoing aspects of the leadership journey, rather than achievements to be completed before graduation. This emphasis on the continually *emerging* nature of leadership formation is perhaps one of the great strengths of the Geneva Seminary paradigm, influencing seminary graduates to continue to pursue personal growth beyond the senior year. This perspective that emphasizes the ongoing nature of personal development may also account for some of the responses of the seminary students.

Geneva Seminary Students

The codes that emerged from the interview with the Geneva Seminary faculty and staff members informed the questionnaire utilized in the focus group and individual interviews with the Geneva Seminary students. Thirty-five *in vivo* codes emerged in the coding of the student interviews (see appendix I), which were gathered into eleven focused codes. These focused codes were grouped into four axial codes, resulting in a further level of abstraction. Table 5, below, illustrates the connections between the focused codes and axial codes.

One of the focused codes, *Fc*, “*Developing self-knowledge*,” influences three of the four axial codes. This is because the desire for self-knowledge emerged repeatedly in conversations with students. Students were concerned with their formation and the

process of becoming the person God *intends* them to become. They often pointed to practices, experiences, and pedagogical methods that aided their growing sense of self-discovery. They expressed their appreciation for the growth they have experienced in the past regarding their self-knowledge while also articulating a continued desire to grow in this way. They spoke of themselves as developing and emerging, and avoided language that suggested arrival. Many students shared the sentiment that they felt God was calling them to become a certain kind of person, developing characteristics that God intends for them to have. They often exuded humility and eagerness to grow. Far from being a narcissistic activity, these students spoke of self-knowledge as a pathway to developing compassion for oneself, and for others.

Table 5. Geneva Seminary Student Axial and Focused Codes

Axial Codes	Focused Codes
I. Building collaborative relationships with peers and mentors that shape identity through intentional community.	Fb. Building relationships with students, faculty, mentors, and congregations Fc. Developing self-knowledge Fg. Being mentored by pastors and professors Fj. Collaborating with other students
II. Growing in self-knowledge that leads to formation and transformation.	Fc. Developing self-knowledge Ff. Developing and identifying gifts and skills
III. Engaging in practical experiences and spiritual disciplines that teach how to learn and ask good questions.	Fa. Engaging in practical experiences Fd. Learning how to learn by reflecting Fe. Learning how to ask good questions (critical thinking) Fi. Learning and practicing spiritual disciplines
IV. Becoming the person God intends by pursuing love and joy.	Fc. Developing self-knowledge Fh. Becoming the person God intends Fk. Pursuing joy and love.

The first axial code in the table above pertains to the role of relationships and community in the identity-formation process of emerging leaders. As with the theoretical

rather than in terms of unrelated fragments, except for one aspect, opportunity to innovate, which is discussed below.

The action-reflection model residing near the center of the diagram represents one of the primary processes identified by students as having great impact on their development. As mentioned previously, students are focused on growing self-knowledge, thus, self-knowledge appears in a larger, bold font and takes prominence in the diagram. This self-knowledge is shaped by their community and its distinct practices, but is most intentionally engaged through the process of reflecting on the practical experiences in teaching churches. Geneva Seminary students value practical experiences that help to shape and inform them. The role of practical experience, like that of community, was ubiquitous throughout the interviews. One conception that Geneva Seminary students articulated that other interviewees did not is that practical experience can teach people how to ask good questions, and not just what the right answers are. This focus on learning how to ask good questions is consistent with the sense of continuous emerging that the Geneva Seminary students conveyed throughout the interviews.

While innovation does play a role in the action-reflection process, students feel that they do not experience opportunities to innovate in real life often enough. Instead, they are left to imagine how they might do things differently, spending most of their time observing or playing nominal roles in decision making. The potential positive influence of practical experience is diminished by this lack of real-world opportunity to take risks and experience accountability within the ministry context. The teaching church concept is beneficial, but students feel that there is room for improvement when it comes to how the

model is executed. Some students have excellent teaching church experiences while others lament them as time wasted and opportunity lost.

Comparing Geneva Seminary Faculty and Staff with Students

The theoretical code diagrams illustrate that the seminary faculty, staff and students share much in common in terms of their perceptions of what works and what is important in the formation of emerging leaders. Both groups shared a heavy emphasis on the importance of community and relationships with peers, professors, and mentors. Both groups also used the language and concepts of formation, highlighting the process of becoming a person with certain qualities of character and competencies. They agreed on the effectiveness of learning by doing, and also on the seminary's need to continue to innovate and improve upon the application of this shared value. In short, these two groups of participants shared many of the primary values and emphases that have emerged in all of the interviews.

One difference between seminary faculty and staff, and students, is in the way that community is described. The faculty and staff describe the seminary experience as one where three communities converge, with them functioning as facilitators of the intersection of these communities. Students, on the other hand, experience a unified communal experience. The seminary weaves together academic and peer-to-peer experiences in formal and informal ways to form one community. Teaching churches, while important, function only as a component to the seminary experience for students.

Another noticeable difference between the theoretical codes of both groups is the desired outcome, or the motivation that drives their actions. Students are mainly concerned with their own growing self-knowledge and identity formation. Faculty and

staff are concerned with students' ability to continue to experience formation and vocational discernment in an ongoing way after they leave the seminary. As with the differences that emerged between the New Wave Network students and pastor, these unique perspectives may be seen as stemming from two realities: varying hopes and fears about the future, and the groups' distinct positions within the organization.

First, students are invested in their own formation in different ways and for different reasons than faculty and staff are invested in them. Students are thinking about future challenges and opportunities that they will be presented with, causing them to care about how to handle crises, or work through conflict. Many of them are also forming their identity as late-adolescents, leading them to desire being trusted and viewed as an adult. They appreciate diverse perspectives because they are being exposed to new voices at a pace and to a degree that they have not before. They may value expressions of compassion for themselves and others because they are changing rapidly and are beginning to see themselves as *pastor* or *leader*.

Faculty and staff, on the other hand, are seeking to present a framework upon which students can build over the course of a lifetime. They speak of addressing pathologies in students' pasts such as shame-based, and legalistic tendencies. Faculty and staff hope to present biblical prototypes of leadership so that students possess a theological foundation for emulation. Both groups care about the growth and development of these emerging leaders, but their focus is sometimes slightly different, perhaps because it is a deeply personal journey for students.

Second, faculty and staff carry extra responsibility and authority within the organization, and within the denomination, which students do not. Seminaries are

responsible to issue a *Certificate of Fitness for Ministry* to the classis—the ecclesial governing body—of each student so that the student might be deemed fit for a call in a congregation or ministry setting. Local congregations entrust this discerning work to seminaries, asking them to provide a filter for emerging leaders. This responsibility means that faculty and staff must value the role of assessment, and desire to observe such things as evidence of God’s ongoing leading in the life of a student, and evidence of leadership capacity. They also address pathologies like narcissism, and work to help students move from an individualistic to a communally based identity. This responsibility requires the seminary to perform psychological evaluations and debriefing. Sometimes the seminary must conduct difficult conversations with students regarding character development, and the aforementioned fitness for ministry. As a filtering agent, the seminary’s additional responsibilities and authority require faculty and staff to approach leadership formation differently than students.

Comparing Qualitative Data from Both Organizations

After comparing the groups within each organization, I turned my attention to a comparison between the organizations. First, I compared the focused, axial, and theoretical codes from the students from the New Wave Network with the students from Geneva Seminary. Next, I compared the focused, axial, and theoretical codes from the staff from both organizations. Finally, I compared the theoretical codes from all 4 groups of participants, allowing for a broader discussion of the big ideas that emerged from each set of interviews and inviting dialogue and collaboration between the two organizations.

Comparing Students from Both Organizations

The codes that emerged from student interviews in both organizations had much in common. The interviews centered on several major themes. Students from both organizations expressed a desire to belong, to be known, to be accepted, and to be trusted. These codes address *interpersonal longing*, and they include things like experiencing vulnerability, being a part of a community of trust and grace, receiving encouragement, and receiving an invitation to join. Other codes addressed areas of *longing for purpose*, such as following passion, desiring to make a difference, and experiencing joy. Finally, many of the shared focused codes wrestle with the *longing for identity formation*. These include such codes as growing self-knowledge, becoming a pastor/leader, and being equipped.

One striking difference between the two groups is the degree of mutual investment that the students feel in the organization where they currently belong. The New Wave Network students exhibit a higher sense of ownership and personal investment in the local congregations that they serve and who are investing in them. They state that they have embraced the mission and vision of the organization. They often are included in strategic decisions, making them true partners in the outcomes. They also appreciate having mentors and teachers who are actively engaged in congregational and ministry leadership. These mentors and teachers provide real-life models that can be both imitated and critiqued. While both sets of students identified that those who are leading and teaching them seem to care genuinely for them, the New Wave Network students identified access to leaders' lives as an important aspect of their formation.

The students from the seminary placed much more emphasis on learning how to learn, and in developing the capacity to ask good questions of the world around them. They valued diverse perspectives, perhaps because they encountered them more often than students from the New Wave Network because of intentional efforts by the seminary. To this end, they identified the importance of learning to listen to others. They also possessed a degree of self-awareness about the potential abuse of power and authority that was not present in the New Wave Network students' responses.

The students' unique responses help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each organization from the perspective of the emerging leaders being formed. Yet, the perspective of the students is only part of the overall picture.

Comparing Staff from Both Organizations

Many of the similarities and differences discussed above are echoed in the comparison of those faculty and staff who lead each organization. The faculty and staff from each organization shared a commitment to providing individualized learning pathways that allow students to experience the work of ministry first hand. They also acknowledge the financial and academic concerns associated with graduate school education. The pastor from the New Wave Network identified financial cost and academic capacity as two primary reasons that people would choose the New Wave Network leadership development program over seminary. Many emerging leaders are unable to make the financial commitment that graduate school requires. Some are also unable, or unwilling, to invest energy and time into some of the academic disciplines

associated with seminary, specifically the biblical languages.⁵ The staff of both organizations also shared a commitment to the overall development of the students they lead as both leaders and persons of character, and expressed a desire for these students to be able to make a positive difference in the world.

The staff from each organization offered some different perspectives from one another, too, typically revolving around one of two things. First, much of the focus of the New Wave Network leadership development process is concentrated on determining if particular students fit within the New Wave Network organization. This allows them to be much more focused in their approach to training and assessment. The faculty and staff of the Seminary, on the other hand, is tasked with forming leaders for a much broader pool of ministries. This restricts the amount of individualized attention that the seminary can offer to students, as well as the methods that they can use to assess student fitness for ministry.

Second, the responses of staff from both organizations reflected the unique cultural DNA of each organization. For the New Wave Network, the organizational value to reproduce at all levels was prominent, as was the value of strategic risk-taking for the sake of innovation. These values were not expressed in the interviews conducted with seminary faculty and staff, and reveal one of the major differences between the two organizations.

⁵ Two of the New Wave Network students who were interviewed are in seminary and participate in the Leadership Residency program of the New Wave Network. They were concerned, although not deterred, by the financial implications of graduate school, and have accepted the academic rigor required for such a program. Both are fairly certain that they would like to pursue a track that leads to ordination, which was not true of the other New Wave Network students I interviewed.

The seminary faculty and staff, on the other hand, valued increased capacity to think theologically. They spoke frequently of the efforts made to instill a biblically and theologically informed framework of leadership. They also mentioned the importance of addressing student pathologies such as narcissism, and confronting shame-based and legalistic tendencies. They do this through various means such as helping students to process their families of origin, and the extensive psychological exam administered to all students, which is followed by a private consultation with a clinical psychologist. These important values of the seminary faculty and staff were missing from the interview with the New Wave Network pastor.

These differences in values highlight ways that each organization can learn from each other as they seek to develop leaders. The seminary may stand to benefit from learning about reproduction and innovation, while the New Wave Network should consider the benefits of formalizing theological frameworks, and offering students opportunities to work through psychological, emotional, and spiritual barriers with trusted professionals. These diverse approaches to leadership development based on motivation, values, and paradigms have produced strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges within both organizations. This project provides an opportunity for cross-organizational learning, and perhaps the beginning of the creation of a hybrid path for leadership development that employs the best practices from both the abbey (New Wave Network) and the academy (Geneva Seminary).

Overall Theoretical Codes

As a final phase of cross-organizational qualitative data analysis, I compared the theoretical codes of all four groups. There were two themes that emerged across the

theoretical codes of each group, yet also take on distinctions between groups. They are the *important role of community*, and the *impact of hands-on experience* in the vocational discernment of developing leaders.

All of the groups placed a high priority on the role of relationships and community in the development of emerging leaders. Each group's conception of the role of community, however, was different, as was the way hands-on experience was practiced. The New Wave Network pastor and students seemed to understand the congregation as the primary context in which leadership formation takes place. The Geneva Seminary faculty and staff agreed that the congregation is an important community, but it is not the central location of leadership formation. Instead, three communities converged to form the seminary experience. On the other hand, Geneva Seminary students understood the potential positive impact of congregational involvement, but also indicated that improvements could be made to the Teaching Church program to increase effectiveness. They felt that this could be done through standardizing the quality of experiences for all students in each congregation, and through increasing the amount of responsibility students have in these settings. The congregational setting was a mere component part of the holistic communal identity that in-residence seminary students experienced.

The language of the abbey and the academy is helpful here. The abbey is the congregational setting in which personal formation takes place through hands-on engagement with ministry. The academy represents the setting of the theological school where there is a focused approach to systematic theological research. The New Wave Network pastor and students viewed the abbey as the primary location of leadership

formation, and the work of the academy is to be done within that context. Geneva Seminary faculty and staff invert this perception, understanding the academy to be the best place in which to study the abbey, and attempting to converge aspects of each through teaching churches. Geneva Seminary students experienced the academy as their primary community, and the abbey as something they encounter partially now—although from a safe distance as in a laboratory—and anticipate encountering more fully in the future.

Finally, all of the groups agree that the purpose of leadership development is personal formation through increased self-understanding and character development. This was a shared value across all interviews, and plays prominently into the leadership development process of each organization. Faculty and staff have employed pedagogical approaches that aim at increasing students' self-understanding by addressing these two fundamental areas. Students from each organization confirmed that much of the individual and group reflection that they engage in has to do with growing Christian character and increasing self-knowledge.

Comparing each group's focused, axial, and theoretical codes helps to identify the strengths and weaknesses within each organization. These inter-organizational comparisons also lay a foundation for future collaboration and conversation between the organizations. The nature of qualitative research is to be dialogical. Learning through conversation, reflecting on patterns and themes that emerge, and comparing these patterns can help both organizations to become more self-aware, as well as provide a model for future cooperation around shared best practices, while also allowing each organization to differentiate based on its values, motivations, and preferred outcomes.

This qualitative research has provided an in-depth look at some of the elements that shape the leadership formation processes of two different organizations. Qualitative research provides a form of color commentary and anecdotal evidence that helps to build depth of understanding. Qualitative research is limited, however, by the size of the sample. Because it is not possible to interview and code hundreds of participants, it is also not possible to be certain that the outcomes observed can be generalized to the larger population. A mixed-methods approach utilizing a quantitative instrument provides breadth, which supplements the depth of qualitative interviews. It is to this quantitative research that we now turn.

Quantitative Data

I conducted a survey among Geneva Seminary students who have graduated within the past three years as a simultaneous aspect of Phase II data gathering. The survey questionnaire can be found in appendix C and was distributed electronically via SurveyMonkey. I emailed the questionnaire to 120 individuals from the seminary. I received forty-three responses, a return rate of 35.83%.

Table 6. Age and Gender Demographics of Quantitative Instrument Participants

Age	Male	Female	Total (N=43)	Valid Percentage
21-29	12	4	16	41.03
30-39	9	1	10	25.64
40-49	1	3	4	10.26
50-59	1	5	6	15.38
60+	1	2	3	7.69
Total	24	15	39	100.00

Table 6, above, illustrates the age and gender demographics of the respondents. Of those who participated, 61.54% were male and 38.46% were female. Four individuals

who filled out other parts of the survey did not respond to these demographic questions. The demographic makeup of Geneva Seminary for the 2014-2015 academic year was 109 men (61.24%), and sixty-nine women (38.76%).⁶ This means that the demographics of the respondents to the survey are representative of the actual demographics of Geneva Seminary students when it comes to gender.

Comparing Responses of Women and Men

I conducted independent t-tests comparing the responses of women and men to four questions where participants were asked to rate their level of agreement in one of five ways, ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” The results of these tests are found below in table 7.

Table 7. Results of Independent t-tests Comparing Gender

Question	Male Mean (n)	Female Mean (n)	t	df	p
I feel as though the assistance I received from the seminary regarding understanding my call has been sufficient.	3.70 (23)	2.43 (14)	4.157	35	.000
I feel as though I understand God’s call in my life.	4.29 (24)	3.60 (15)	2.024	21.115	.056
I feel anxiety regarding trying to understand God’s call in my life.	2.63 (24)	3.00 (15)	-1.101	37	.278
I desire more intentional assistance from others to help me discern God’s call in my life.	1.96 (24)	2.27 (15)	-1.278	37	.209

*For Means: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither Agree/Disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Three of the questions elicited no statistically significant difference between males and females. But when asked, “I feel as though the assistance I received from the

⁶ These numbers do not include enrollment from an extension program in San Francisco since that population did not participate in this research.

seminary regarding understanding my call has been sufficient,” women and men differed substantially. Men reported stronger agreement with this statement than women. The p-value was less than .001, and p-values less than or equal to .050 are statistically significant for all t-tests conducted as a part of this research. We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the difference in the means of the two groups is statistically significant. Men’s positive agreement with this statement was statistically significantly higher than women’s.

The second row of this table also shows the results of an independent t-test which compared the way men and women reported their level of understanding of God’s call in their life. Men reported a high degree of understanding, reporting a mean of 4.29, or between “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree”. Women reported a mean of 3.60, or between “Neither Agree/Disagree,” and “Agree.” The independent t-test concluded that the difference in the means between women and men was not statistically significant and we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the two groups are not statistically significantly different.⁷ Based on the responses to the previous question regarding satisfaction with seminary assistance and the difference between responses of the genders to that question, it may be that with a larger sample size a significant statistical difference could emerge. At this point, however, these data are merely suggestive.

I also used independent t-tests to compare the reported frequency with which women and men say that they engaged in seventeen different practices.⁸ Only one of

⁷ A p-value of $\leq .050$ is considered statistically significant.

⁸ The full list of these practices can be viewed in tables 15 and 16 below.

these practices, praying about calling, resulted in responses that were statistically significantly different. Table 8 presents the results of that independent t-test.

Table 8. Results of Independent t-test Comparing Gender and Frequency of Prayer

	Male Mean (n)	Female Mean (n)	t	df	p
In the last year, how often have you prayed about calling?	4.29 (24)	4.92 (13)	-2.536	27.522	.017

*For Means: 1=Never, 2=1-2 Times, 3=3-5 Times, 4=6-10 Times, 5=More than 10 times

Women reported a higher mean (4.92) than men (4.29), meaning that women reported praying about calling more often than men. The t-test compared the means of the two groups and determined that the difference in the means was statistically significant because the p-value is .017.⁹ We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the difference in the means of the two groups is statistically significant. The frequency with which women reported that they prayed about calling was statistically significantly higher than that reported by men.

Finally, I compared the way that women and men responded to their perceptions of how helpful those same seventeen practices were during their time in seminary. Again, only one of these seventeen practices was different enough to be statistically significant. One of the tools recently employed by the seminary to facilitate self-understanding and growth is the Enneagram.¹⁰ The Enneagram allows those who engage in it to discover how they relate to themselves, others, and the world around them through the lenses of

⁹ A p-value $\leq .050$ is considered statistically significant.

¹⁰ For more information on the Enneagram see Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson, *The Wisdom of the Enneagram: The Complete Guide to Psychological and Spiritual Growth for the Nine Personality Types* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999).

nine unique personality types, or strategies. These nine types can be further filtered through the lens of one of three subtypes, leading to the possibility of twenty-seven unique profiles, which are combinations of strengths, weaknesses, and motivations for behavior.

Table 9. Results of Independent t-test Comparing Gender and Helpfulness of Enneagram

	Male Mean (n)	Female Mean (n)	t	df	p
During your time in seminary, how helpful was the Enneagram assessment in helping you to understand your call?	3.11 (18)	3.58 (12)	-2.050	28	.050

*For Means: 1=Very Unhelpful, 2=Somewhat Unhelpful, 3= Somewhat Helpful, 4=Very Helpful

An independent t-test compared the way men and women answered the question, “During your time in seminary, how helpful was the Enneagram assessment in helping you to understand your call?” Women reported a higher mean (3.58) than men (3.11), meaning that women found the Enneagram to be more helpful than men (see table 9). The t-test compared the means of the two groups and determined that the difference in the means was statistically significant because the p-value is .050.¹¹ We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the difference in the means of the two groups is statistically significant. Women found the Enneagram to be statistically significantly more helpful in assisting them in understanding their calling than men found it to be.

¹¹ A p-value of $\leq .050$ is considered statistically significant.

Comparing Response of Different Ethnicities

I also conducted ANOVA tests comparing the means of the responses of the three racial groups who participated in the survey. Table 10 describes the racial demographics of all respondents.

Table 10. Racial Demographics of Quantitative Instrument Participants

Race	Frequency (N=43)	Valid Percentage
White	25	65.79
Black or African-American	2	5.26
Mixed race	11	28.95
Total (n)	38	100.00

Participants in this survey were 65.79% white. The racial demographics of the Geneva Seminary for the 2014-2015 academic year were slightly different than that of the survey participants. Of all post-baccalaureate students at Geneva Seminary in 2014-2015 academic year, including those in the MA and Doctor of Ministry programs, 84.56% were white. This means that, although the predominant group of survey participants was white, this group was still underrepresented in the study. Those of black or African American heritage comprised 5.26% of survey respondents, and 4.78% of total post-baccalaureate students at the seminary during the 2014-2015 academic year. The largest difference was in the racial demographic called “mixed race,” where 28.95% of respondents identified themselves as such, but only 1.47% of post-baccalaureate students at the seminary during the 2014-2015 academic year also identified themselves in this way.

I conducted various tests on these data, comparing the responses of the various racial groups to survey questions. I conducted ANOVA tests comparing the means of the responses of all three groups to all questions, and independent t-tests comparing the

means of those who identified themselves as white with those who identified themselves as non-white to all questions. There were no statistically significant differences between the ways people of various races responded to the survey questions.

Comparing Responses of In-residence and Distributed-learning Students

The seminary has a healthy in-residence program, and a robust and growing distributed-learning program for Master of Divinity candidates. The demographic information for respondents to the survey concerning which program they are enrolled in is found below in table 11. The vast majority of respondents (83.78%) were in-residence students. During the 2014-2015 academic year, 109 out of 178 students (61.24%) enrolled at Geneva Seminary were part of the in-residence program.¹² This means that the distributed-learning students are an underrepresented group of respondents in these data.

Table 11. Frequency of In-residence and Distributed-learning students

Which of the following best describes you?	Frequency (N=43)	Valid Percentage
In-residence student	31	83.78
Distributed-learning student	6	16.21
Total (n)	37	100.00

I conducted independent t-tests comparing the responses of in-residence and distributed-learning students to various questions. There were no statistically significant differences between the responses of these two groups. However, it is not possible to know if the two groups were truly similar or if there were differences that are undetected

¹² These data do not include the distributed-learning students who participated in the San Francisco extension program because there were no graduates included in the survey. There were 22 participants enrolled in that program during the 2014-2015 academic year.

because in-residence students responded to the survey at a much higher rate than did distributed-learning students.

Comparing Responses of Varied Pre-Seminary Experiences

Life experience, along with gender, race, and the seminary program (in-residence or distributed-learning) in which one is enrolled is also meaningful when discussing vocational discernment. Table 12, below, offers a breakdown of the pre-seminary experiences of respondents. A majority of respondents (62.16%) spent at least one year doing something other than engaging in formal education prior to entering seminary.

Table 12. Analysis of Pre-Seminary Experience

Did you go directly to seminary after college, or did you do something in between college and seminary?	Frequency (N=43)	Valid Percentage
Directly from college to seminary	14	37.84
Did something between college and seminary	23	62.16
Total (n)	37	100.00

I conducted independent t-tests comparing the responses of these two groups to four different Likert scale questions, the results of which are presented below in table 13. The independent t-tests revealed one statistically significant difference. The two groups were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, “I feel as though I understand God’s call in my life.” Individuals who went directly from college to seminary reported a mean of 2.93, whereas people who did something else for at least a year between college and seminary reported a mean of 2.38. The t-test revealed a p-value of .028, meaning that there is a statistically significant difference between the responses

of these two groups.¹³ We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that those who went directly from college to seminary are statistically more likely to feel as though they understand God's calling in their life than those who did something else between college and seminary.

Table 13. Results of Independent t-test Comparing Pre-seminary Experience and Understanding of Call

	Went Directly from College to Seminary (n)	Did something else for at least one year (n)	t	df	p
I feel as though the assistance I received from the seminary regarding understanding my call has been sufficient.	3.43 (14)	3.27 (15)	.386	27	.702
I feel as though I understand God's call in my life.	2.93 (14)	2.38 (16)	2.381	18.063	.028
I feel anxiety regarding trying to understand God's call in my life.	1.64 (14)	2.00 (16)	-1.043	27.880	.306
I desire more intentional assistance from others to help me discern God's call in my life.	2.00 (14)	2.19 (16)	-.669	28	.509

*For Means: 1=Disagree or Strongly Disagree, 2=Neither Agree or Disagree, 3=Agree or Strongly Agree

I also considered that age might be a contributing factor when comparing responses to these same questions. I conducted ANOVA tests, and independent t-tests

¹³ A p-value of $\leq .050$ is considered statistically significant.

comparing the means of responses of various age groups and found no statistically significant differences.

Comparing Responses of Various Current Ministry Roles

Another way to differentiate the various demographics of respondents is by the role that they currently play in a local congregation. The post-seminary experiences of respondents are varied. Some graduates find employment in a congregation, while others serve as volunteers, deacons, or elders. Still others find themselves with no formal role. Table 14, below, presents the breakdown of these three groups. I conducted ANOVA tests to determine if there was statistical significance in the variations between the means of the responses of these three groups to different survey questions. Several of these tests revealed statistically significant differences between groups, but none that related directly to the research question at the heart of this thesis.

Table 14. Frequency of Current Ministry Roles

What is your current role in the church?	Frequency (N=43)	Valid Percentage
No formal role	6	15.79
Employed	18	47.37
Volunteer, Deacon, or Elder	14	36.84
Total (n)	38	100.00

Reporting and Analysis of Practices

The data collected in this research project can also be organized based on means. This is especially helpful when trying to determine which practices are experienced to be most helpful in facilitating vocational discovery, and which are least helpful. Table 15 presents the seventeen practices in order of means, with the most helpful at the top and the least helpful at the bottom.

It is important to note that respondents were very positive about all of the practices that they encountered during seminary. The means of all but one practice are 3.00 or higher. This means that the average respondent rated all but one practice as at least “Somewhat Helpful.” It was not uncommon to see 80% or more of respondents rating various practices as somewhat or very helpful.

Table 15. Ranking of Practices by Reported Helpfulness

How helpful were the following practices in aiding your vocational discernment during seminary?	N=43 (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Meditating on scripture	(37)	3.73	.450
Talking with a mentor/coach	(38)	3.68	.574
Talking with a friend	(39)	3.67	.530
Praying about calling	(40)	3.67	.572
Intern/volunteering in an area of interest	(36)	3.56	.652
Other spiritual disciplines	(36)	3.53	.654
Talking with a family member	(39)	3.44	.641
Writing in a journal	(30)	3.43	.504
Enneagram	(31)	3.32	.653
Reading a book/article	(39)	3.21	.695
Peer group discussion	(35)	3.20	.759
Small group discussion	(35)	3.17	.568
Listening to podcast or audio program	(19)	3.11	.809
Spiritual gifts assessment	(35)	3.06	.725
Personality assessment	(38)	3.05	.613
Leadership assessment	(35)	3.00	.594
Watching a movie or TV show	(18)	2.61	.850

*For Means: 1 = Very Unhelpful, 2 = Somewhat Unhelpful, 3 = Somewhat Helpful, 4 = Very Helpful

The highest rated practices support the findings illustrated in the qualitative data, which were presented previously in this chapter. The qualitative data suggested that the opportunity to experience hands-on learning and to reflect on these experiences within a trusted community was most helpful. The list in table 15 affirms these statements.

Interning or volunteering in an area of interest achieved a mean of 3.56, and all three

practices revolving around conversation with a trusted member of one's community reported means of 3.44 or higher, or between *somewhat helpful* and *very helpful*.

Also ranking highly are practices that are typically considered to be classical spiritual disciplines. These include "meditating on scripture" (3.73), "praying about calling" (3.67), and "other spiritual disciplines" (3.53). Respondents who marked "other spiritual disciplines" were invited to share these practices in a separate space. Their responses can be found in appendix G.

In a different question, participants were presented with the same list of practices that are displayed in table 15 and were asked to indicate how often they had engaged in each practice within the past year. Table 16, below, organizes these practices from highest to lowest means, indicating how often each practice was utilized.

Table 16. Ranking Regularity of Practices in the Past Year by Means

How often have you done the following in the past year to help you process God's call in your life?	N=43 (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Meditated on scripture	(42)	4.62	.882
Prayed about calling	(41)	4.46	1.027
Other spiritual disciplines	(42)	4.02	1.199
Talked with a friend	(43)	3.93	1.009
Talked with a family member	(43)	3.51	1.298
Talked with a mentor or coach	(43)	3.28	1.161
Intern/volunteer in an area of interest	(40)	2.75	1.481
Written in a journal	(43)	2.65	1.587
Read a book/article	(42)	2.43	1.129
Peer group discussion	(41)	2.37	1.318
Small group discussion	(43)	2.19	1.402
Enneagram	(43)	1.88	.981
Listened to podcast/audio program	(42)	1.81	.890
Personality assessment	(43)	1.77	.841
Leadership Assessment	(43)	1.74	.819
Watched movie or TV show	(42)	1.57	.831
Spiritual gifts assessment	(42)	1.50	.707

*For Means: 1 = Never, 2 = 1-2 times, 3 = 3-5 times, 4 = 6-10 times, 5 = more than 10 times.

The range in means of the regularity with which each practice was used is much larger than the range of means reported for each practice's helpfulness. The largest mean for regularity was 4.62 (meditated on scripture), while the lowest mean was 1.50 (taking a spiritual gifts assessment). The large difference in the range of means in these two questions has implications when we compare the mean of the helpfulness of a practice with the mean of how regularly it was practiced in the past year. Further inquiry would be required to gain an understanding as to why the range in means in these two tables is so different. Bearing this difference in mind, however, there is still much we can learn from comparing these data.

I wondered if there would be any convergence between the helpfulness of practices in seminary and their ongoing practice in the years after seminary as I commenced this research. Many of the practices that ranked highly in the helpfulness table (table 15) also appear near the top of the frequency table (table 16). These include meditating on scripture, praying about calling, practicing other spiritual disciplines, talking with a trusted member of the community, and engaging in practical ministry experiences. The same can be said for practices that were reported to be least helpful in seminary and least often practiced in the past year. These include watching a movie or television show about calling, taking a spiritual gifts assessment, leadership assessment, or personality assessment, and listening to a podcast or audio program.

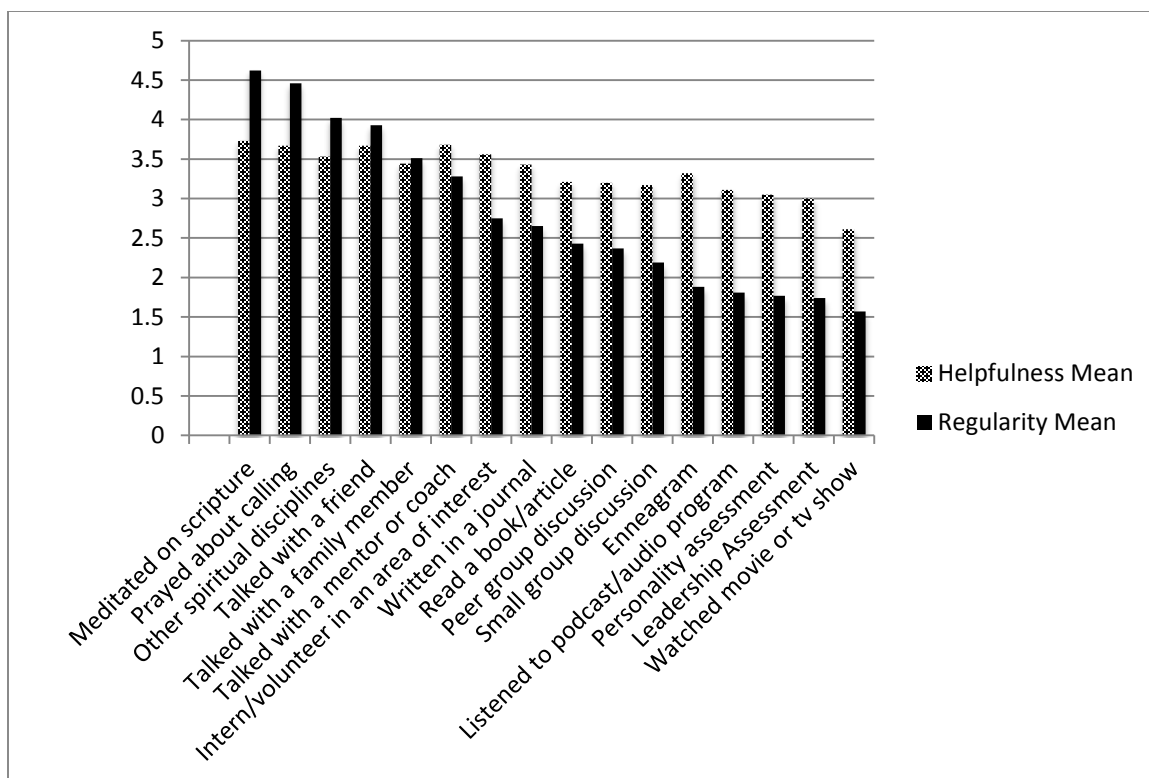


Figure 7. Comparing Means of Helpfulness and Regularity of Practices

The chart above (figure 7) illustrates the comparison of the means between the reported helpfulness of each practice while in seminary and the regularity with which the practice was employed in the years after seminary. The chart is ordered from most frequently practiced to least frequently practiced exercise. The longer the bar, the higher the reported helpfulness, or the more frequently utilized was the practice. The means for the helpfulness index were much more closely clustered than the means for the frequency, so it is difficult to identify trends. Also, the maximum possible mean of the regularity of practices was 5 (More than 10 times), and the maximum possible mean for helpfulness was 4 (Very Helpful).

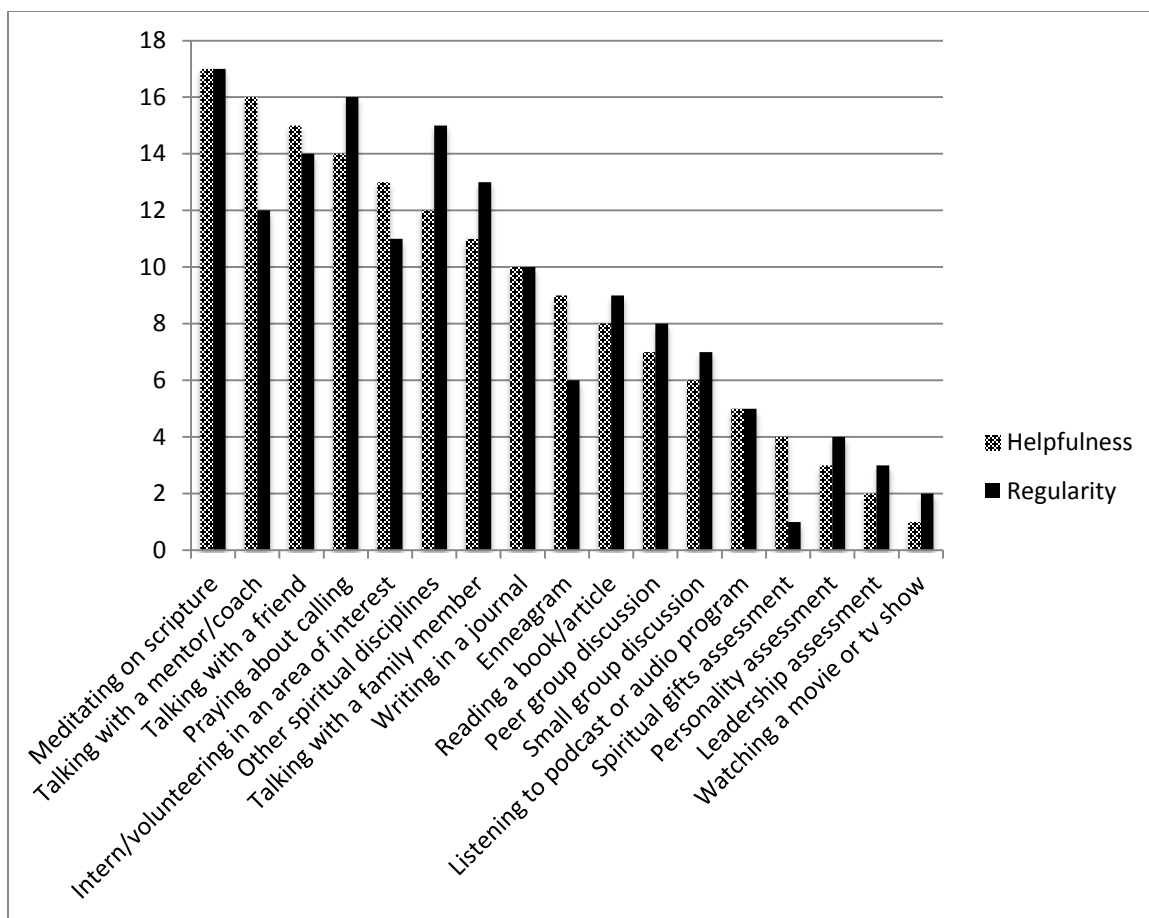


Figure 8. Comparing Ranks of Helpfulness and Regularity of Practices

Another way to illustrate these data is to rank each practice based on its mean, assigning it a ranking from one to seventeen. This method presents the data as ordinal data, and artificially eliminates the helpful ratio aspects that are present when comparing actual means, as in figure 7. The benefits, however, are that presenting the data in this way allows us to see possible corollaries between the two sets of data. Figure 8, above, presents the data in terms of each practice's ranking from most to least helpful based on means (as in table 15), and from most to least practiced based on means (as in table 16).

The chart in figure 8 is ordered based on the most helpful to least helpful practices, and the longer the bar, the more frequently practiced, or the more helpful the practice. Meditating on scripture received a rating of seventeen out of seventeen for both

helpfulness and regularity, meaning that it was the highest rated practice in both of these questions. It is important to remember that the actual means of each practice's helpfulness are tightly clustered, as can be seen in figure 7. The highest mean for helpfulness was 3.73 (Meditating on scripture), and the lowest was 2.61 (Watching a TV show or movie). An ordinal chart, as in figure 8, which shows how each practice ranks in comparison to all others, presents a different kind of context. It reveals that, although slight, there is a hierarchy present in the perceived helpfulness of each practice. It also shows that, for the most part, the regularity decreases as the perceived helpfulness decreases.

No conclusions about the statistical correlation of responses to these two questions can be drawn from these data alone. Distinctions between the helpfulness and frequency of each practice may exist for a number of reasons. For instance, it could be that the seminary provides access to some opportunities and practices that are not readily available after one leaves the seminary. Some of the practices may be less frequently engaged after seminary because they are seminary-specific practices. The Enneagram assessment, for instance, was considered to have been quite helpful (3.32) during seminary, but was rarely practiced by respondents in the past year (1.88). This may be because taking an assessment is more common, or accessible, during seminary training than in the years immediately after. These tables and charts do suggest, however, that practices that are most helpful in seminary are more frequently practiced in the years immediately following seminary than practices which are rated as less helpful, or unhelpful.

Respondents were also invited to share practices that were not listed, but that they have regularly employed in the past year. Two individuals reported that they have fasted to gain a better understanding of God's call in their life. Another individual said that he/she talked to his/her spouse, children, supervisor, and pastor about calling. Finally, one individual wrote that he/she read devotional books, practiced solitude, and engaged in scripture memorization.

Vocational Anxiety, Understanding of Call, and Desired Assistance

In conducting research on the best practices for facilitating vocational understanding in emerging leaders, it is also important to grasp the felt need and self-assessment surrounding vocational discernment. How do emerging leaders perceive their own understanding of their calling? What level of anxiety do they feel about it? Would they like more assistance from others, or do they feel equipped to navigate these questions with the resources that they already possess? The frequencies for responses to questions related to these are presented in the tables below. Several of these questions were previously presented in the form of independent t-tests and ANOVA tests, which compared different demographic groups' responses to these questions. These questions also have merit outside the analysis conducted through the lenses of demographic groups. They can give us insight into the overall state of vocational discernment in emerging leaders.

The transition from seminary to ministry context can be difficult to navigate. The hospitable community of friends and professors, safe environment for exploration, and often-idealistic notions of what ministry will be like give way to the realities of working in a congregation or other setting. The transition also provides the opportunity to

encounter and address the very real and destructive pathologies that exist both within the leader, and in others. Table 17, below, does not explore any of the reasons for anxiety concerning calling. It simply explores the level of agreement with the statement, “I feel anxiety regarding trying to understand God’s call in my life.” One-third of participants stated that they agree or strongly agree with this statement. Another 12.82% said that they neither agree nor disagree.

Table 17. Frequencies of Vocational Anxiety

I feel anxiety regarding trying to understand God’s call in my life.	Frequency (N=43)	Valid Percentage
Strongly Agree or Agree	13	33.33
Neither Agree or Disagree	5	12.82
Strongly Disagree or Disagree	21	53.85
Total (n)	39	100.00

Participants were also asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement; “I feel that I understand God’s call in my life.” The results of responses to this question are presented below in table 18. A vast majority of respondents (79.49%) reported that they agree or strongly agree with this statement. There were no statistically significant differences in responses to this question between women and men, various age groups, various races, or differences in pre-seminary experiences.

Table 18. Frequencies of Perceived Understanding of Calling

I feel that I understand God’s call in my life.	Frequency (N=43)	Valid Percentage
Strongly Agree or Agree	31	79.49
Neither Agree or Disagree	3	7.69
Strongly Disagree or Disagree	5	12.82
Total (n)	39	100.00

Comparing this table with table 17, however, raises some interesting questions. In table 17, 53.85% of respondents reported little to no anxiety about their vocation. In table 18, 79.49% of people said that felt that they understand God's call in their life. This means that 25.64% more people said that they understand their calling in life than said that they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, "I feel anxiety regarding trying to understand God's call in my life." In other words, some participants indicated that they both understand their calling, and that their calling is a source of some level of anxiety in them. This could mean that just because one understands one's calling does not mean that one is comfortable or confident in it. It could also mean that some people feel a strong sense of call, but face challenges in light of that calling that produce anxiety. For instance, women may possess a high degree of vocational clarity, but find their vocational calling to be a source of anxiety or frustration because of challenges still present within the RCA regarding gender equality.

Related to these questions pertaining to vocational clarity and anxiety are the responses to the statement, "I desire intentional assistance from others to understand God's call in my life." Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with this statement. The results of this question are presented below in table 19.

Table 19. Frequencies of Desire for Intentional Assistance

I desire intentional assistance from others to understand God's call in my life.	Frequency (N=43)	Valid Percentage
Strongly Agree or Agree	12	30.77
Neither Agree or Disagree	18	46.15
Strongly Disagree or Disagree	9	23.08
Total (n)	39	100.00

The largest percentage of respondents (46.15%) said that they neither agree nor disagree with this statement. Perhaps they are unsure if they would like more assistance, or they cannot imagine what form that assistance might take. Maybe they have never considered the option of receiving further assistance from others and, therefore, have no opinion on the matter. Of those who do have an opinion, however, slightly more (30.77%) either agree or strongly agree that they would like to have more intentional vocational assistance. These data closely compare with the findings presented in table 17 regarding anxiety related to vocation, where 33.33% of participants said that they agree or strongly agree with the statement, “I feel anxiety regarding trying to understand God’s call in my life.” A substantial portion of the sample for this survey (approximately 1/3) feels the pinch of vocational discernment, and desires the presence of other individuals to walk alongside of them as they discern.

Three other questions related to the importance of community in discerning vocation asked about the level of helpfulness provided by talking with a friend, a mentor, or a family member. Table 20, below, presents the results of these data. These three questions resoundingly affirm the role of others in the process of vocational discernment. Whether talking to a friend, a family member, or a mentor about calling, the outcome was approximately the same; over 90% of respondents said that all three were either helpful or very helpful. There is no statistically significant difference in the reported level of helpfulness between the groups. The act of talking with someone is helpful, regardless of who the person is in relation to the person who is processing their calling.

Table 20. Perceived Helpfulness of Talking with Another Person about Calling

How helpful were the following during seminary:	Frequency N=43 (n)	Valid Percentage
Talking with a Friend about Calling	Somewhat Unhelpful = 1	2.56
	Helpful/Very Helpful = 38 (39)	97.44
Talking with a Family Member about Calling	Somewhat Unhelpful = 3	7.69
	Helpful/Very Helpful = 36 (39)	92.31
Talking with a Mentor about Calling	Somewhat Unhelpful = 2	5.26
	Helpful/Very Helpful = 36 (38)	94.74

Biblical Models of Vocational Discernment

Participants were also asked to rate their agreement with the statement, “I have drawn on biblical examples that speak to the importance of listening for and understanding God’s call in life.” Of those who responded, 84.21% said that they either agree or strongly agree with this statement. This is notable because one of the axial codes that emerged from the faculty and staff of the seminary was, *the ability to think theologically and make theologically informed decisions*. Students were then asked to list some of the biblical examples upon which they have drawn. A full list of these responses can be found in appendix H. Among those reported, the call of Moses was most frequently referenced. The call stories of the Old Testament prophets and Abraham also figure prominently in many vocational journeys. Some drew on specific New Testament passages of encouragement and calling, as well. The role of the Psalms was also prominent in responses. Further study into why these passages connect so readily with so many could shed light on the motivations, concerns, and inner workings of respondents.

These stories may reveal the *mental models* that emerging leaders use to conceive of their vocational identity, and of the notion of vocation as a whole.

Complicating Factors in Vocational Discernment

Finally, participants were asked, “What factors, if any, make it difficult to understand God’s calling in your life?” They were invited to write their responses in long form in a space provided. One person expressed difficulties rooted in age or gender bias, while another was more explicit in naming the resistance that she has experienced as a woman in ministry. Others mentioned finances and the need to provide for a family as a source of tension.

Several respondents identified the multiple options that are presented to them as a complicating factor. One individual wrote, “Affirmation from those who know me best that I am suited for and [have] been gifted to pursue multiple areas of vocation about which I am passionate. I find the freedom in this to be wonderful and difficult to navigate.” Another person wrote, “Curiosity about specific passions in my life. I could see myself doing a number of different things but not feeling overly passionate about one particular vocational path.” One individual simply identified “competing gifts” as problematic, while another said that the “ability to enjoy and succeed in multiple areas” complicates discernment.

Conversely, others identified self-doubt and uncertainty as a source of vocational discouragement. One individual confessed, “My own paralyzing anxiety that I’ll do the wrong thing and disobey God, that I’ll pick a career that drives me deeper into depression.” Another identified past challenges giving rise to doubts about possession of “the gift for ministry.” Some individuals emerged from seminary with crippling

insecurity and fear, while others have encountered situations in ministry that threaten to unseat them early in their journey. One new pastor wrote,

I am less than 18 months into my ministry career. I am serving in a church I have come to find is far more dysfunctional than I was led to believe while candidating, and I have come to question whether parish ministry is my calling at this time. I am actively seeking out campus ministry or non-senior pastor positions. I feel I am unprepared to lead a "mature" church through the kinds of dysfunction we currently face.

Others experience ongoing conflict between what they feel called to, and what the community around them affirms in them. One individual said that he/she has felt called to a place and ministry, but the call was not reciprocated. Another wrote about feeling that he/she was "in their sweet spot," but others did not affirm his/her gifts or calling. Yet another identified the tension he/she has felt between his/her own personal calling and the demands of the ministry context. Several individuals expressed feelings of rejection accompanied by ongoing conflict between the individual and their community.

These responses provide qualitative evidence that emerging leaders need support in discerning their vocational identity in the years after seminary as much as they need it during seminary. Identity formation continues throughout life, and the support of a community of grace, trust, and accountability helps to promote resiliency, as well as direction. One respondent identified the lack of "someone to intentionally process and pray with while seeking understanding" as an inhibitor to vocational understanding. Still others struggle with vocation as a concept. One individual wrote,

Sometimes I think the idea of discerning a call is overemphasized, especially in seminary. I think we also overemphasize the idea that God is constantly leading and guiding people into the exact right fit for them. In reality, things seem a lot messier to me than that. Just because someone comes into a certain position ... doesn't necessarily [confirm] God's will for their life.

This individual affirms the ongoing nature of the search for calling. Vocational discernment is messy, and it is constantly unfolding and developing. It is always in process. Yet, she/he struggles with the idea that calling is something that one arrives at with finality, and that any fit will be “perfect.” Somewhere along the way, she/he picked up this misconception about vocation and has aptly pushed against it. To be clear, however, nothing in the literature review for this project, or any of the interviews I conducted with participants suggested the contrary. This particular response highlights another problem that stands in the way of individuals successfully discerning their calling. Some experience the pressure caused by the misconception that there exists some perfect fit, and they feel a sense of disappointment and failure when they do not find it. Still others may be tempted to engage in endless searching, driven by discontentment resembling wanderlust rather than intentional discernment. Another participant wrote,

The inability to discern what calling means to different people and what it should mean to me. For the purposes of this survey, we have a nice, clean definition. In seminary, everyone means something different when they talk about it. It took me half of seminary to decide what I thought "calling" actually meant, and even then, I was one of the only people I knew who defined it in that way.

In short, some emerging leaders lack clarity about what calling and vocation means, and how it is realized. While many are pursuing it, at least some feel frustrated by an inability to get handles on it. The concept is vast enough, daunting enough, and personal enough that explicit instruction and ongoing coaching are needed to assist emerging leaders in their journey of persistent discovery.

Comparing Quantitative and Qualitative Data

One final layer of meaning is uncovered when the qualitative data are brought into conversation with the quantitative data. There are areas of convergence, where the

quantitative and qualitative data agree, and affirm each other. There are also instances where one form of research provides context that was not revealed through its social science counterpart.

One aspect that was resoundingly affirmed across all groups interviewed, and through the survey, is the importance of relationships and the desire that many have for closer and more frequent access to professors, pastors, and mentors. As mentioned previously, over 90% of survey participants rated as helpful or very helpful the act of talking to a friend, a family member, or a mentor about calling. The act of talking with someone is helpful, regardless of who the person is in relation to the person who is processing calling. The interviews give further color and detail to what emerging leaders truly desire, however. Students shared specific times when a mentor, professor, or pastor showed care and interest in them personally. They also found it meaningful when these same mentors and leaders invited them into their own lives, giving students access and providing transparency. Students long to know and be known by those who are teaching them and whom they are following. They not only want to talk about vocation, they also want to be a part of a community that cares about them.

As mentioned previously, table 15 supports the findings illustrated in the focus groups and interviews regarding the role of practical experience in the development of vocational identity. Table 15 illustrates the most helpful practices relating to vocational discernment that were employed during seminary. The qualitative data suggest that the opportunity to experience hands-on learning and to reflect on these experiences within a trusted community is of utmost importance. Staff from both organizations named practical experience as primarily important for vocational discernment, and students

agreed. Both groups also affirmed the role of processing these experiences with others, as well as the opportunity to talk with others about calling and to share life experiences. The list in table 15 affirms both of these practices as well. The role of practical experience (3.56), talking with a mentor/coach (3.68), talking with a friend (3.67), and talking with a family member (3.44) all had means that ranked in the top seven most helpful practices.¹⁴

Of importance specifically for the seminary was the affirmation of biblical and theological frameworks as an important aspect of leadership development. One of the axial codes that emerged from the faculty and staff of the seminary was, “Challenging emerging leaders to think theologically and make theologically informed decisions within the ministry context.” The survey revealed that 84.21% of students either agreed or strongly agreed that they draw on biblical examples of leadership in their lives. The quantitative data support the qualitative data and seem to affirm that the seminary is accomplishing one of its primary goals.

Occasionally, one social science method offered supplemental insights that the other did not. Several instances where the survey provided this supplemental data by comparing the responses of women and men stand out. There were three statistically significant differences between men and women that emerged through the quantitative instrument and analysis that were not unearthed through interviews. I did not notice differences in the way that women and men answered questions during focus group interviews, but analysis of survey responses revealed at least three useful and important differences. First, women reported a higher regularity of praying about vocation (4.92) than men (4.29). An independent t-test comparing these two means resulted in a p-value

¹⁴ For Means: 1=Very Unhelpful, 2=Somewhat Unhelpful, 3=Somewhat Helpful, 4=Very Helpful

of .017.¹⁵ Table 8, above, presents that information. While prayer was mentioned in the focus groups and interviews, the survey data made it possible to understand the differences between the actual practices of women and men.

Second, women reported a lower level of satisfaction with seminary experience (2.43) than men (3.70). An independent t-test comparing these two means resulted in a p-value of less than .001.¹⁶ This information is found in table 7, above. It was not possible to pick up on this difference during interviews because I did not ask this specific question of women and men, nor was I looking for this difference in those conversations. While there are several possible reasons why women and men might feel so differently about their seminary experiences, these data invite the seminary to engage in further inquiry and, where possible, to take action.

Third, during the focus group interview with seminary students, both women and men spoke about the impact of the Enneagram assessment. During the survey, however, women reported a higher mean of helpfulness for the Enneagram (3.58) than men (3.11). This means that women found the Enneagram to be more helpful than men. The independent t-test comparing the means of the two groups determined that the difference in the means was statistically significant because the p-value is .050 (see table 9).¹⁷ In this case, the quantitative data suggest that there may be something in the Enneagram that connects more deeply with women than with men, an insight that would not have surfaced through qualitative methods alone.

¹⁵ A p-value of $\leq .050$ is considered statistically significant.

¹⁶ A p-value of $\leq .050$ is considered statistically significant.

¹⁷ A p-value of $\leq .050$ is considered statistically significant.

One final way that the qualitative and quantitative data converge is in the way that they broadly agree about the role of vocational discernment in the development of emerging leaders. The survey responses and all qualitative interviews from both organizations affirm that vocational discernment is an important aspect of leadership development. Furthermore, there is a need for intentional conversations and assistance in this regard. This need for assistance is revealed through explicit expressions of desire for more help, and through the anxiety reported by some participants. It is also exposed in the confusion that some students have about vocation, its role, and its definition.

Conclusion

I have presented in this chapter the results of the research that I have described in the previous chapters pertaining to the vocational discernment of emerging leaders at Geneva Seminary and the New Wave Network. I began by reviewing the research question and methodology that was employed: sequential mixed-methods exploratory research. I then described the qualitative data gathered from interviews with faculty and staff, and focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews with students from both organizations. I presented the resulting focused, axial, and theoretical codes that emerged from the coding process, and showed how all of the codes are connected. I presented an internal comparison of these codes between groups of participants within each organization. To conclude the qualitative section, I compared the responses of participants from each organization with one another to find cross-organizational similarities and differences.

I then presented the data gathered from the quantitative instrument, which was a survey conducted with the seminary. I described the various independent t-tests and

ANOVA tests that were conducted on the data, and reported the statistically significant findings. I also presented a list of all vocational discernment practices, ordered by their means, from most helpful to least helpful, and from most to least frequently employed after seminary.

Finally, I discussed the implications of the convergence of the quantitative data and the qualitative data from each organization. The results of this research are unified in their suggestion that vocational discernment is an important aspect of the development of emerging leaders. They are also unified in their affirmation of experiential learning and action-reflection models of pedagogy, as well as the importance of a trusted community in the vocational discernment process.

This chapter presented the data and explained the statistically significant aspects of the quantitative analysis that were completed, along with noteworthy aspects of the qualitative data that emerged during the coding process. Chapter 6 attends more fully to the implications of these results and their interactions with the biblical, theological, and theoretical lenses that were presented in chapters 2 and 3.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Results

The preceding chapter presented the findings of a sequential mixed-methods exploratory research project. This research sought to explore the vocational discernment practices of two organizations engaged in the development of emerging church leaders. The study investigated this topic through the perspectives of staff, faculty, current students, and former students from both organizations. The research question that this project sought to address was:

Which of the current practices of Geneva Seminary and the New Wave Network are most effective in helping emerging leaders engage in vocational discernment?

I described the qualitative data gathered from interviews with faculty, staff, and focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews with students from both organizations in the previous chapter. These data resulted in the creation of four diagrams outlining the interrelationships between various pertinent concepts within each organization.¹ The diagrams also allowed for a visual approach to conducting comparisons of these codes between groups of participants within each organization, and across organizations. The comparison process revealed areas of strength and weakness within both organizations and ways that each organization can learn from and assist the other.

¹ See figures 3, 4, 5, and 6 in chapter 5.

I then presented the data gathered from the quantitative instrument, which was a survey conducted with seminary graduates from the three years previous to this project. I reported the statistically significant findings from the independent t-tests that were conducted on the data. I also presented a list of all vocational discernment practices, ordered by their means, from most helpful to least helpful, and from most to least frequently employed in the years following seminary.

Finally, the quantitative data and the qualitative data from each organization were brought into conversation with one another. This triangulation of data confirmed at least three things. First, vocational discernment is an important aspect of the development of emerging leaders. Second, experiential learning and action-reflection models of pedagogy are effective paradigms for training and educating emerging leaders within these two organizations. Third, a trusted community is a critical component for healthy vocational discernment.

Introduction to Conclusions

This chapter describes how the results of the research interact with the lenses and frames that served as the groundwork for the study as discussed in chapters two and three of this thesis. First, the results from the quantitative and qualitative research are brought into conversation with four key theoretical lenses, which were discussed at length in chapter two: *action-reflection through experiential learning, leadership development theory, self-actualization theory, and sensemaking theory*. The chapter then turns toward an engagement with two biblical narratives and three theological concepts, which formed the content of chapter three: *the concept of vocation, the story of Elijah and Elisha, the*

gathering and sending of disciples in Luke 8-10, the missio Dei, and the activity of the Holy Spirit. Finally, several questions that could aid further exploration are presented.

Theoretical Lenses

Action-Reflection Through Experiential Learning

The two organizations studied for this research project are distinctive from one another in many ways. One of the most striking similarities, however, is the role and importance that hands-on, contextual learning plays in the development of leaders. Further, members of both organizations highlighted the importance of having the opportunity to reflect on these experiences within the context of a community. While the specific language of action-reflection and experiential learning were not used, the key concepts of these pedagogical theories were persistent as the significance of these practices bears out in both the qualitative and quantitative data across both organizations.

As a review, action-reflection is a pedagogical approach that helps learners to understand their actions through a process of intentional reflection. This reflection, which is often guided by the input of others, leads to innovations, allowing the learner to explore and implement new actions.² The cycle is ongoing and evolutionary. It is rooted in the value of continuous learning and growth. The theory that undergirds this pedagogical method is that behaviors modify thinking, and thus create new behaviors. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) relies on action-reflection theory as it focuses on making meaning of concepts, theories, and tasks through direct experience of them, rather than solely through hearing or reading about them. Experiential learning and

² For more on Action-Reflection, see Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*.

action-reflection embrace the idea that people learn best when *doing* accompanies *hearing* or *reading*, and is reinforced through intentional critical reflection.

The New Wave Network pastor, and the Geneva Seminary faculty and staff identified ELT as a primary source of leadership formation in their organizations. The New Wave Network places all students in congregations as *Leadership Residents* with specific responsibilities and authorities, and clear lines of accountability. The model more closely resembles apprenticeship than internship. Each *Leadership Resident* (LR) is paired with a mentor pastor. The mentor pastor is responsible to give opportunities for hands-on experience, and these experiences often come with graduated responsibility and authority. All ministry accomplished by LRs is done within the context of a congregation through the work of creating and leading teams of people. The LR and mentor pastor meet weekly or bi-weekly to reflect on life experiences, debrief ministry efforts, discuss questions, give and receive feedback, pray, and strategize about future ministry opportunities.

All Geneva Seminary students must engage in a *Teaching Church* experience. Teaching churches give students the opportunity to explore ministry in a congregation and give students access to pastors and lay-people who are ministering to their communities, similar to the Leadership Residencies offered by the New Wave Network. Many students are given the opportunity to explore various aspects of ministry, and to reflect on their experiences with their mentor pastors, as well as with faculty and students at the seminary. Students, faculty, and staff all identified the wide-ranging experiences that students have with teaching churches, and, unfortunately, not all of them are positive. Some students find that the pastors with whom they serve are true mentors and coaches

who are highly engaged and provide many opportunities for robust engagement in ministry practice. Others have a less engaging experience and are treated as silent observers or inexpensive laborers, with little true engagement of actual ministry practices, or opportunity to explore their own vocational identity. Despite these differences, seminary students expressed their appreciation for practical experiences, and the opportunity to reflect critically on them with others through both qualitative and quantitative instruments.

Students from both organizations identified these concrete experiences of action and reflection as valuable in helping them to understand their calling. Talking with a mentor or coach, talking with a friend, and interning or volunteering in an area of interest made up three of the top five most helpful vocational discernment practices identified in the quantitative data. The other two top five practices are central to Christian formation in general: meditating on scripture, and prayer. This study has confirmed that action-reflection and experiential learning are helpful and should continue to be implemented in both organizations, but there is also room for further innovation, just as there have been innovations in leadership theory throughout the years.

Leadership Development Theory

There have been many definitions of leadership over the last several centuries, some more satisfying than others. I discussed several of these definitions in chapter 2 and make a case for the definition offered by Peter Northouse in his book, *Leadership Theory and Practice*. Northouse says that any definition of leadership should include four elements: “(a) leadership is a process, (b) leadership involves influence, (c) leadership

occurs within a group context, and (d) leadership involves goal attainment.”³ These four elements create an environment where leaders can grow and flourish, and where the group can be moved. Northouse sums up these four elements with this definition: “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”⁴

The first element of his definition, *leadership is a process*, was widely reflected in the perspectives of all participants. Seminary faculty and staff spoke almost exclusively in terms of leadership development as an ongoing process that extended well beyond the years of seminary. They seemed to understand their mission as preparing students to continue to learn and grow in the various contexts they find themselves in throughout the decades after they leave the academy. Seminary students agreed. They conceived of themselves as *in process* and continually evolving. They said that they were being prepared to ask good questions and were learning how to think, not just what to think.

The New Wave Network pastor also understood leadership development as a process, although he emphasized the students’ experience as LRs as the context of that process. The formation process he described is progressive. Leadership Residents experiment with starting or leading a small ministry or leading a small group of people. They reflect on this experience and the outcomes of their work with the pastoral staff and with each other, and then are set free to experiment again. The pastors assess LRs for growing capacity for leadership, allowing actual results to determine next steps. If the efforts of the LR are successful, the LR is given increased responsibility. New Wave

³ Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 3.

⁴ Ibid.

Network students also acknowledged the impact of being given an opportunity to make real decisions and take risks. They learned from feeling the pressure of authority, responsibility, and accountability. They did not, however, talk about the continuous nature of emerging as a leader after they complete the LR program, as the seminary students did when considering the years after they left the seminary.

Northouse's second point, *leadership involves influence*, is much more clearly lived out in the practice of the New Wave Network than in the Geneva Seminary. Students in the seminary openly lamented the lack of opportunities to influence the outcomes of the ministry settings they found themselves in. Faculty and staff of the seminary agreed that the teaching church experiences are varied, and most do not afford students the chance to try out their leadership muscles. The New Wave Network LR program is rooted in students accepting responsibility for ministry, receiving authority to accomplish their goals, and being held accountable based on their performance. New Wave Network students noted that they appreciated when their mentors and leaders allowed them to influence the organization by offering their voices to the discernment process for strategic decisions.

Influence flows both ways, however, within the context of a community. The third element of Northouse's leadership paradigm is that *leadership occurs within a group context*. Students, faculty, and staff from both organizations agreed that the influence of professors, pastors, congregations, mentors, and peers plays an important role in leadership development as a whole, and on vocational discernment in particular. Community is essential for fostering growth for emerging leaders, as all four theoretical code diagrams make clear. The quantitative data agree, as well. When reflecting on their

seminary experiences, students noted the influential role of conversation with trusted friends, mentors, and family members in helping them to discern their vocational identity. Over 90% of survey participants rated as *helpful* or *very helpful* the simple act of talking to a friend, a family member, or a mentor about calling, as table 20 illustrates.⁵ While seminary students desire more opportunity to be influential, and New Wave Network students appreciate the opportunities they receive, both groups agree that receiving care from others has influenced them positively in their leadership development journeys.

Finally, Northouse says that *leadership involves goal attainment*. All four groups interviewed have at least one similar goal, and also several unique goals. First, all of the groups from both organizations indicated that the purpose of leadership development is personal formation through increased self-understanding and character development. Each organization approaches achieving this goal in different ways and with different emphases. Geneva Seminary uses psychological testing and the Enneagram, for instance, whereas the New Wave Network provides direct feedback on concrete outcomes. Yet, the goal of increased self-understanding and character development are the same.

All four groups differ, however, in other aspects of their goals. The Geneva Seminary faculty and staff have the goal of facilitating ongoing character formation, competency development, and vocational discernment. They set their focus squarely on students' ability to continue to grow beyond the seminary years, including the core component of learning how to think theologically. They also placed emphasis on helping students to address areas of personal un-health, such as narcissism. Seminary students placed growing self-knowledge at the center of their goals. They also acknowledged both

⁵ See chapter 5.

eagerness and anxiety about encountering actual ministry contexts where they were expected to lead and use power responsibly.

The New Wave Network pastor placed the organizational mission—Helping people find their way back to God—at the center of everything the organization does, including leadership development and facilitating vocational discernment. This mission is the context within which strategic action is implemented. Finally, New Wave Network students spoke about their goal of realizing personal leadership aspirations, while also achieving strategic goals related to their work as LRs. Many of the New Wave Network students had a sharper understanding than their seminary counterparts about what they thought God might be inviting them to do with their lives, even though the specifics of their personal callings were occasionally a little fuzzy.

Perhaps more relevant to Northouse's point is that New Wave Network students are given opportunities to attempt goal attainment through leading within their ministry contexts. The New Wave Network pastor explained the importance of clear next steps for students, and students mentioned that they felt most comfortable when they knew how to succeed, and what they were trying to accomplish. The goals of seminary students are to graduate from seminary and find meaningful work in ministry, rather than goals specific to their teaching churches. The goals of the seminarians are clear (graduate and find meaningful work), but the way that these goals positively impact the ministry context is not obvious. The leadership development process for the New Wave Network students, on the other hand, is directly related to goal attainment within congregations.

One final connection between Northouse's definition of leadership and the perspectives offered by all four groups is the difference between what Northouse calls

“trait” and “process” leadership.⁶ Trait leadership assumes that leadership depends on innate characteristics that leaders possess and non-leaders do not. These traits include intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability.⁷ Northouse agrees that certain traits do make leadership easier or more accessible for some, but also says, “The process viewpoint suggests it is a phenomenon that resides in the context and makes leadership available to everyone.”⁸ All four groups of interviewees agreed that understanding traits and characteristics of individuals is important for leadership but is not all encompassing. Leadership is, and should be, available to everyone. It is something that can be learned, and emerges as people discover their unique capacities to lead in various contexts.

Self-Actualization Theory

Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs addresses human potential in a different way than Northouse’s theory of leadership, yet they share the conviction that personal growth is available to everyone. Self-actualization is the pinnacle stage in Maslow’s hierarchy.⁹ It posits that people derive a sense of meaning and purpose from accomplishing their full potential. The healthiest individuals are motivated by the promise of their own growth. This allows them to successfully engage in the process of identity formation.

⁶ Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice.*, 21.

⁷ Ibid., 19.

⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁹ Maslow and Frager, *Motivation and Personality*, 15-22.

Geneva Seminary students placed growing self-knowledge at the center of their motivation for leadership development. They maintained that vocational discernment would flow out of their increased self-knowledge, which was always emerging. Self-knowledge was important for New Wave Network students as well, although it was not nearly as pronounced as with their seminary counterparts. Faculty and staff from both organizations were explicit about their efforts to help students grow in self-knowledge and form a solid identity rooted in Christ-likeness. From this angle, self-actualization seems to be a good fit for the vocational discernment paradigm of these two organizations.

Additionally, one key aspect of Maslow's research was his focus on studying the lives of exceptionally healthy and successful people. He wanted to find the common positive characteristics that produced self-actualized individuals, that is, those whose motivation for action was their own growth, leading to them becoming their authentic selves. Geneva Seminary students most clearly stated that their goal, and the motivation for their actions, was their own growth. This fits well with Maslow's theory.

Geneva Seminary faculty and staff often mentioned the importance of addressing pathologies in students. Students from both organizations also spent a great deal of time considering their weaknesses. New Wave Network students talked extensively about the role of failure in their development, saying that coming to terms with their failure in an environment of grace and trust was important for their growth. Seminary students also spoke about their own shortcomings, and the role of psychological testing and the Enneagram in revealing them. So, while growth remains a motivation for students from both organizations, one route often utilized to achieve it is through examining

weaknesses, processing failures, and addressing unhealthy aspects of one's identity. This finds a home within Maslow's theory, as well. He says,

There are no perfect human beings! Persons can be found who are good, very good indeed, in fact, great. There do in fact exist creators, seers, sages, saints, shakers, and movers. This can certainly give us hope for the future of the species even if they are uncommon and do not come by the dozen. And yet these very same people can at times be boring, irritating, petulant, selfish, angry, or depressed. To avoid disillusionment with human nature, we must first give up our illusions about it.¹⁰

Many of the characteristics that Maslow uses to describe the self-actualized person (accurate perception of reality, acceptance of circumstances, spontaneity, problem centering, solitude, autonomy, fresh appreciation for life, deep friendships, humility, respect for others, strong ethical sense, humor, creativity, strong values, the ability to resolve dichotomies, and resistance to enculturation) seem to be present in many of the students interviewed.¹¹ Maslow is both realistic about the limitations of the human condition, and hopeful about its potential, which complements the perspectives of those interviewed for this project.

Sensemaking Theory

The final theoretical lens utilized for this research project comes from the work of organizational theorist Karl Weick in his book *Sensemaking in Organizations*.¹² Sensemaking states that meaning is made through the convergence of both individual and communal perspectives. The stories that people tell and the way that they remember past events, along with the values passed down from one generation to the next, all

¹⁰ Ibid., 146-147.

¹¹ Ibid., 128.

¹² Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations*.

accumulate to frame reality and make sense of the world. In his book, *Making Spiritual Sense*, Scott Cormode uses sensemaking to help readers find meaning in their experiences of life through biblical narratives.¹³

The survey invited respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, “I have drawn on biblical examples that speak to the importance of listening for and understanding God’s call in life.” Just over 84% of those who responded said that they either agree or strongly agree with this statement. This does not indicate the extent to which students draw on mental models from scripture, but it does affirm the role that biblical narrative plays in the vocational discernment journey of emerging leaders. It also affirms the work of the seminary. As mentioned in chapter 5, one of the axial codes that emerged from the faculty and staff of the seminary was *the ability to think theologically and make theologically informed decisions*.

Students were also asked to list some of the biblical examples upon which they have drawn (see appendix H). The call story of Moses was most frequently referenced, as were the call stories of the Old Testament prophets and Abraham. Several respondents also mentioned specific New Testament passages of encouragement and calling. To know why these stories made such an impact, or in what ways they frame vocational discernment, one would have to ask follow-up questions. One thing that can be said, however, is that most seminary students have at least one important tool for sensemaking from a Christian perspective: a grasp of the biblical narrative and its role in making meaning of their experiences.

¹³ Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters*.

Interviews with students from both organizations provided insight into the role that the family of origin has played in students' self-understanding and vocational identity. Some students told heartbreaking stories of rejection and criticism. Others shared how their family had supported and encouraged them. Common to both was the important role of families in shaping the mental models of individuals, and of vocational ministry as a whole. Students from the Geneva Seminary spend a significant amount of time processing their family of origin, and find that work to be helpful. Students from the New Wave Network have less experience thinking about their family systems, but also appreciated the few opportunities they have had to do this work. An opportunity exists for both organizations to pay closer attention to facilitating the family systems journey for the emerging leaders under their care. It is fertile ground for analyzing and reshaping the mental models that emerging leaders carry with them into the ministry context.

Biblical and Theological Lenses

Conceptualizing Vocation

One area where the theoretical lenses of sensemaking theory and mental models overlap with an important theological lens is in the predominant concepts of vocation presented in both qualitative and quantitative phases of this research. There were differences in vocational conceptualization within each organization, as well as between the organizations.

Geneva Seminary faculty and staff presented vocation as a continually emerging reality. They described vocational discernment as an ongoing process of discovery that accompanies the growth of the individual, rather than as a final conclusion that one comes to about what to do with one's life. Geneva Seminary students experienced

seminary to be a place where they could experiment with different notions of vocation, although they said that most of the focus of the seminary's curriculum is on training pastors for congregational settings. Vocation for these students is closely tied to their growing self-understanding. These two groups were similar in that they conceived of vocation as an emerging reality, yet students looked at vocational discernment with the urgency one might expect from people who would soon need to choose what they were going to do with their lives after graduation.

The quantitative phase of research also offered insights regarding conceptions of vocation. Several former seminary students indicated skepticism toward notions of vocational discernment that are clean and tidy. Some respondents stated that their real-world experience had taught them that there is no perfect vocational fit. Others indicated that difficult experiences within the first few years after seminary have negatively shaped their vocational self-understanding, and they found themselves questioning their calling, and their ability to discern it. These experiences of struggle invite ongoing interaction between the seminary and its graduates in the first several years after graduation, especially regarding vocational discernment.

It would be easy to assume that students who have graduated from seminary have achieved a strong sense of vocational direction, but many responses from the survey tell a different story. Two questions from the survey address this most clearly. First, just over 33% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I feel anxiety regarding trying to understand God's call in my life." Second, just over 30% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I desire intentional assistance from others to understand God's call in my life." Both statements assume that

vocation is something that continues to emerge throughout life, and the responses to these statements confirm this assumption. These seminary graduates continue to wrestle with calling after they leave seminary, and desire others with whom they can process.

The language of vocation created problems for the New Wave Network students, let alone the concept of it. They stated that the word itself felt antiquated and inaccessible. Two of them, NWF1 and NWM2, said that they thought vocation was “the thing you get paid to do” whether or not it is the thing you feel passionate about or feel God asking you to do. What became apparent after some probing is that New Wave students’ understanding of vocation was best communicated in terms of their stories of self-discovery, many of which included pain and failure. The students shared their journeys of coming to the New Wave Network, and their decision to begin the Leadership Residency program. In summary, these students conceive of vocation most clearly in terms of their context. They described how God has brought them to a particular context—New Wave Network—and they embrace the notion that God wants them to do something within that context. New Wave Network students described vocation as emerging *from* a context, rather than *leading one to* a particular context.

Calling has more to do with follow-through and bearing fruit than with ideas about doing a particular job, according to the New Wave Network pastor. When he is assessing calling in emerging leaders he asks, “... what level of follow-through does this person have towards that calling?” He continues,

If you were to sit here and say, “I feel like I’m called to be a pastor,” and I’m giving you the tools and steps you need to become a pastor and you do not follow through on that, then I question whether or not you are really called to do that, because you’re not really engaging in what needs to happen to make that a reality. (NWP1)

Vocational discernment is both discovered and revealed as the individual engages in ministry opportunities. Concrete experiences not only shape the self-understanding of the emerging leader, but also shape the congregation's perception of the emerging leader's call. Since many of the LRs desire to work with the New Wave Network after completing the Leadership Residency program, the role of accountability within the context of concrete experiences is significant in their vocational journey.

In summary, vocation was nuanced in five ways throughout this study. Geneva seminary faculty and staff described vocation as an ongoing aspect of personal growth shaped by capacity for theological engagement. Current Geneva Seminary students viewed it similarly, but with an increased degree of urgency to choose a direction for their lives after graduation. Some students who have recently graduated from the seminary agreed with faculty, staff, and current students that vocation continues to emerge after seminary, and expressed desire for help in processing their own vocational discernment and the anxiety that sometimes comes with it. The New Wave Network students described vocation as emerging from context, rather than leading to a context. Finally, the New Wave Network pastor described calling as most clearly emerging through the activity of ministry, and the production of fruit in the life of the emerging leader. The differences in the way that each of the five groups conceptualized vocation highlights various strengths in both organizations and also suggests that they have much to learn from each other.

Elijah and Elisha, Alongside the Gathering and Sending in Luke 8-10

Vocational discovery in the Bible was often closely connected to apprenticeship. The prophet Elijah invited Elisha to follow him wherever he went so that he could learn

to do what Elijah was able to do. Elisha saw Elijah at his best and worst, and their lives were caught up together as they followed God. Similarly, Jesus called disciples to follow him. They grew to understand the character of Jesus and to value what he valued as they came close to him. They also grew in competency to live the kind of life that he lives. Jesus told his disciples that they would be able to do the things that he could do (John 14:12).

Jesus sent out seventy-two of his followers to the places he would soon be going in Luke 8-10. He empowered these seventy-two to preach the good news of God's coming reign and to heal the sick, just as he had been doing among them. When they returned, the disciples were gathered back together with Jesus so that they could share their experiences with one another and with Jesus, and so that Jesus could speak wisdom into what they had seen, heard, felt, and done.

In the stories of Elijah and Elisha, and Jesus and his disciples, two common themes create the environment for leadership growth: *access to the life of the leader*, and *practical experiences in participating with God in the world*. These two themes also appeared frequently throughout the interviews conducted for this project.

Students from both organizations shared their longing to know and be known by others, and specifically by mentors and professors. Emerging leaders desire *access* to the lives of those they are following and who are teaching them. Access comes in the form of appropriate transparency on the part of mentors and teachers, and is solidified through mutuality when mentors and pastors show a genuine interest in the lives of students. Students from both organizations recalled times when their mentors or professors shared

personal stories of their own calling. They also fondly remembered specific instances when mentors and professors showed care and concern for their personal lives.

Students also conveyed the significance of watching leaders with whom they have relationships function in the crucible of leadership in the ministry setting. This was especially true with the New Wave Network students, for whom this is an intentional aspect of their formation as leaders. Leadership Residents at the New Wave Network are given opportunities to walk alongside congregational leaders as they make decisions, handle conflict, pray, discern strategy, make mistakes, and do everything else that comes with leading congregations. Leadership Residents are invited to ask questions, and reflect on what they observe. Pastors and LR's have regular meetings to process and plan. One LR spoke of a time when his mentor talked about the importance of personal finances, and revealed his personal bank ledger to show the student how to balance his financial life (NWM1). The pastor shared his own past shortcomings in financial management and wanted to give his apprentice every opportunity to avoid those same mistakes. *Granting access requires vulnerability.* When the student shared this story, other students expressed their desire to have that kind of relationship with their mentor pastor (NWF1, NWM2). Some LR's experienced their relationships with their mentors to be more focused and intentional than others, so the experience is not identical for all students. Yet, the positive impact of this rhythm was evident in all of the New Wave Network interviews.

Seminary students expressed slightly different emphases regarding their experiences with professors and mentors. They especially appreciated times when a professor or staff person took a personal interest in them. One student spoke fondly of the

weekly lunch meeting he has with a staff person, at which they talk about their families, the student's hopes for the future, and his struggles (GSM1). Another student shared about a professor who frequently asks about the student's family, and commented on how meaningful it is to be treated as a whole person (GSM3). The level of care for students at the seminary is evident. However, students described their relationships with professors, staff, and mentor-pastors as unidirectional in terms of access. Mentors were given access to students' lives, but not vice-versa. This is not to say that the seminary is failing in this arena. Students frequently expressed gratitude for the care they received, and the reciprocal love that they experienced in the seminary community. The seminary could benefit, however, from increasing the amount of vulnerability shared between professors, staff, mentors, and students.

The second way that the interviews reflected the biblical models of leadership formation is in the practical ministry experiences provided to students. New Wave Network LR's have substantial responsibilities within the organization, the authority to enact those responsibilities, and a level of accountability that provides clear goals and direction for future growth. This was a significant departure from the feedback received from seminary students regarding their experiences in teaching churches, where many of them felt like passive observers. A seminary staff person remarked, "There is simply a little too much observation that is taking place [in teaching churches]. I would like to see our students actually have more experience (GSS2)."

Both organizations can learn from the rhythm that Jesus created in chapters 8-10 of Luke's gospel. The New Wave Network could benefit from standardizing the experience of mentor-mentee relationships across all campuses. One way that they could

do this is by formalizing the frequency of interactions between pastors and their apprentices (Leadership Residents). They could also provide clearer expectations for pastors on what mentoring should look like, and could offer coaching to pastors on how to facilitate that relationship. Finally, they could formalize the progression for students through the Leadership Resident program. Currently, there is no clear end point to the program, and no clear next steps for what happens after the program is completed.

The seminary's Teaching Church program could benefit from Jesus' pedagogical model in similar ways. It could structure the Teaching Church curriculum so that students are not only gathered to observe, but also sent out to participate. This would require the seminary to place higher expectations on congregations to allow students to take risks and make decisions that will challenge and change the congregation; a development that would be beneficial for everyone! This would also require higher expectations and perhaps more oversight of mentor pastors who serve in these teaching churches. Students identified discrepancies in teaching church experiences and felt that much of it had to do with the kind of mentoring that they received from the pastor of their teaching church. One student noted that there were plenty of churches in the region, and the seminary should focus on enlisting the help of those congregations and pastors who were passionate about helping students to grow.

A staff member from the seminary agreed, remarking from his own experience as a pastor that the key to a congregation embracing the call to develop leaders is a relationship. He said, "I think that the problem ... is that the church has not embraced as part of its missional agenda this role of raising up leaders and sending them off to ministry (GSS2)." When asked what could help churches to invest more in emerging

leaders, he replied, “A strong sense that this is one of our own. I watch when children go up in a children’s choir and they sing, and people lean forward. If it could be the same for when other adults ... step up (GSS2).” Relationships with emerging leaders are key to moving leadership development to the missional center of the congregation, and result in a willingness to let them take risks and challenge the status quo.

Missio Dei

The ultimate challenge to the status quo is the *missio Dei*. I have defined the *missio Dei* as the ongoing work of God in the world whereby God seeks to redeem and reconcile all of creation into relationship with Godself (1 Cor 5:11-21). Christians find themselves swept up into God’s mission of redemption and reconciliation when they follow Jesus into the world. Faithful participation in the *missio Dei*, then, becomes the primary vocation of all Christians. The focus of this project has been to identify the practices that help emerging leaders to determine *how* they will participate in God’s mission in the world.

The *missio Dei* deals primarily with identity. First, God’s identity is as one who is pursuing the redemption and reconciliation of all things. Second, the Christian’s identity is as one who has been redeemed, is being reconciled, and finds vocational purpose in being focused on God’s mission in the world. When an individual or a congregation realizes that God’s mission is here and now at all times, then the vocational focus can move from asking, “What should I do next?” to: “How can I become the *person* God has made me to be in the *place* where God has positioned me, among the *people* God has placed me with?” Three elements emerge from this statement: *person* (identity), *place*

(context), and *people* (community). All three concepts played significant roles in both the qualitative and quantitative data gathered for this research.

I have discussed at length the importance of *community* and *context* in the life of the emerging leader. Students and staff from both organizations expressed the impact of parents, peers, professors, pastors, and members of the congregation in the development of the emerging leader. The quantitative data placed an exclamation point on these observations when they showed that it does not matter to whom a person talks about their vocational discernment, so long as they talk with someone who cares about them. Likewise, I have already discussed the importance of experiencing ministry in a context rather than simply in theory. Both organizations value experiential learning and the opportunity for students to reflect on their experiences, and both organizations have opportunities for improvement in this area.

The *missio Dei*, however, starts with identity. This is important because identity plays an enormous role in the journey of the emerging leaders interviewed. All of the groups interviewed identified the purpose of leadership development as personal formation. Both organizations have structured their training in an attempt to increase students' sense of identity, and to shape it by developing Christian character. This was most pronounced in the theoretical code diagrams for the Geneva Seminary students and staff. Students placed *growing self-knowledge* at the center of everything they do in seminary.¹⁴ Their experiences shape their self-knowledge and their self-knowledge shapes what they think, feel, do, and believe. This is the process of identity formation. The goal of seminary faculty and staff was that students would be prepared to engage in

¹⁴ See figure 6 in chapter 5.

ongoing identity formation even after they leave seminary. One axial code that emerged stated the goal of the seminary as, “Facilitating the formation of a person’s character and competencies through practicing spiritual disciplines and addressing pathologies.”¹⁵ The identification and development of skills was of second-tier importance for both organizations when compared to identity formation. However, the seminary spends much more time explicitly addressing identity and growing self-knowledge than does the New Wave Network. This is an area where the multi-site church can learn much from the seminary.

Several important questions remain. Is the identity that is being formed in students *missional* in nature? Are students becoming people who live as recipients of God’s redeeming and reconciling work? Are they increasingly on the lookout for ways that they can participate in God’s redeeming and reconciling work in the world wherever they are? Do they understand vocation as participation in God’s *missio Dei*?

Students from both organizations clearly understood themselves to be the recipients of God’s grace as expressed through God’s redeeming and reconciling work. The important role of failure, and students’ eagerness to share stories of personal growth and challenge, make this clear. One student tearfully recounted a moment around the kitchen table across from her father. When she shared her desire to serve Christ as a pastor, he rejected her calling and told her that she would “never amount to anything (NWF1).” Another student confessed that he had failed his first semester of college where he was studying to become a medical doctor (NWM1). He found himself more captivated by human souls than human anatomy. He left college unsure of what was next,

¹⁵ See figure 4 in chapter 5.

hopeful that something more was possible, and scarred by his failure. Both of these young leaders eventually found themselves with the New Wave Network, and experienced a community of grace and accountability that allowed them to heal, and that affirmed God's love and call in their lives. Seminary students also shared stories of the ways that the seminary community has been a balm to their wounds.

Students from both organizations identified God's mercy and grace expressed through repeated opportunities to serve and lead, and the ongoing support of the community of faith as helping them journey toward vocational clarity. Perseverance amidst struggle has served as evidence of God's continued work in students' lives. Several tools have been helpful for students in their journeys toward realizing their redeemed and reconciling status. Seminary students found the Enneagram to be a helpful tool, as well as opportunities to reflect on their families of origin using family systems theory. They also found the psychological testing and subsequent work with a therapist to be insightful.

The New Wave Network students exhibited less overt humility, and were less aware of the dangers of pathologies like narcissism that lead to abuses of power than their seminary counterparts. This is something that the New Wave Network could work to improve. However, many of these students shared personal struggles relating to their families of origin, or decisions—both theirs and others'—that yielded consequences that could have kept them from exploring Christian leadership. They found a community of grace, trust, and accountability in the New Wave Network that allowed them to become open again to using their gifts to serve God, rather than becoming captive to a story of failure and brokenness that might have otherwise defined them.

The mission statement of the New Wave Network – Helping People Find Their Way Back To God – is connected to *participating* in God’s redeeming and reconciling work in the world. Both the New Wave Network pastor and students named the mission statement as a primary source of inspiration and a focusing motivation for their efforts. This mission is *the* purpose for the existence of the leadership training efforts of the organization, according to the New Wave Network pastor. Leadership Residents named the mission as one important aspect of their own striving toward realizing their leadership potential.

This redeemed and reconciling identity compelled the students to participate in a story much larger than their own. Faculty, staff, and students from both organizations stated their desire to make a difference in the world, and be a catalyst for change. These responses emerged when students were asked why they chose to pursue further leadership training, and when faculty and staff were asked what they hoped would be the outcomes of the programs for which they were responsible. Respondents were acutely aware that their purpose was to participate in something bigger than their own personal aspirations. Many students also indicated that they believed that God was active in the world, and that they were going to participate wherever they could. When asked why he had decided to pursue further Christian leadership training, one New Wave Network student said, “... what led me to this point was just responding to God in situations he would bring to me and saying ‘yes’ (NWM1).” This may be the best summation of the missional ethos expressed by many of the students from both organizations: a predisposition to say *yes* to God.

The Activity of the Holy Spirit

Saying “yes” to the *missio Dei* is impossible without the work of the Holy Spirit.

Bosch’s words are worth reiterating here,

The gift of the Spirit is the gift of becoming involved in mission, for mission is the direct consequence of the outpouring of the Spirit ... Moreover, the Spirit not only *initiates* mission, he also *guides* the missionaries about where they should go and how they should proceed.¹⁶

The Holy Spirit creates the church in an ongoing way through the Spirit’s power, and the church that the Spirit establishes exists for the mission of God.

I set out to answer two questions regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in the work of developing emerging leaders and helping them to discern their calling. First, what do the emerging leaders perceive to be the role of the Holy Spirit in their discernment? Second, how do the institutions that train them support this process through practical pneumatology?

When asked about the role of the Holy Spirit in the development of emerging leaders, many respondents initially spoke about the tensions surrounding more charismatic expressions of pneumatology. In fact, the New Wave Network students and pastor, as well as the faculty and staff from the seminary, all began their answers to this question in this way. For instance, one New Wave Network student said,

For nearly 20 years of my life, ... the Holy Trinity was not Father, Son, and Spirit. It was Father, Son, and Bible. For me that made the realization of two things; not only that we had elevated the Bible to a place that it may not belong, but also that we had pushed out the Holy Spirit. So, for me even just being comfortable with the Holy Spirit doing something besides a gentle murmur in someone’s heart is a challenge. (NWM2)

All of these groups proceeded to deconstruct this sentiment as they continued.

¹⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 114.

The New Wave Network students and pastor both most clearly identified the necessity of watching for the Holy Spirit's work and joining in where possible. One student said,

We are simply [asking], "where is [the Holy Spirit]? What do we see?" So it's really more about not what can be done, but what is being done [by the Spirit]? ... Where is it obvious that that [activity] is not us? ... I think every time we talk about someone finding their way back to God, if we listen to that story, we hear about the Holy Spirit doing a thing that we never could have done. (NWM1)

This is a *responsive* pneumatology, anticipating that God's work in the world extends beyond the walls of the congregation, as well as within it, through the work of God's Holy Spirit. Again, the New Wave Network students seem to understand their purpose as simply saying "yes" to God.

The New Wave Network organizational structure supports this paradigm. The New Wave Network pastor said,

I create a framework and then I watch what happens. And part of that is allowing God to do what he is going to do with these folks and me trying to get onboard with where he is bringing them. So, for me, that's the discerning thing. It's [asking] God, "where are you trying to lead this person and how can I help him get there? (NWP1)

Again, the expectation is that God is leading and the role of the leader is to be responsive and join what God is doing. There is no formalized pneumatology, but this is the practical pneumatology of the New Wave Network as expressed by pastor and students alike: God is up to something, and we get to join in.

The seminary faculty, staff, and students spoke of the role of the Spirit in a slightly different, but no less biblical, way. The Holy Spirit was perceived as *coming alongside* those who are searching. This is reminiscent of language used in John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, and 16:7 where the Holy Spirit is referred to as the *paraclete* in Greek, meaning advocate, comforter, or helper. The work of the Spirit manifests in

conversations and in personal reflection as one who counsels. The Spirit moves within the inner workings of the soul, and in the community as an advocate. The Spirit is also the giver of spiritual gifts, the discernment of which helps women and men toward vocational clarity. Again, there is no formal pneumatology offered at Geneva Seminary, outside of systematic theology classes, but the Spirit is thought of as an active presence who is always leading God's people toward God's purposes.

Summary of Conclusions

This research project was predicated on a question:

Which of the current practices of Geneva Seminary and the New Wave Network are most effective in helping emerging leaders engage in vocational discernment?

The most straightforward answer is that both organizations have been most effective when they combine *responsibility* and *authority* for doing ministry, within the context of an intentionally *gracious* and *accountable community* of mentors, peers, family, and guides. This combination creates an environment within which emerging leaders can thrive and hear God's invitation to participate in the *missio Dei*.

Both organizations excel at creating this environment in different ways. They both have room for improvement, as well. The seminary could learn from the New Wave Network's willingness to give authority and responsibility to emerging leaders. It could also work toward creating the vulnerability necessary to give access to mentors' lives that the New Wave Network students find to be so transformational. The New Wave Network could adopt the seminary's healthy approach to dealing with students' pathologies by using the Enneagram and conducting psychological testing and debriefing with a therapist. They could also shift resources toward helping students to think theologically. Finally, Geneva Seminary's perspective on vocational discernment as a continually

emerging reality over the course of a leader's life is enlightening and could lead to innovation in the way that congregations conduct leadership training and help congregational leaders to listen for the invitation of God in their lives.

Generalizability and Limitations

The ability to generalize the results of this study is limited in some ways, yet broadly applicable in others. The specific results of the study regarding most effective practices may give some hints as to the effectiveness of these practices in other organizations, but it would be necessary to conduct further research to know how fully to apply these conclusions. The leadership development environments, illustrated by the four theoretical code diagrams in chapter 5, are specific to each context and the unique perspectives of those who participated in the interviews. They may inform other similar organizations' conceptualizations of community, strategic outcomes, leadership development, or other key concepts, but further research would be needed within those organizations to confirm or deny their relevance. Most of the specific information gathered through this project falls into this same category, in fact. We cannot and should not generalize the particulars.

One area that we can generalize, however, is the demonstrated opportunity of two distinct organizations to learn from each other. This project shows that bringing congregations into conversation with seminaries creates the occasion for both organizations to grow and flourish. Deep study of an organization's processes produces space for innovation, and provides a critique of the status quo, which is often invisible to organizational insiders. When two organizations with similar objectives compare themselves to each other it is called benchmarking. This study suggests that it may be

time for some congregations and some seminaries to start benchmarking themselves with one another in areas where their goals are aligned.

We may also generalize that the methodology itself is a useful tool for facilitating cross-organizational collaboration. First, comparing the best practices of distinct organizations with similar goals creates the occasion for both organizations to share their unique strengths without feeling the anxiety of competition or critique. This appreciative approach creates open space for celebrating successes, and emphasizing strengths. Second, interviewing students, faculty, and staff places decision makers and consequence takers in dialogue with one another without the pressures associated with power dynamics. This methodology moves these organizations, and each group of participants, out of competition with one another, and honors the insight of all.

Finally, the theoretical code diagrams are the aspect of this study that I find to be most interesting and important. We can generalize from all four diagrams that the role of community is not only important, but the way each person conceives of the role of community changes their experience. Likewise, the distinct motivations of each group influence their perceptions of what is most effective and important in the formation of leaders. While the exact motivations of each group may not be generalizable, the effect that motivations have on participants' perceptions may be. Future researchers would do well to investigate the role of community and participant motivations in leadership formation efforts.

Questions for Further Exploration

Several questions come to mind as I conclude this project. Some of these questions are focused in nature, and come as a direct result of the statistically significant

findings of the research. For instance, why were men more satisfied than women with the vocational assistance they received from the seminary? Similarly, why did women find the Enneagram to be more helpful than men?

Other questions arose because the research would have been more complete if certain questions had been asked. I found myself wondering about the ongoing effectiveness and influence of certain discernment practices on individuals in the years after seminary. Asking this question during quantitative data gathering would have added another layer of insight to the research.

Conclusion

The questions above are fairly technical in nature, but there are deeper, more adaptive questions as well.¹⁷ These are questions about the nature of leadership development, denominational institutions, and the relationship between congregations and seminaries in the future. These are the questions that I find most compelling. Are academies and abbeys ready to learn from one another in humility and collaborate for the sake of the church? If so, how could the academy and the abbey collaborate more fully to produce the kinds of leaders that the world needs today? Which aspects of each organization's current training paradigm would need to recede, and which would take on greater influence? Geneva Seminary and the New Wave Network share a common mission: preparing leaders for the *missio Dei*. What would a hybrid model of leadership training that combines the unique strengths of these two organizations entail? I suspect

¹⁷ I use the terms *technical* and *adaptive* here in reference to the way they are applied by Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, 13 and 119. See the section about this book in chapter 2 for more information.

that the missional future of the church depends largely upon the answers to these questions.

EPILOGUE

I was first introduced to the *missio Dei* and the missional shape of the church on my first day as a freshman at Hope College. The professor assigned Lesslie Newbigin's book, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, and expected that a group of eighteen year olds would grasp its importance and potential applications.¹ Some of my classmates may have achieved this lofty goal, but I did not. Wrestling with the content did, however, open within me a holy discontentment with the church as I had experienced it.

I encountered Newbigin's work again in seminary during a class called, *Missional Church*, with George Hunsberger. Newbigin's book, *The Open Secret*, found within me an audience, and my discontentment began to turn toward hope that the church could do more.² I wanted to be a part of it. Yet, my perception of the *missio Dei* was as something the church *does*, still falling short of a truly missional ecclesiology. This engagement during seminary was still enough to convince me that any further education I would pursue would have to be rooted in a missional framework.

The Congregational Mission and Leadership Doctor of Ministry program has taught me that God's mission is not something that the church *does*, but that God's mission shapes the *identity* of the church. I now lead with a missional paradigm. Missiology shapes ecclesiology, which informs liturgy – the work of the people. I credit engagement with this program with forming this conviction within me.

¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1989).

² Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*.

This program has also given me some historical perspective on the evolution of the church; specifically it's local expression in congregations. Understanding the rise and fall of Christendom, advent of post-modernism, growth and decline of denominationalism, various ecclesiologies, and the rise and spread of a chaplaincy mentality toward society among seminaries and congregations has shaped my view of the current state of the church in the United States. I now understand how we got where we are, and how we can, and must, change. Additionally, I have learned about the evolution of leadership theory and now critique leadership theories based on biblical and theological lenses. In fact, I have become a better critical thinker over all. I have also grown an appreciation for social science theory and a scientific approach to understanding congregations. I will use many of the social science tools that I have learned in this program in future discernment of congregational direction.

This program has exposed me to literature and ideas that I would not have found on my own. I have read some books that I would not choose to read again. I have read other books that are dog-eared and coffee-stained because they have been used so frequently. My language has changed as well. I often find myself using missiological vernacular without thinking about it. My task is to continue to appropriate the tremendous and difficult concepts I have learned into language and ideas that are accessible and operational for the people with whom I am journeying toward Christ.

I am insatiably curious, and a learner by nature. I crave knowledge, wisdom, and insight and am eager to wrestle with new ideas and to be challenged. This program has scratched that itch for me. Mutual learning has marked my interactions with all of the professors, and I have been impressed by their depth and care. The other members of the

cohort share diverse perspectives and backgrounds, and they have edified me tremendously. They have helped me to see more clearly the things I take for granted, and to question my assumptions. The best part of this program has been the human element. I wasn't prepared to love my cohort as I do today. Their friendship has made me want to continue in this journey, even when I felt like quitting, and has shaped me as we engaged the content, and our diverse contexts, together.

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol for Seminary Professors and Church Pastor

These interview questions were used in initial interviews with professors and directors of the leadership training programs at the Geneva Seminary and the New Wave Network.

1. Tell me about your role at the seminary/church with developing emerging leaders.
 - What are a few of the biggest changes you have experienced or witnessed while doing this work?
 - What challenges are arising that you feel emerging church leaders need to be trained to address?
2. What do you hope someone who completes your program will be able to do?
 - How do you invest in developing these core competencies?
 - How do you know if these competencies exist in your students?
3. What do you hope will be the cornerstones of their character?
 - How do you invest in their character development?
 - How do you know if their character is of the quality you hope for?
4. Let's talk specifically about vocational discernment – the process of people coming to understand how God is inviting them to use their gifts for the sake of God's Kingdom. Tell me about the role that vocational discernment plays in the curriculum here.
 - What role do you think the seminary and the congregation have in helping emerging leaders to discern their vocation?
 - What kind of formal conversations is the seminary/congregation having regarding training leaders to engage in vocational discernment?
 - What trends are you seeing in your students in regard to the concept of vocation and the challenge of discerning it?
 - How have you seen this particular aspect of leadership development change over the course of your years in working with training emerging leaders?

5. What are some of the tools or practices that your organization presently uses to help students engage in vocational discernment?
 - Of these practices, which do you find to be most helpful?
 - What are some specific books or articles that are helpful?
 - What are some specific spiritual practices that are helpful?
 - How do you utilize mentoring methods in vocational discernment?
 - How do you utilize experiential learning in vocational discernment?
 - What are some specific assessments like MBTI, Strengths Finder, spiritual gifts, psychological testing, etc, that are helpful?
 - What are the particular rhythms in the academic year that lend themselves to engaging in vocational discernment?
 - Which, if any, of your current practices do you feel are not necessary, or are even hindering the vocational discernment process?
 - Are there any practices that you were once incorporating that you have dropped because they were not helpful or were counterproductive?
6. How do students typically respond to these practices that seek to help them develop vocational discernment skills?
7. In what ways does this organization incorporate the work of the Holy Spirit, and the ability to discern the Spirit's leading, into leadership formation?
8. What are some of the more prominent challenges that stand in the way of emerging leaders being able to discern their vocation?
 - What about broader cultural issues?
 - Issues specific to the RCA?
 - Issues specific to your organization?
9. What role do you expect ongoing vocational discernment to play in the life of a student who completes your program?
 - What does success look like? Can you give me an example or two?
 - What do you hope students will understand conceptually about vocation when they are done here?
 - How are you seeing students respond to the work you are doing around these issues? Why do you think they are responding in this way?
 - What are the follow-up practices or programs, if any, that you have implemented to help students process vocation after they have completed their coursework?

10. What role do local congregations/campuses presently play in the vocational discernment process?

- How would you like to see them engaged in this process?
- What about the denomination? How are they involved and how would you like to see them involved?

What else do you think is important for me to know as I move forward in this research?

APPENDIX B

Focus Group and Interview Protocol for Students

Emerging Leaders and Vocational Discernment

1. Tell me a little about what led you to pursue further education in order to prepare you for church leadership.
 - Why did you choose this specific program/seminary?
2. What do you think are some of the things you are being prepared to do when you complete the program?
 - How are you being prepared to do these things?
 - What challenges are arising that you feel emerging church leaders need to be trained to address?
3. When I say “leader,” what comes to mind?
4. When I say “vocation,” what comes to mind?
 - To what extent is this language used in the organization?
 - To what extent is this language used in “real life?”
 - What language, if any, do you think might be more helpful than this language?
5. When I say “discernment,” what comes to mind?
 - To what extent is this language used in the organization?
 - To what extent is this language used in “real life?”
 - What language, if any, do you think might be more helpful than this language?
6. In what ways is this program helping to develop your character?
 - What do you think are the core character elements that this program is seeking to develop in you?

7. Let's talk specifically about vocational discernment – the process of people coming to understand how God is inviting them to use their gifts for the sake of God's Kingdom. Tell me about your process of discernment that led you to come here.
 - Who were some of the key people in that process? Why were they so influential?
 - What were some of the most important aspects of that process?
 - What practices did you employ to help you make the decision to enter this program?
 - What do you wish you had done differently in that process?

8. What are some of the more prominent challenges that you have faced in your journey of understanding God's calling in your life?
 - Have you overcome these challenges? If so, how?
 - What about broader cultural issues?
 - Issues specific to the RCA?
 - Issues specific to your organization?

9. And now that you've experienced this program, tell me about the role that discerning God's call plays in the curriculum here.
 - What kinds of formal conversations are you having regarding vocational discernment? With friends? With family? With faculty or staff? With your mentor or supervisor in your internship?

10. What are some of the tools or practices that you find this organization is using to help students engage in discerning God's calling in their life?
 - Of these practices, which do you find to be most helpful?
 - Are there specific books or articles that are helpful?
 - Are there specific spiritual practices that are helpful?
 - How do you utilize mentoring methods in vocational discernment?
 - How do you utilize experiential learning in vocational discernment?
 - Are there specific assessments like MBTI, Strengths Finder, spiritual gifts, psychological testing, etc, that are helpful?
 - Are there particular rhythms in the academic year that lend themselves to engaging in vocational discernment?
 - Which, if any, of the organization's current practices do you feel are not necessary, or even hindering the vocational discernment process?

11. In what ways does this organization incorporate the work of the Holy Spirit into your learning?

- How is this helping you to develop the ability to listen for and respond to the Spirit's leading?
12. What, specifically, do you wish the organization would do to help you grow in your ability to process your calling?
- What are some practices that you have heard other people doing that you think would be very helpful to you or your peers?
13. What role do local congregations presently play in the helping you to understand and discern where and how God is calling you to use your gifts?
- How would you like to see them engaged in this process?
 - What about the denomination? How are they involved and how would you like to see them involved?

What else do you think is important for me to know as I move forward in this research?

APPENDIX C

Census Questionnaire for Graduates

Vocational Discernment in Emerging Leaders Questionnaire

I am interested in gaining an understanding of your experiences and perspectives on the journey to understanding God's call in your life as a leader. For the purpose of this survey, I define calling as *using your gifts and abilities to participate in God's redemptive work in the world*. The data collected from this questionnaire will be used in conjunction with other data sources to help identify the best practices and methods for accompanying emerging leaders as they discern God's vocational call in their lives.

Please respond candidly to the following questions. The data from these surveys will be reported in group form only and individual responses will never be identified. If you have questions about the survey please contact Tanner Smith at 712-578-9191. Thank you!

For the following questions, please fill in one circle per item.

1) In the last year, how often have you done the following to help you process God's call in your life?

	Never	1-2 Times	3-4 Times	5-10 Times	More than 10 times
a. <u>Talked with a mentor or coach about calling</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. <u>Talked with a friend about calling</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. <u>Talked with a family member about calling</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. <u>Written in a journal about calling</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. <u>Read a book or article on vocation</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. <u>Prayed about calling</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. <u>Small group discussion about calling</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. <u>Peer group discussion about calling</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. <u>Served as an intern in an area of interest</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. <u>Taken a personality assessment</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. <u>Taken a spiritual gifts assessment</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. <u>Taken a leadership assessment</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. <u>Taken the Enneagram assessment</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. <u>Watched a movie or TV show about calling</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. <u>Listened to podcast or audio about calling</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
p. <u>Spent time in other spiritual disciplines</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
q. <u>Meditated on Scripture</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
r. <u>Other (write in below, if any):</u>					

2) During your time in seminary, how helpful were the following practices in helping you to understand God's calling in your life? (Please circle one response for each letter)

	Very Helpful	Helpful	Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Don't Know
a. Talked with a mentor or coach about calling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Talked with a friend about calling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Talked with a family member about calling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Written in a journal about calling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Read a book or article on vocation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Prayed about calling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Small group discussion about calling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Peer group discussion about calling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Served as an intern in an area of interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Taken a personality assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Taken a spiritual gifts assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Taken a leadership assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Taken the Enneagram assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. Watched a movie or TV show about calling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. Listened to podcast or audio about calling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
p. Spent time in other spiritual disciplines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
q. Meditated on Scripture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
r. Other (write in below, if any):					

3) What other practices, if any, have been helpful in your growing understanding of God's call in your life? (Please write your answer in the space below)

For the following questions, please circle the one most appropriate response below each statement that indicates your level of agreement.

4) I feel as though I understand God's call (using my gifts and abilities to participate in God's redemptive work in the world) in my life.

Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree

5) I feel anxiety regarding trying to understand God's call in my life.

Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree

6) I desire more intentional assistance from others to help me to discern God's call in my life.

Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree

7) I feel as though the assistance I have received from the seminary regarding understanding my call has been sufficient.

Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree

8) I have drawn on biblical examples that speak to the importance of listening for and understanding God's call in life.

Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree

If so, what passages, concepts or stories come to mind? (please write your thoughts in the space below):

9) What factors, if any, make it difficult to understand God's calling in your life?
(write your answers in the space below)

10) How long have you been a Christian? (*choose one*)

- a. Less than 1 year
- b. 1 to 2 years
- c. 3-4 years
- d. 5-9 years
- e. 10-14 years
- f. 15-19 years
- g. 20+ years
- h. I am not a Christian.
- i. Unsure.

11) Are you male or female? (*choose one*)

- a. Female
- b. Male

12) How old are you?

- a. 18-20
- b. 21-29
- c. 30-39
- d. 40-49
- e. 50-59
- f. 60 or older
- g. Unsure.

13) What is your current role in the church? (*choose one*)

- a. Not employed by a church and no formal leadership position.
- b. Employed by a church
- c. Deacon, Elder, or former Deacon or Elder

- d. Sunday school teacher, youth volunteer, committee member, etc.
 - e. Other. Please specify
-

14) In the year previous to starting seminary I was:

- a. A full-time or part-time college student.
- b. Employed in a church or Christian non-profit organization for 1-5 years.
- c. Employed in a church or Christian non-profit organization for 6-10 years.
- d. Employed in a church or Christian non-profit organization for 11+ years.
- c. Employed 1-5 years in the public service, secular non-profit, or other sector.
- d. Employed 6-10 years in the public service, secular non-profit, or other sector.
- e. Employed 11+ years in the public service, secular non-profit, or other sector.
- f. Unsure.

15) Which of the following best describes you:

- a. I was a full-time in residence student.
- b. I was a part-time in residence student.
- c. I was a full-time distance learning student.
- d. I was a part-time distance learning student.
- e. Unsure.

16) Which of the following describe your racial/ethnic background?

- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
- b. Pacific Islander
- c. Asian American
- d. Black/African American
- e. Hispanic/Latino
- f. White (non-Hispanic)
- g. Mixed race/ethnicity

17) Please share any other comments you would like to make on this topic:

Thank you for your time and help!

APPENDIX D

Implied Consent Letter for Census Participants

Led to Lead: Vocational Discernment and Emerging Pastoral Leadership in the Reformed Church in America

October 15, 2014

Dear _____,

You are invited to participate in a study of vocational discernment in emerging pastoral leaders as part of a Doctor of Ministry thesis project at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. I hope to learn about the most effective practices that help emerging church leaders discern their calling in life. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have engaged in training for church leadership.

If you decide to participate, please complete the enclosed survey. Your return of this survey is implied consent. The survey is designed to discover your experiences with specific practices of vocational discernment while at Geneva Seminary. It will take about 15 minutes. No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be used to help advance the body of knowledge on how to train emerging leaders for the church. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the survey.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationships with Luther Seminary, the Reformed Church in America, Geneva Seminary, or the New Wave Network. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please contact me at
3301 Deep Rose Dr.
Hudsonville, MI49426
Tannersmi@gmail.com

Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,
Tanner Smith

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent for Professors and Pastors

Led to Lead: Vocational Discernment and Emerging Pastoral Leadership in the Reformed Church in America

You are invited to be in a research study of vocational discernment in emerging pastoral leaders. You were selected as a possible participant because you are educating emerging church leaders and have special knowledge and experience regarding the practices and process of cultivating vocational discernment capacity. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by me, Tanner Smith as part of my Doctor of Ministry thesis project in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN.

My advisor is Dr. Craig Van Gelder.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to better understand the intentional practices that are most effective in helping emerging pastoral leaders to understand their calling in life.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things.

You will participate in an interview. The interview will be audio recorded. We would ask you to answer questions as honestly as you are able.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study presents no anticipated risks to the research subjects.

In the event that this research activity results in an injury, treatment will be available, including first aid, emergency treatment, counseling, and follow-up care as needed, however, payment for any such treatments must be provided by you or your third party payer.

There will be no direct benefits to the participants in the research.

The indirect benefit to you of participation in this research is a contribution to the body of knowledge, especially regarding the formation of emerging church leaders.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If I publish any type of report, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file on my personal computer; only my advisor, Dr. Craig Van Gelder, a transcriber, and I will have access to the data and, if applicable, any audio or video recording. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. While I will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

All audio or video recordings will be destroyed on May 31, 2019.
If anyone besides me will have access to the raw data, you will be notified.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Luther Seminary, Geneva Seminary, the Reformed Church in America, or the New Wave Network. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships..

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Tanner Smith. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me via email at *Tannersmi@gmail.com*.

You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Craig Van Gelder at *CVanGeld@luthersem.edu*.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____ Date _____

I consent to be audio recorded and video recorded:

Signature _____ Date _____

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

Created 08/29/14

APPENDIX F

Informed Consent for Student Participants

Led to Lead: Vocational Discernment and Emerging Pastoral Leadership in the Reformed Church in America

You are invited to be in a research study of vocational discernment in emerging pastoral leaders. You were selected as a possible participant because you have pursued education in church leadership. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by me, Tanner Smith as part of my Doctor of Ministry thesis project in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN.

My advisor is Dr. Craig Van Gelder.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to better understand the intentional practices that are most effective in helping emerging pastoral leaders to understand their calling in life.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things.

You will participate in an interview. The interview will be video and audio recorded. We would ask you to answer questions as honestly as you are able. We would ask you to hold as confidential and not disclose to others outside the group any information received in the course of a group interview.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study presents no anticipated risks to the research subjects.

In the event that this research activity results in an injury, treatment will be available, including first aid, emergency treatment, counseling, and follow-up care as needed, however, payment for any such treatments must be provided by you or your third party payer.

There will be no direct benefits to the participants in the research.

The indirect benefit to you of participation in this research is a contribution to the body of knowledge, especially regarding the formation of emerging church leaders.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If I publish any type of report, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file on my personal computer; only my advisor, Dr. Craig Van Gelder, a transcriber, and I will have access to the data and, if applicable, any audio or video recording. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. While I will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

All audio or video recordings will be destroyed on May 31, 2019.
If anyone besides me will have access to the raw data, you will be notified.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Luther Seminary, Geneva Seminary, the Reformed Church in America, or the New Wave Network. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Tanner Smith. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me via email at *Tannersmi@gmail.com*.

You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Craig Van Gelder at *CVanGeld@luthersem.edu*.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study. I agree to hold as confidential and will not disclose to others outside the group any information received in the course of a group interview.

Signature _____ Date _____

I consent to be audio recorded and video recorded:

Signature _____ Date _____

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

Created 08/29/14

APPENDIX G

Other Helpful Practices for Discerning Vocation

Participants were asked, “What other practices/experiences have been helpful in discerning God’s call?” Their written responses are presented below.

- Ministering in a local church and in state and national church work
- Beginning to pursue an opportunity in faith and prayer and "checking in" with those who know me best to see the effect it has on me as a person, as well as measuring the degree of openness of the call.
- In seminary some of the things that were most helpful were helping with worship, participating in discussions in classes, my internship at a church, listening to the stories of others call.
- Solitude and silence. Meditation. Intercultural immersion trips.
- Silence & solitude, the reality of forming my own schedule as a pastor, prayer, conversation with other pastors.
- Response of God's people and having the experience of being in business previously.
- The most recent position I held was very formative in helping train me toward living into Gods call in my life.
- Clinical Pastoral Education (C.P.E)
- Having home or small group prayer meetings
- Personal reflection on my past
- Volunteer opportunities where I have wanted to participate, or where someone else has seen my gifts and asked me to participate.
- Testimony has been key. Through testimony you as well as those you tell your story to can see first hand and can affirm God's call on your life.
- Freedom to question a particular calling
- I have had a few opportunities to teach others and equip them for service and ministry; teaching others has often been the best way for me to deepen my own understanding.
- Interviewing for a job. You have the opportunity to articulate what you have been experiencing/learning in the above areas and process your gifts/passions in the context of a "real job." I think it helps you tease out how you can lead vocationally, spiritually, and personally.

- I learned a great deal by serving and volunteering in different capacities. I would seek out opportunities to volunteer at places of interest so I could get a taste for that type of ministry and pray and discern from there.
- Having diverse experiences has helped me to understand which areas I don't feel called to, but we don't receive an explanation of what the results might be telling us, as to how we fit into the call, these practices may not hold clarity for us and not be so useful. Basically, if time to process with another person is not completed after the practice has been used, the person may remain unclear on their understanding of God's call on their life.
- Cross Cultural immersion on both sides of the Mexico/US border looking at society, politics and economics.
- Trying to understand calling not just as what brings me joy and fulfillment (that part is over-emphasized, in my estimation) but also what serves others (the neglected part).
- Reflecting with others about past experiences, evaluating them in terms of how life giving they were and how effective I found myself to be in those experiences.

APPENDIX H

Biblical Examples of Vocational Discernment

Participants were asked to report biblical passages that have helped them in their vocational discernment. Their written responses are presented below.

- Esther, Joshua, The scouts in the promised land
- Abraham's Call-Genesis 12, Paul's letters to Timothy
- Call of Abraham, Calling of the disciples, 1 Cor. 12
- The Psalms
- Exodus 3-4, Call of Moses. Ezekiel 1, Call of Ezekiel, John 15:16. Phil 1:6
- Eli & Samuel, 2 Timothy 3:16, Romans 10, Luke 24:25-27, Praying the Psalms
- Romans 12 and Hebrews 12
- Abraham, Call stories of the prophets
- John 15:16; "You did not choose me but I called you," "to bear fruit that will last."
- Moses' calling in Exodus 3
- Abraham's calling, Luke 4
- Story of Hagar.
- 1 Kings 19:19, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Mark 12:28-34, Luke 4:16-21
- Moses' call by God, Israel in the wilderness, The disciples back and forth faithfulness to Jesus, Titus
- Elijah and Jonah have often been leaders who have inspired me and comforted me in their leadership development. Romans 12:1-2 has always been a key verse of scripture for me in understanding my call, clarifying it, and sharing it with others.
- I often think of the call of Moses and his reluctance to take on the responsibility God was calling him to.
- Joseph, "What you meant for evil, God meant for good." Moses was afraid at times, but God equipped him for the task at hand. Esther was obedient to her calling and God blessed not only her, but her people in return.
- Deborah who was a judge with the gift of discernment and a mother to Israel...a spiritual director in a sense.

- I find that God's relentless call to Moses and Jonah speaks to me very powerfully. Isaiah is often a voice of hope in my times of darkness. Paul's words to Timothy are a source of counsel for me.
- 2 Corinthians 5, Philippians 2, Acts 1 & 2, John 1, Rev 1, Genesis 1-3
- The Daniel narrative, 1 Peter 2-Priesthood of all Believers and no strong sacred/secular distinction.
- Various stories in the gospels and Acts. Any time God called someone to do something in the Old Testament.
- Moses in Exodus 3

APPENDIX I

*IN VIVO CODES***New Wave Network Pastor *In Vivo* Codes**

1. Multiplying leaders
2. Take next steps in discernment
3. Gift/skill development
4. Reproducing at all levels
5. Cost/financial concerns
6. Contextual training
7. Developing self-knowledge
8. Ability to articulate calling
9. Individualized process
10. Invitation to participate
11. Affirmation of gifts and calling from leaders
12. Clear next steps/pathway
13. Ministerial formation
14. Seminary as overly academic
15. Instill organizational DNA
16. Coaching emerging leaders
17. Developing spiritual leadership
18. Reflection/guided reflection
19. Cultural DNA/transmission of cultural DNA
20. Communal discernment – peers and leaders
21. Constantly evolving program
22. Highly customizable and individualized learning
23. Reliance on God's providence
24. Creating opportunities to experiment
25. Observing level of follow-through
26. Observing fruitfulness
27. Taking risks on people and ideas
28. Learning through leading – graduated responsibility
29. Assessing character
30. Assessing competency
31. Assessing chemistry
32. Mentoring/apprenticing
33. Goal oriented accountability
34. Sense of reciprocal calling
35. Listening to God, others, and scripture
36. What gives you life?
37. Project-based learning
38. Initiative to start something
39. Longevity leads to trust and influence

New Wave Network Student *In Vivo* Codes

1. Practical experiences
2. Passion
3. Desire to make a difference
4. Purpose
5. External encouragement
6. Gifts/skills
7. Joy/enjoyment
8. Relationships
9. Vision/mission of organization
10. Practical training
11. Invitation to join
12. Making disciples
13. Becoming a leader
14. Planting churches
15. Becoming a pastor
16. leadership through relationships
17. Being mentored
18. Taking risks/trying new things
19. Collaboration
20. Accountability in the context of relationship
21. Appropriate Autonomy
22. Strategic planning
23. Being part of decision making process
24. Access to leaders lives
25. Mentors who actively lead
26. Self-knowledge
27. Transparency
28. Equipping/being equipped
29. Reflection
30. Feedback/critique
31. Pain/failure/loss
32. Family of origin
33. God speaks through others
34. Contextual leadership
35. Community of trust and grace
36. Vulnerability
37. Having/keeping goals
38. Learning while doing
39. Emphasis on “bearing fruit”

Geneva Seminary Faculty/Staff *In Vivo* Codes

1. Learning preference/style
2. Cost prohibitive
3. Influence of family dynamics and life circumstances
4. Secret call - internal sense of God's calling in life
5. Addressing narcissism
6. Biblical prototypes of Christian leadership
7. Christian call - possessing a wholehearted desire to be a disciple of Jesus
8. Recognition of God's mysterious leading
9. Ongoing evidence of God's leading in a person's life
10. Providential call – gifts and guidance of God
11. Ecclesiastical call – affirmation of faith community
12. Spiritual disciplines – prayer, wrestling with making Jesus Lord, warm person piety
13. Possession of academic horsepower for graduate school
14. Evidence of leadership capacity
15. Addressing shame-based and legalistic backgrounds
16. Clarity most often found through the faith community and direct ministry experience
17. Expand thinking about calling and the ways clarity emerges
18. Listening to others – asking good/deep questions
19. Emerging identity understanding and formation of identity
20. Ability to make theologically informed decisions
21. Influence of familial anxiety about student's future
22. Influence of anxiety about ability to perform academically (eg. biblical languages)
23. Developing confidence to speak and lead
24. What brings you joy?
25. How has God wired you?
26. The process of training helps calling to emerge
27. Experiential learning as key
28. Affirmation from the faith community as key
29. Trial period of increased leadership responsibility
30. Leadership involves influence
31. Congregations fail to embrace missional role of leadership formation in context
32. Personal relationships key to congregational willingness to invest in emerging leaders
33. Want students to make a difference, be change agents
34. Move congregations from missionally neutral to missionally active
35. Developing flexibility in calling
36. Discernment is a long-term spiritual discipline, not an event
37. Moving from me to we
38. Intentional times of reflection
39. Daily rhythm of communal worship
40. Seminary as means to a much larger end

Geneva Seminary Student *In Vivo* Codes

1. Financial concerns/cost
2. Relationships – friends
3. Practical teaching
4. Teaching church
5. Passion of teachers
6. Relationships – teachers
7. Purpose – to train leaders
8. Being mentored
9. Identifying gifts and skills
10. Family origins
11. External encouragement
12. Past experiences
13. Learning to learn
14. Formation/transformation
15. Self-knowledge
16. Becoming a pastor
17. Prayer/meditation
18. Self-knowledge assessments
19. Diverse perspectives
20. Academics
21. Compassion for self and others
22. Learning by doing
23. Processing/feedback
24. Being trusted
25. Enneagram
26. Working through conflict
27. Handling crisis
28. Learning to listen to others
29. Collaborative
30. Empowering others
31. Using power rightly
32. Skill and trait development
33. Experiencing joy and love
34. Knowing/being known
35. Informal settings are helpful

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