INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES AS LEARNING LABS FOR FAITH FORMATION: HOW ADULT CHILDREN OF HOLDEN VILLAGE UNDERSTAND EMERGING FAITH COMMITMENTS

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INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES AS LEARNING LABS FOR FAITH FORMATION:

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Chapter One: The Question

The Power of the Wilderness

In the Jewish and Christian scriptures, the wilderness is a particularly powerful setting, frequently the backdrop for revelatory moments of faith. From the creation of the first humans in the Garden of Eden, to Sarah and Abraham's call to a new land, to Hagar's expulsion to the wilderness, to Moses's encounter with the burning bush, to Elijah's listening for the movement of God in natural phenomena, to John the Baptist's ministry in the desert, to Jesus's forty days in the wilderness, there is a sense that transformative encounters with God happen most clearly in these wild spaces. In fact, while much of contemporary Christian practice happens amid daily life, there is a sense that "mountaintop experiences" happen only when we are removed from the everyday rhythms of routine; it is then, the tradition holds, that we can see and hear most God clearly.

The Christian monastic tradition builds on this assertion. As the church became increasingly institutionalized following the conversion of Constantine in the fourth century, women and men monastics began to move to the desert, living in solitude or communities. These early monastics believed that faith could be refined through seeking a life of prayer and solitude, often in untamed physical spaces. Clark Elliston notes, "While diverse in their backgrounds and even in their practices as monastics, they share a mutual concern for fleeing 'the world' to live in rural desert wilderness."[1] Seeking a deeper wisdom, non-monastic pilgrims would travel to their hermitages to listen to those committed to a life of prayer. Over time, monastic living came to represent the more faithful life. Many believed that one could hear God most clearly in removed spaces.

[1] Clark Elliston, "The Calling of the Wild: Christian Tradition and Wilderness," *Rural Theology* 14, no. 1 (May, 2016): 10.

With the advent of the Reformation in the sixteenth century and its emphasis on the home and family life, monasteries began to decline, and parts of Western Christianity began to lose connection to a contemplative-focused life of faith. With those losses, at least for the growing Lutheran tradition, also came the loss of pilgrimage and the experience of the wilderness as a transformative space. Perhaps as a corrective to this loss of untamed space, the summer camp movement began to gain steam several centuries later.[2] Recognizing that the church needed to engage youth in a new way, the first Lutheran summer camp opened in 1919.[3] At the heart of the summer camp movement was the understanding that when we step away from everyday life, away from cities and into wilderness, we are open for an encounter with God. In fact, a positive experience at a summer camp remains a high indicator of continued faith involvement for children and youth, which will be explored later in this paper.[4] The power of wilderness has persisted through the ages.

The power of wilderness also rings true across ages. Many adults point to experiences in the wilderness, namely national parks, as profoundly spiritual. Susan Power Bratton comments that spiritual experiences in the wilderness are often marked by "the perception of a presence infinitely larger than the self, the reception of beauty beyond visual and auditory aesthetics, the feeling that the presence is both within and without, and the understanding of unity in the cosmic

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[2] Nancy Ferguson and Jennifer Burch, "Religious Camps: Common Roots and New Sprouts," *Camping Magazine,* November/December 2011, https://www.acacamps.org/article/camping-magazine/religious-camps-common-roots-new-sprouts.

[3] Mark D. Burkhardt, "A History of Lutheran Church Camping: 1919-1949," (Master's thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, 1982), 21, https://www.lomnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/History-Lutheran-Camping-1919-1949-Burkhardt.pdf.

[4] Jacob Sorenson, "Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 2 Research Report," Sacred Playgrounds, April 2017, 21, https://sacredplaygrounds.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ECRP-Phase-2-Report.pdf.

fabric."[5] What is key to these experiences is that participants are not expecting them. As Bratton says, "The individual person does not precipitate the experience, and is taken by surprise by the encounter."[6] Whether a participant has explicitly religious language for the experience or not, the wilderness has potential for life-changing encounters with the divine. As Emma Pavey says, "Here is a sense in which the wilderness is the perfect place for the unpredictable, sometimes wild activity of the Holy Spirit."[7] In the words of Elliston, "The wilderness provides the context for pivotal encounters with spiritual beings."[8] From the Garden of Eden to a hike in the mountains, the wilderness continues to hold transformative potential for those open to it.

But what needs transformation? In the complexity of contemporary life, where both youth and adults are tied to phone, email, and hyper-connectivity, disconnected spaces offer the promise of respite and awe. Elliston notes, "Whereas the desert wilderness empowered monastics through silence and solitude, the world of computer screens, phones, televisions and social media introduces a threatening malaise." The malaise has a deeply spiritual component to it. "Recovering an affirmation of, and participation in, wilderness provides crucial release from the quixotic and oppressive hold of urban, technological existence… At stake is the fullness of genuine being-with: being with others, being with creation and being with Christ."[9] Wilderness spaces offer an alternative to the false connectedness that has come to define our lives, offering instead the potential for genuine connection with self, others, the natural world, and God.

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[5] Susan Power Bratton, "'The Mass on the World' on a Winter Afternoon: Contemporary Wilderness Religious Experience and Ultimacy," *Open Theology* 4 (2018): 284, https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2018-0021.

[6] Bratton, "The Mass on the World," 284.

[7] Emma L. Pavey, "Wilderness: A Bridging Metaphor for Pastoral Practice," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 16 1 (2016), 24.

[8] Elliston, "The Calling of the Wild: Christian Tradition and Wilderness," 7.

[9] Elliston, "The Calling of the Wild: Christian Tradition and Wilderness," 10.

Wilderness also holds potential for re-orienting family life. With the rise in technology and connectedness, alongside the shifts in child-rearing over the last few decades, the pressure on family life has increased. Many parents articulate a desire to slow down, to rest, and to create a village, citing a lack of help with childcare, a loss in intergenerational living, and schedules without a rhythm for slowing down.[10] Many adults do no take vacation time; most check email late at night and early in the morning. Few know how to disengage. We have lost the gift of wilderness and Sabbath, along with the rhythms of rest and listening that accompany them.

While experiences in actual wilderness are powerful, the wilderness also serves as a compelling metaphor for the Christian life. Pavey writes, "From a metaphorical perspective, the wilderness provides a pivotal image for our lives, and we may use the metaphorical idea of wilderness to describe the same feelings in our daily lives: we may speak, or hear others speak, of feeling lost in a wilderness as we journey through life in uncharted territory."[11] Whether physically in a wilderness space or not, many can relate to the metaphor of wilderness as a reflection of our lives; indeed, many find ourselves in an interior wilderness, searching for clarity and new ways in the untamed spaces of our lives.

The wilderness also serves as a powerful metaphor for the margins, reminding Christians that our faith calls us to be in solidarity with those on the margins and those who speak from wilderness spaces. Pavey writes, "There is a call for those who are willing to 'live in the desert', for those who are willing to be mystics and prophets and speak from the wilderness at the borders. Now more than ever it is vital to truly hear the stories of those who live on the margins,

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10 Jennifer Senior, *All Joy and No Fun: The Paradox of Modern Parenting* (New York: Ecco, 2014).

11 Pavey, "Wilderness: A Bridging Metaphor for Pastoral Practice," 16.

from whom we have much to learn."[12] The Christian life calls our attention to those who dwell on the margins.

Whether serving as a literal space or a metaphorical one, in Scripture and in contemporary Christian living, wilderness is generally temporary. Pavey writes, "Seeking a different way of living, at least temporarily, 'wilderness experiences in scripture always lead back into community.'"[13] Jesus returned from the desert, ready to begin his public ministry. The voice of God that called to Elijah in silence called him back into hope. The big fish returned Jonah to his call to the people of Nineveh. Hagar was called into mothering a new people. We return from the wilderness into our lives, changed by the encounter with the divine, our spirits made new. Letty Russell describes how the wilderness calls us more deeply into a concern for the work of justice, peace, and hospitality, or in Russell's words, "understanding of God's welcome in our lives."[14] As we encounter God in wilderness spaces, God calls us back into community and into our fundamental call to serve our neighbor and love the world.

However we encounter wilderness, the Christian hope is the same: that in this space, we encounter God anew, and changed or renewed by the encounter, we are more able to hear God's call and to bring about God's justice in the world. In writing about this theme, Pavey refers to the words of the 18th century Biblical scholar Matthew Henry, "In the place where we stand we are sustained, guided, accompanied and nourished by God: no place is so remote as to shut us out

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[12] Pavey, "Wilderness: A Bridging Metaphor for Pastoral Practice," 21.

[13] Pavey, "Wilderness: A Bridging Metaphor for Pastoral Practice," 18.

[14] Pavey, "Wilderness: A Bridging Metaphor for Pastoral Practice," 26, referring to Phyllis Trible and Letty. Russell, (eds.), *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 194.

from the visits of divine grace; nay, commonly the sweetest intercourse the saints have with Heaven, is when they are withdrawn furthest from the noise of this world."[15]

"Withdrawn furthest from the noise of this world," how then might wilderness function as formative for those with a particular experience of wilderness community? Might children of such a wilderness community grow into adults with a commitment to God's call to justice and peace? This research project will take up these and other questions, examining the place of wilderness in the faith formation of children by examining stories from Holden Village, a wilderness community in Washington state.

The Research Question, Goals, and Objectives

The focus of this project is to put the lived wilderness experiences of a specific group of temporary wilderness dwellers, who I will call "adult children of Holden Village," into conversation with a specific type of faith formation, that is, faith formation toward justice and peace, as rooted in the Lutheran (ELCA) tradition. How might a year or longer in an intentional Christian community in childhood impact emerging adult identity and faith commitments? How might these implications affect how the wider church understands the connections between childhood faith formation and adult faith commitments? More simply, who do Holden Village children grow up to become? When a family with minor children chooses to live in a faith-rooted, semi-intentional wilderness community setting for a significant amount of time, how are the faith lives of those children impacted as they age into adulthood? Do they gravitate toward peace and justice commitments? If they do, how do they understand their time in this faith community as formative (or not formative) to their commitments?

[15] Pavey, "Wilderness: A Bridging Metaphor for Pastoral Practice," 26, referring to Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible, Volume 5 (Matthew to John)*, 1706, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc5.html.

To these questions, an immediate caveat arises. The focus of this research will be on Holden Village, a remote year-round wilderness community in Washington state, rooted in the Lutheran faith tradition, which will be described in detail in the next chapter. Families who choose to live at Holden Village for a year are not the norm; something in their life, whether a specific faith commitment, a love of the outdoors, or a desire for a new experience has impacted their decision, leading to a significant disruption in their normal rhythms. Furthermore, the Village does not accept every family that applies. Holden Village is selective about who is invited to live in the winter (year-round) community, weighing a family's readiness and expectations, ability to contribute positively to communal life, and the physical and mental health of each participant against the Village's capacity to serve and the Village's desire to create and maintain a positive living environment.

With these caveats in mind, I am less interested in examining a causal relationship (if you live in the Village as a child, you become more *x*) and more interested in the self-understanding that develops in adulthood (because of my time in the Village, I am *x*). Each of the adults interviewed are years away, sometimes decades away, from their experience of life in the Village. Participants will need to rely on the memories, perceptions, and feelings they acquired as a child about their time in the Village. How they understand and relate to those memories and feelings has likely changed since that time. Furthermore, some may have never reflected on these questions or drawn these connections prior to the interviews. This project, then, is less about static data and more about a participant's dynamic relationship to their memories, one that will likely continue to evolve their entire life.

That said, how *do* adult children sift through their many childhood experiences and tie their current faith or spiritual commitments to time in the Village, if they do? Through this

project, I hope to be able to offer insight not simply to Holden Village and potential families, but also to the larger conversation around children and youth faith formation and how these are lived out in adulthood. My primary objectives include:

1. Identify 4-6 adults who spent at least one school year at Holden Village between the ages of 5 and 17.
2. Invite and listen to reflections on time in the Village as a child.
3. Invite connections between that time and how it has shaped their adult identity, particularly their faith/spiritual commitments.
4. Seek connections between themes that arise in multiple interviewees.

Method

I am primarily interested in using a narrative approach, listening to how participants make sense of their experience or are learning to make sense of their experience. As Tim Sensing points out, "The purpose of narrative research is to examine how participants impose order on their lived experiences, thus making sense of the events, thoughts, and actions in their life."[16] Through an invitation to reflect aloud in an interview on a series of questions, I am curious as to what meaning might emerge and be made through conversation.

The narrative approach will build on Christine Nueger's *Correlation Spiral*.[17] This method begins by listening closely to the lived human experiences of the subjects, with special attention paid to the context in which their experiences emerged or are emerging. This will be elicited through interviews, with contextual reading related to Holden Village forming the

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[16] Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 158.

[17] Christie Cozad Nueger, *Counseling Women: A Narrative, Pastoral Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

backdrop. Once shared, these stories and experiences will then be brought into conversation with research from various theological and social disciplines, which in my case includes faith formation in children and youth, particularly in the Lutheran Church (ELCA). As insights emerge from these conversations, I will draw them together to offer suggestions for how practical theologians, ministry practitioners, and others with interest in this area might understand both the capacity and potential of intentional communities as shapers of faith formation.

To achieve this, participants will be invited into participation through personal invitations, social media invitations, and connections through alumni. They will engage in a one-hour interview, conducted via Zoom, an online communication platform that allows video and audio interaction, as well as recording. Questions include:

- How do you understand your family's decision to live at Holden Village? What contributed to the decision?
- As you reflect on your time at Holden and your experience of faith formation there – through daily worship, teaching sessions, the Village's commitment to justice issues as an expression of faith – what experiences impacted you most significantly?
- How would you describe your adult faith and spiritual commitments now? Do you connect those to your time at Holden, and if so, how?
- What are the justice areas that you find yourself particularly drawn to, and do you trace a connection to those with your formation at Holden? For example, ecological justice, racial/gender/LGBTQIA+ justice, etc.

The theological, theoretical, contextual, and interpretive resources that I will use include two primary research areas: Holden Village itself and children's faith formation, particularly through the lens of development and related to outdoor ministry. I believe the interviews will introduce other research areas; however, I am primarily interested in the formative impact of

time in an intentional community around faith/spiritual identity and how these are present in ongoing adult commitments.

The research related to Holden Village is minimal. To my knowledge, there are three books that have been published,[18] as well as a handful of scholarly articles that investigate some aspect of the community's identity. Most of my own knowledge related to Holden Village's ethos and history comes from my own time there, which include five visits over the course of fifteen years, including: time as a part-time volunteer (3 weeks), time as a full-time volunteer (3 months), teaching faculty (one week), young adult trip leader (three days), and living as a resident of the winter community (9 months). During my time at Holden Village, I attended several sessions about the history of the Village, as well as gained firsthand knowledge as both a visitor and a resident. I will pull from both the published literature and personal experience in painting a portrait of Holden Village to help the reader understand its ethos, commitments, and nuances. Limits to this approach will be explored in the "Author Interest" section in chapter two.

The second research area is related to faith development, with a focus on children's faith development against a backdrop of changing family trends in family values and understandings of community. How do rituals and community shape a child, and continue to shape a child into adulthood? Do intensive experiences shape a child in a particular way? How does wilderness/outdoor setting impact faith formation? How might the literature on children's faith development help researchers understand how a year at Holden Villages shapes children in the way that it does? What makes a year at Holden as a child different than a year at Holden as an adult in terms of developmental milestones? How might this time in wilderness speak to

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[18] These include Werner Janssen's *Holden Village - A Memoir: New Life - Endless Stories* (Createspace Independent Pub, 2015), Lola Dean's *50 Years of Memories,* (Chelan, WA: Holden Village Press), and Charles Lutz's *Surprising Gift: The Story of Holden Village, Church Renewal Center* (Chelan, WA: Holden Village Press, 1987).

changing family structures and needs? I am interested in how these questions may help lead to better understanding of the uniqueness of the stories shared.

Project Design and Evaluation

There are five steps to this research project. The first step, explored in chapters two and three, is a review of the literature outlined above to better understand the history and experiences of Holden Village, as well as to become familiar with research in children's faith formation. I am particularly interested in research related to faith development and research related to outdoor/camping ministry, specifically how outdoor experiences at camp impact children's faith formation, as well as how faith formation is understood and practiced in the Lutheran Church (ELCA). Chapters three and four takes up the question: for what are we forming children and youth?

Steps two and three of the project are to identify, interview, and cross-examine the stories of participants. In chapter five, the nine participants are introduced. These nine met all of the criteria, namely that they each spent one or more school years at Holden Village as a minor (between ages 5 and 17), are now an adult (over the age of 18), and were willing to spend one hour in conversation about their time in the Village and their current faith and spiritual commitments, particularly related to justice and service. Knowing that the experience of living in the Village is different each year, the original design was to capture stories from a variety of decades at Holden; the participants do indeed cover a variety of ages and decades. Each participant was invited to reflect on the four questions outlined above, which were provided to them ahead of the interview and during the interview. These interviews were then transcribed and examined for similar themes and connections, which are described in chapter five.

The final steps of the project are to put the literature in conversation with the interviews, which occurs in chapter six, followed by drawing connections between the interviews and the research that might prove helpful to the field of practical theology. Several implications emerge, which are explored in chapter eight. These relate to faith formation, intentional faith communities, children's faith development, the impact of outdoor ministry, and family faith formation.

Chapter seven explores the limits of the project as well as the evaluation of the project. I will evaluate the project through four questions:

1) **Clarity of stories.** Did the stories elicited provide clear themes?
2) **Connection between stories.** Did the stories elicited provide crossover to the stories of other participants?
3) **Clarity of research area.** Did the stories point to a clarifying area of research?
4) **Clarity of contribution to practical theology.** Are there clear, decisive recommendations and insights that can be offered to the field of practical theology?

The Interview Process

An invitation to participate in an interview was put forth on social media in an alumni group for Holden Village. Nine participants agreed to participate in an interview. This was more than the original design, which was for four to six; however, because the nine had come forward at nearly the same time, I decided to interview all of them. All the participants met the criteria for "adult children of Holden Village," namely that, between the ages of 5 and 17, they lived at Holden Village for the duration of at least one school year and are now above the age of 18. Participants were invited into a one-hour Zoom interview that centered on four questions. The interviews were audio and video recorded.

Statement of Significance

I believe this project will be significant for several reasons. First, there appears to be limited research related to the experience of living in an intentional faith community at any point in one's life, but especially during childhood. Even so, I believe there is enormous formative potential in these experiences, particularly in communities that make a commitment to being a voice for justice in the world. This project will contribute to the conversation around communities and formation, perhaps even opening an aspect of it that does not appear to be well-researched.

Second, I believe this project will be significant because it will add to the conversation around children's faith formation by tracing that formation from childhood into adulthood through a specific lens. Among ministry colleagues, I often encounter a hunger to understand what is most effective in our work, especially as ministry is becoming more complex and family schedules feel stretched and unsustainable. In fact, when my own family committed to a year in the wilderness, several colleagues expressed interest in following our journey closely. The idea of living in an intentional community with their own children appealed to them. As parenting becomes even more siloed, trends supported by research,[19] I believe more will seek out a communal experience of life together, whether in a set-apart community or within their own neighborhoods or churches. How these experiences actually impact the faith development of children will be an important component to consider.

[19] For a good discussion of research related to changing trends in parenting, see Jennifer Senior, *All Joy and No Fun: The Paradox of Modern Parenting* (New York: Ecco, 2014).

Definition of Terms

For clarity with this project, the following terms are defined as follows:

Holden Village – also referred to as "the Village," "Holden," or "the community," these terms are used interchangeably to describe the community that lives at Holden Village, which will be described in the next chapter.

Winter Community - the winter community at Holden, as opposed to the summer community, is made up of around 80 individuals, both children and adults, who live, work, and/or go to school in the Village during the off-season. Because of the high amount of snowfall during this season, travel and hiking can be limited. Because of this, the winter community generally lives and works closely together.

Holden Staff – Holden Staff are those who work in the Village, either for a season (generally summer) or year-round, as volunteers or in a paid capacity. Staff must apply and be accepted. Minor children of staff who are school-age are generally enrolled in the school (winter community) or in the Narnia children's program (summer). Staff also includes teaching staff, who generally come for one to two weeks in the summer to lead sessions.

Holden Guests – Holden guests are paying guests who generally come to the Village for one or two weeks in the summer. Guests can also come for retreats in the fall, winter, or spring, though the majority of Holden's guests come in the summer.

Wilderness – while Merriam-Webster defines wilderness as "a tract or region uncultivated and uninhabited by human beings,"[20] for this project, "wilderness" will refer to inhabited spaces (like Holden Village) in the midst of uncultivated spaces. It is also used metaphorically in reference to a break in routine that has spiritual significance.

Lived Experience – "lived experience" refers to the way an individual understands and interprets their own story.

Temporary – "temporary" refers to a period of time between one school year (9 months) up to five years, which is the longest amount of time that an adult child lived at Holden Village.

Adult Children of Holden Village – "adult children of Holden Village" refers to adults who spent at least one school year at Holden Village as a child.

Faith Formation – "faith formation" refers to the process of learning and growing in understanding of one's faith, generally in partnership with the church, faith leaders, outdoor ministries, or other faith-based institutions.

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[20] Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, "Wilderness," accessed January 20, 2023, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wilderness.

Justice and Peace – "justice and peace" refers to commitments of individuals or the church, in this case the Lutheran Church (ELCA), toward certain areas of communal concern, including protection of the environment, equity for LGBTQIA+ persons, people of color, and women, non-violent solutions for conflict, the alleviation of poverty, and other commitments that recognize the full humanity of each person, as defined by the ELCA's social statements.[21]

Lutheran Tradition – while there are a variety of Lutheran traditions in the United States, this project primarily looks at the tradition around the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), which formed in 1988. Because Holden Village is not a formal ministry of the church, it stands in the "Lutheran tradition," but is not governed by a single church body.

Faith-Rooted – "faith-rooted," similar to Lutheran tradition, recognizes that Holden Village is rooted in a faith commitment, but does not align fully with any singular tradition.

Semi-Intentional – "semi-intentional" refers to the reality that Holden Village is not an intentional community with a single rule of life or a set group of committed members, but a community in flux, whose traditions and participants change often.

[21] See section in chapter four, "Why Justice and Peace?" for an outline of the ELCA's specific commitments to justice and peace.

Chapter Two: The Context

What is Holden Village?

Nestled deep in the Cascade Mountains, beyond cell phone signals and daily mail, lies an uncommon wilderness community called Holden Village. Inaccessible by car or road, Holden is one of the most remote continuously inhabited communities in the continental United States.[22] In fact, to get to Holden is a complex journey in and of itself; guests must take a three-hour boat ride up Lake Chelan, the largest and deepest natural lake in Washington state, to the dock of Lucerne, an unincorporated community on Forest Service land in Chelan County. At Lucerne, a Holden school bus meets guests for another 45-minute bus ride through switchbacks, gaining two thousand feet in elevation, that covers the final eleven miles into Holden Village.

Prospected by JR Holden in the late 1800s, Holden first opened as a copper mining town in 1937. For twenty years, the Howe Sound Mining Company operated Holden as the largest copper-mining producer in the state of Washington. Because Holden did not have access to other communities, a self-sustaining town grew up around the mine, including neighborhoods, stores, a dining hall, a rec center, and even a bowling alley, with 600-700 residents, mostly miners and their families, occupying the remote town. When the price of copper plunged following World War Two, the mining operation was abandoned, and in 1957, the town, also abandoned, was put up for sale.[23]

For three years, the town remained on the market. During that time, a young Lutheran man named Wes Prieb wrote to the mining company several times to ask them to lower the price

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[22] Anna Trammell, "A Week in Holden Village's Remote Archives," *Archival Outlook* (July/August 2019), 6.

[23] For a concise history of Holden, see Mattias Olshausen, "From Company Town to Company Town: Holden and Holden Village, Washington, 1937-1980 & Today," (Master's thesis, Portland State University, 2013), https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1716&context=open_access_etds.

in hopes that the town might become a Lutheran youth camp. In 1960, unable to find a buyer, the mining company gifted the town to the Lutheran Bible Institute for $1. Holden's second chapter, as a Lutheran renewal and retreat center, began.[24]

Since that time, Holden Village has operated as a somewhat off-the-grid, semi-intentional faith community. During the summer, Holden Village hosts up to 400 guests each week. Teaching faculty lead adult sessions on topics ranging from theology and worship to environmental ethics and racism. A resident pastor leads daily Vespers (an evening worship service), and guest musicians lead sessions in music and the arts. Children's programming includes hiking and crafts. Meals are taken communally in the dining hall. A hike house provides gear and maps for day and overnight hiking into the North Cascades. Residents and guests stay in Swiss-style chalets and large dormitories, the same buildings from the mining days. Core values of "hilarity" and "hospitality" are often on display, with the entire Village gathering to cheerfully greet each busload of guests, sometimes with pranks and shenanigans. "Lutheran Disneyland" is how some guests have described their stay; "Switzerland of the Americas" is the caption on an old newspaper describing the beauty surrounding Holden Village. Many guests comment that Holden Village is a place unlike any other.

Following the summer season, the "winter community" is formed. While called the winter community, this community lives in the Village from the fall through the spring, September through May. (Perhaps it is called the winter community because it often snows during *all* of these months, with an average of 270 inches of snow per year.) This winter community consists of about 80 individuals who serve as Holden Village staff or schoolchildren in the off-season. While this community mostly consists of young adults and retirees, each year

[24] Olshausen, "From Company Town to Company Town: Holden and Holden Village, Washington, 1937-1980 & Today," 2.

there are several families with minor children who commit to living in the Village for the winter season. Children from kindergarten through twelfth grade attend the Holden Village School, a "remote and necessary" public school[25] housed in the Village and staffed by the Chelan School District. Children of all ages often learn side by side, with Village staff members supplementing instruction with lessons applicable to Village life: carpentry, painting, avalanche survival, identification of wild animals, composting, crafts, and hiking.

In the 1960s, when Holden Village was re-imagining its identity, the Board envisioned a community that served a variety of ages. As Olshausen describes,

> An undated pamphlet preserved in the Holden Portal Museum, probably dating back to 1961-62, reads: "Holden Village, set in the grandeur and seclusion of the Northern Cascades in Washington is being developed by the Lutheran Church as an experimental village for youth work and as an international retreat center for young adults." Berg laid out a program that included spiritual training for young pastors and youth workers. However, the program also included "providing a community experience for families which will help them enter into potential Christian family living" and "providing facilities for other Christian groups who are willing to enter into the spirit and discipline of the village."[26]

While the phrase was certainly aspirational, "potential Christian family living" is part of the focus of this research project, namely how such family living in such a place impacts children as they age into adulthood. What becomes of families who commit to the intentional way of life that Holden represents? For children who spend formative years at Holden, how does this time in the wilderness impact who they become? How do the Village's commitments, particularly around faith and justice, impact who Holden's children grow up to be?

Family Life at Holden Village

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[25] As explored in the next section, "remote and necessary" status is given when a school is "located in a 'nontransient' community more than an hour away from the nearest regular school; as such, the state supports it financially." See Olshausen, "From Company Town to Company Town: Holden and Holden Village, Washington, 1937-1980 & Today," 112.

[26] Olshausen, "From Company Town to Company Town: Holden and Holden Village, Washington, 1937-1980 & Today," 75-76.

At the center of Holden Village family life is the Holden Village School, a single building which consists of two classrooms and a library. While the Holden Village school during the mining days might have had hundreds of children enrolled at a time, today the school generally has less than a dozen students, ranging in age from kindergarten to high school. Holden's "remote and necessary school" status is an unusual one, designated as such because it is "located in a 'nontransient' community more than an hour away from the nearest regular school; as such, the state supports it financially." Only the San Juan islands also has schools with this designation.[27]

This designation means that the Chelan school district provides two fully trained and certified teachers who live in the Village and take part in Village life every year. In some years, one teacher might work with older students, while the second teacher works with younger children. In other years, one teacher might bring a specialty in math and science and work across all grades; while the other might bring a specialty in reading and social studies and also work with all ages.[28]

Children generally begin their school day after communal breakfast, learning until noon, when they are released to their families for the community lunch in the dining hall. Following lunch, they continue their school day until the mid-afternoon, again released to their families as the school day ends. In the mining years, because children had to cross an avalanche chute on their way home, adults often accompanied them to watch for avalanches. In current years, as the "suburban neighborhoods" of Holden no longer exist, children have more freedom after school to

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[27] Olshausen, "From Company Town to Company Town: Holden and Holden Village, Washington, 1937-1980 & Today," 112.

[28] Olshausen, "From Company Town to Company Town: Holden and Holden Village, Washington, 1937-1980 & Today," 112.

occupy themselves by playing at the gym or in each other's homes, participating in weaving and pottery in the craft cave, playing games in the dining hall, or reading at the Village library.

While eating meals communally is encouraged but optional, all staff and schoolchildren are expected to attend evening Vespers every day.[29] Daily worship, usually lasting about half an hour, is generally a new experience for nearly all Village members. Children are encouraged to serve as ushers, lead singing, or participate in worship leadership in other ways. These half-hour experiences, with a full Eucharist on Sundays, are often the only time when the entire Village comes together, as children are exempted from staff meetings and staff always have the option of eating in their own homes.[30]

Holden Village Values and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

From its start as a Lutheran renewal and retreat center, Holden Village has wrestled with its identity as a faith community that is grounded in Lutheran theology but not an official ministry of the Lutheran church, and even sometimes at odds with Lutheran social teaching. For example, in an article written in 1990, a visiting couple describes their week-long experience at Holden during "Gay and Lesbian" week. The writers did not know this was the focus of the week before their arrival, and their writing reveals anger at Holden Village for supporting such a week, even as Holden had been a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) community since 1985, which is a faith community that publicly welcomes and affirms the lives and families of LGBTQIA+ members.[31] While the article today reads as out of touch with mainstream opinions, their opinion likely

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[29] This requirement changed in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic, but then the relaxed requirement continued in the following years so as not to further traumatize staff members who had been hurt by religious institutions in the past.

[30] Charles P. Lutz, *Surprising Gift: The Story of Holden Village, Church Renewal Center* (Chelan, WA: Holden Village Press, 1987), 124.

[31] Michael Danzig and Roberta Danzig, "Repressive Tolerance at Holden Village" *Lutheran Forum* 25, no. 1 (February 1991): 16-19.

represented the majority of Lutherans at the time. Holden's commitment to equality was evident nearly two decades before the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) would vote to affirm the lives, marriages, and ministries of LGBTQIA+ persons in 2009, which was highly controversial at the time. In fact, in 2009 when the ELCA's vote occurred, Holden's pastor, Pastor Erik Haaland, was a married gay man who lived in the Village with his husband. Holden had called him as pastor even before the denomination officially sanctioned it.

Holden has also been at the forefront of women's ordination, particularly in the early days of the movement. Because Holden was affiliated with a variety of Lutheran expressions, not all of whom ordained women, this caused some controversy. However, in 1976, Pastor Nancy Winder was called to serve as the Village pastor, not only the first full-time pastor in Holden's history, but the first pastor who was female. With women's ordination having been approved just a few years before, Pastor Winder had been unable to find a church willing to call a pastor who was female. Holden Village called her, and she served the Village from 1976-1978.[32]

Environmental ethics has also been the subject of much conversation at Holden. As a community that lives near to the land, affiliated with a church that has been engaged in environmental ethics since the early 1990s, this focus seems to come to Holden more organically. In 1993, the ELCA passed a social statement, "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice," which outlines the church's commitment to care for creation. The statement begins with the bold statement, "We see the despoiling of the environment as nothing less than the

[32] Lutz, *Surprising Gift: The Story of Holden Village, Church Renewal Center,* 126-127.

degradation of God's gracious gift of creation."[33] It ends with a commitment to advocacy, education, awareness, and programming.

Holden Village shares these commitments, as can be seen in the Village's commitment to "Garbology," its liturgical life, and its movement toward a zero-impact village. Garbology is the Village's in-house department that actively composts food waste and sorts garbage, with all staff committing to sorting Village-wide trash on a once-per-month shift. The shift ensures that all Village trash that can be composted or recycled is pulled for these purposes, limiting the Village's need for landfill space considerably. Liturgically, the Village explores connections between worship and creation care, even serving as a liturgical resource to the larger church. For example, "Land and Seasons" is a liturgy written at Holden that connects faith to the natural seasons. Finally, in its most recent strategic plan, the Village has set a lofty goal becoming carbon neutral by 2025, and the larger valley in which it sits carbon neutral by 2030.

In its most recent strategic plan, becoming a more diverse community and "unlearning patterns of racism" are also articulated as priorities. The Village has long recognized a significant issue with diversity, with most staff and guests coming from white cultural backgrounds. While consistent with the ELCA's feeder migration patterns and larger demographics (the ELCA is the whitest denomination in the country), the Village is working to actively encourage diverse leadership and a more diverse community. As stated on Holden's website:

> For the sake of **Justice**, Holden is called to:
> - Foster **Diversity** through deliberate invitation and welcome;
> - Deploy an ethic of **Equity** to confront and dismantle systemic oppression; and

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[33] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "A Social Statement on Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" 1993, 2, accessed December 13, 2022, https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/EnvironmentSS.pdf?_ga=2.222513560.2089490343.1670259218-1496052000.1665509970.

- Practice **Inclusion** by listening to, learning from, and being transformed by marginalized voices,

In order to become, together, the community for which God longs.[34]

These commitments are woven into the fabric of Holden and can be reflected in both volunteer and guest experiences. A professor at Texas Lutheran, Carl Hughes, summarized the experience well after taking a group of college students to Holden Village during a J-Term. The article quotes him as saying,

> Village likes to talk about itself as a community of renewal rather than merely a retreat center. The point is that going there is not about secluding oneself from the world but about being renewed to engage it in more faithful and creative ways. The nightly vespers services model forms of liturgy and spiritual practice that visitors can carry back 'down the mountain.' The emphasis on art and creativity helps visitors connect with parts of themselves that they too often neglect. Minimizing waste, resisting consumerism, and eating lower on the food chain are all Holden values that reshape how visitors live when they return.[35]

Amid these commitments, there is also a playfulness to life at Holden Village, reflecting a core value of "hilarity." In 2009, the pastor showed up for her installation in a cow costume, borrowed from Holden's rather large costume shop. On the first day of school each year, the entire Village turns out in costume, attempting to stop the school bus through silly antics as the bus travels the absurdly short distance from homes to the school. On the first day of school, the dining hall might transform into a 1980s school cafeteria, complete with tater tots and macaroni, served by staff dressed up as lunch ladies. Prom and high school graduation, usually celebrating one student, can also be large community events, with the whole Village attending. One year, the single graduating student made both the valedictorian's speech and the salutatorian's speech at

[34] Holden Village, "About Holden Village," accessed June 15, 2023, https://www.holdenvillage.org/about.

[35] Texas Lutheran University, "Students Renew & Revitalize Faith During Trip to Holden Village," June 11, 2019, accessed December 13, 2025, https://www.tlu.edu/news/students-renew-revitalize-faith-during-holden-village-trip.

graduation, a playful event marking the uniqueness of being in a class of one. Holden Village is often a playful place to be.[36]

The Harder Side of Village Life

But as many have observed, Holden Village is no utopia. Werner Janssen, detailing the history of the Village in his book *Holden Village: A Memoir*, points out several troubling incidents related to previous directors of Holden Village. Those incidents included sexual harassment and unwanted touching toward female members of staff and guests, which were largely unacknowledged for four decades. In 2013, the Holden Board publicly apologized for the behavior of previous directors and the trauma caused and compounded by the Village's silence following a significant number of allegations.[37]

Discipline of staff and guests is left to the discretion of the directors, which can also cause community issues. In 2011, for example, several underage staff members were asked to leave the Village for drinking, and there have been some dismissals related to marijuana use, which remains illegal on federal land. Staff dismissals can disrupt the community's life, especially when fellow staff feel that the dismissals were unfair.[38]

Several have also reported that marriages can more easily disintegrate at Holden Village, particularly marriages that were troubled prior to arriving in the Village. With close living can come heightened conflict within family units, as well as new romantic attachments outside of family units. Without regular access to therapy or mental health support, as well as longtime

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[36] Olshausen, "From Company Town to Company Town: Holden and Holden Village, Washington, 1937-1980 & Today," 112.

[37] Warner Janssen, *Holden Village - A Memoir: New Life - Endless Stories* (Createspace Independent Pub, 2015), 290.

[38] Olshausen, "From Company Town to Company Town: Holden and Holden Village, Washington, 1937-1980 & Today," 121.

friends and family, couples and individuals can feel unsupported. As a result, several have reported that following their time at the Village, couples have experienced divorce.

In other words, while experiences tend to be positive and formative at Holden Village, this is not universally the case. As Olshausen writes, "However, it is misleading to think of or characterize Holden Village as a utopia. It is not a place apart from the world's problems, but merely a place where their effects are felt less sharply. And it has problems of its own, including the environmental challenges described in earlier chapters. Moreover, utopian perceptions of Holden may lead to forgetfulness of the fact that living there can be tenuous, and is made possible mainly by the guests and donations."[39] Holden Village can be a complex place to live.

Holden Village Children

When a family commits to living at Holden Village for a school year, those are the realities that they face. For their time in the Village, the education of their children will be will likely be unlike any other education the child has experienced. They will interact with a close-knit village in a new way, through worship, meals, play, and communal life. Children will likely form friendships outside of their immediate age group, and they will likely become buddies with young adults and retirees. These children will be exposed to the values that guide the Village: equality, inclusion, environmental ethics, and a commitment to diversity, plus a grounding in a progressive Lutheran faith tradition. At the same time, they will also likely experience the harder side of Village life: isolation, family conflict, Village conflict, and the loss of agency that comes with being invited guests who can also be asked to leave at any time.

Considering these realities, the primary research question I want to explore is how this year in the Village forms the adult identity of Holden Village children. How might a year or

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[39] Olshausen, "From Company Town to Company Town: Holden and Holden Village, Washington, 1937-1980 & Today," 121

longer in an intentional Christian community in childhood impact emerging adult identity and faith commitments? How might these implications affect how the wider church understands the connections between childhood faith formation and adult faith commitments? More simply, who do Holden Village children grow up to become?

Author Interest

My interest in this question is both personal and professional. In 2019, my husband and I moved to Holden Village with our own small children, who were age 4 and almost 6 at the time. My husband and I had met as Village staff a decade before, and we had long dreamed of introducing our own children to the Village, which had been positively formative for both of us. During our year in residence, our older child was enrolled in the Holden Village school as a kindergartener, with eight other children between first and seventh grade, while our younger child was the only non-working and non-schooling resident of the village. During this year, we came to know the other four families well. While we had had friends with small children before moving to Holden, this was the year that gave us our first taste of what it meant by the phrase "it takes a Village." Our children were often in and out of the homes of these other families, forming friendships across ages and backgrounds. We marveled also at the friendships formed between the children, young adults, and retirees, many of whom took joy in the opportunity to know a child well and mentor them.

While the year was joyful and positive in countless ways, it was difficult as well. There were conflicts in the community around worship attendance, work expectations, and Covid regulations. Difficult personalities could stir trouble easily, and conflict was not always well-managed. Several young adult staff were asked to leave the Village without an explanation to the wider Village. While staff and residents were background checked, guests were not, and

troubling behavior toward children, who had a wide range of freedom in the Village, did not have clear protocol. The isolated nature of the Village meant mental health treatment options were limited. A fellow couple reported that they could feel the absence of what had been regular appointments with a couples' counselor to support their marriage. Family and relational conflicts were sometimes seen by the full Village. Without a cellular signal, staff struggled to be in good touch with family and support outside of the Village. Many staff reported being lonely, even when surrounded by people. Work assignments did not always match the gifts and interests of staff. We were not exempt from these challenges. While we look back on our time at Holden with considerable fondness and gratitude, Holden Village is, indeed, no utopia.

But it has significant formative potential, and it is the faith side of this formative potential that I am interested in professionally. As a pastor in the ELCA, I am curious about the stories of Holden Village adult children and the insight they might offer related to faith formation and justice commitments. Most families in the church communities I serve will never move to an intentional community; and yet they long for robust community and good formation for their children, and they want to work toward a more just world. Might Holden Village have something to teach us? If so, how might the church serve as a more intentional community? How might our camping and outdoor ministries serve as more intentional communities?

As a semi-intentional, remote, faith-rooted community, but neither a camp ministry nor a ministry of the church, Holden Village has almost no peers, nor a single research area that corresponds to its identity. To begin to understand the questions above, I will briefly review the literature around four related research areas whose overlap each inform Holden's identity and the focus of this research: the area of faith development across the ages, the formation of children in

the ELCA, the impact of outdoor ministries, and an emerging field of research known Christian Leisure Studies.

Before turning to the literature, I briefly want to address author bias. My personal connection to the Village means that I come with a particular bias, understanding it as an insider in some ways (though not all; for example, I have only been to Holden as an adult) and as one who has generally positive feelings about my time in the Village (though not universally positive, as noted above). This relationship means that I come to this project with both limits and advantages. One such limit *and* advantage is that I understand the setting and experiences in a way that most readers will not. In several of the interviews, in fact, participants broke off their response to a question by commenting that I already knew what they meant because I had also lived there (so they did not need to describe or explain more fully). To these comments, I often nodded, as I usually did indeed know what they meant, even while recognizing that I was interpreting their response through the lens of my own experience. Because I am personally connected to the project, participants needed to do less interpreting for my sake and likely felt that their stories were more quickly understood, an advantage that came from a sense of shared understanding. However, because I am personally connected to the project, my interpreting of their experience is also through a lens of shared understanding, which is a bias that an unconnected researcher might not bring.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

To contextualize and interpret the interviews, I will first describe several frameworks related to the development of faith, which will lay the groundwork for the construction of the unique framework that will be used in this project. This will be accomplished in two ways. The first task will be to review the literature on faith formation, with a special focus on formation in the first three decades of one's life. How do developmental scholars understand the unique ways that faith is formed at various ages as these ages correspond with human development? Following the review of an age-specific faith maturation process, I will review several scholars whose frameworks are less concerned with age and more concerned with *theological maturation*, which can happen at any age. I will then put these two approaches in conversation: How is one's first faith, generally the faith of childhood, different than a faith undergoing deconstruction and reconstruction? How does a deconstructed faith become mature faith? How do these correspond to age and life stage? How does Holden Village implicitly and intuitively understand and relate to these levels? We will return to this final question about Holden Village in chapter six, as we integrate the interviews with the literature.

Following this review, the second task of this chapter will be to construct and define what I mean by a mature/maturing faith, answering the question, *toward what are we ultimately shaping persons in the life of faith*? What does a mature/maturing faith look like, and what are the beliefs, relationships, and commitments that accompany this? While the understanding of mature faith certainly varies among scholars and practitioners, I will define how I understand the end goal of faith, building on several theological research areas. It is toward this end that this research project is concerned, particularly as we examine the faith formation that happens at Holden Village.

Theories of Faith Development

Many faith development scholars assert that faith development often corresponds with age and stage of life. This is seen most clearly in the work of James Fowler, through his foundational book *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning.* In this work, Fowler describes seven stages of faith. The first stage (stage 0, ages 0-2) is concerned with the infant's ability to build trust and mutuality, as well as develop "pre-images of God," which are formed before language but speak to how the infant receives love and care.[40] An infant then moves into early childhood and the second stage (stage 1; ages 2-6), which is concerned with the need for concrete stories and symbols. Fowler notes that at this stage, a child can be "powerfully and permanently influenced by examples, moods, actions, and stories of the visible faith of primally related adults."[41] Fowler notes that it is in this stage that imagination is birthed and that world understanding comes through stories, including stories of faith.

At Holden Village, most children arrive in the third stage of faith development (stage 2; ages 7-12). Fowler describes this stage as concerned with a mythic-literal faith, or how the stories of faith have the capacity to build meaning. Children absorb these faith stories as their own and begin to connect them to their place in community. This is also a period when children learn to understand perspective outside of their own, which begins to impact their understanding of God, self, and others.[42] The fourth stage (ages 13+), which is when many youth leave Holden, begins to emerge in adolescence. It is in this stage that a youth recognizes that they are dependent on others for faith but begin to sense their own capacity for faith building. Faith must

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[40] James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1995), 121.

[41] Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning,* 133.

[42] Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning,* 149.

become coherent and create a framework in which youth can hold their whole lives. Fowler notes that while this stage begins in adolescence, often for many adults it becomes "a permanent place of equilibrium."[43] Many do not age out of this stage.

Even so, Fowler outlines a number of additional stages, generally corresponding with the decades of life. The fifth stage (stage 4; individuative-reflective faith) is often begun in one's 20s, 30s, or 40s as adults recognize and take responsibility for their own faith life. Fowler notes that the danger of this stage is for adults to overemphasize their own ability to translate faith, sometimes leading to a break with church or previously held beliefs.[44] The sixth stage (stage 5), conjunctive faith, begins when one begins to re-examine the faith they had dismissed, finding a new openness to faith through paradox and mystery. At this stage, which does not correspond to age, adherents can appreciate the symbols, myths, and rituals that they had first come to know in an earlier stage.[45] The final stage (stage six), is Fowler's "universalizing faith stage." In this description, he caveats that his work around these stages is both descriptive and normative; stage six, however, feels more aspirational than normative. Fowler notes that persons in this final stage are the rare people who have become "incarnators and actualizers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community."[46] Fowler points to persons such as Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Jr, Mother Theresa, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer as representatives of this stage of faith.[47]

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[43] Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning,* 172.

[44] Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning,* 182.

[45] Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning,* 198.

[46] Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning,* 200.

[47] There are several important and significant critiques to Fowler, including Fowler's own later work. For a good summary of some of these critiques, which includes the concern that his highest stage is only attainable by martyrs, the broadness of Fowler's definition of faith, and the lack of nuance between religious traditions, see Felicity Kelkhorst *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul,* ed. Felicity B. Kelcourse (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2004), 47.

Building on Fowler, pastoral theologian Donald Capps asserts that Fowler's stages can be broken down into various decades of life, describing a pastoral approach to understanding how age might inform faith formation and struggles that may be universal to the age. Capps describes the first decade of life as one in which a child is attempting to determine if the world and those in it are trustworthy or not. Should a child determine that the world and the people who relate most closely to the child are more trustworthy than not, a healthy trust emerges and a child becomes hopeful. As Capps notes, "to say that the hopeful self is formed in the first decade of life is to claim that these are the years that we also develop the capacity for faith."[48] Trustworthy adults are necessary for a child to emerge from this first decade with a capacity for trust – both in others and in themselves.

Capps describes the second decade of life (10-19) as one that is fundamentally concerned with autonomy alongside shame and doubt. This decade might be marked by a battle of the wills, with the parent and youth both asserting their wills as the youth reaches for more autonomy. Shame and doubt may arise at the end of the battle, should a youth's will have initially won but the greater outcome (for example, consequences for behavior or strained relationships) been problematic. Or a youth might feel shame and doubt regarding the will of their parents, considering them out of touch. Capps notes that fundamentally at this stage, a youth *seeks to be willing*, and such a willingness of spirit often emerges when one can recognize a youth's autonomy and seek to collaborate with them or treat them with kindness.[49]

Capps notes that the third decade of life (20-29) is fundamentally about purpose. As a young adult discovers and attempts to live into a sense of purpose, they may grapple with a fear

[48] Donald Capps, *The Decades of Life: A Guide to Human Development* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 20.

[49] Capps, *The Decades of Life: A Guide to Human Development,* 21-41.

of failure, a fear of disappointment, or a fear of punishment. However, Capps notes that purposefulness requires a type of inner unity, or a confidence in one's self to discern, determine, and live into an emerging understanding of purpose.

Capps then notes the differences between the decades: the fourth decade (30-39) is concerned with competence, the fifth decade (40-49) with faithfulness, the sixth decade (50-59) with love, the seventh decade (60-69) with care, the eighth decade (70-79) with wisdom, the ninth decade (80-89) with grace, and the tenth decade (90-99) with endurance. Of note to this project, Capps comments that much literature considers one's fifth decade (40-49) as the best age for conversion (along with one's second decade). As one wrestles with a sense of integrity in their forties, similar to the adolescent wrestling with identity, Capps notes that a 40-something year old is at a key moment for some type of spiritual rebirth, like Nicodemus in the Gospels. Middle-aged persons have reached a turning point in faith, no longer young, not yet old.[50]

While many developmental faith scholars make their arguments based on the observations of and research *about* children, a growing number of scholars are asking how this changes when we recognize both the moral agency and the spiritual capacity of the child *from the child's perspective*. Bonnie Miller-McLemore, in her book *Let the Children Come,* seeks to reimagine childhood from a Christian perspective, imagining what may happen when children are given space and permission to explore faith on their terms, not through the memories of what formed the adults in their lives. Seeking to balance children's autonomy with adult intervention, she comments "finding this middle ground of good enough parenting is no simple task efforts to give children voice certainly make family life much more complicated, and there are limits to the

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[50] Capps, *The Decades of Life: A Guide to Human Development,* 98.

amount of tolerable and appropriate determination."[51] In other words, when children are allowed to explore their own agency, life may become more difficult for parents. However, she makes the argument that this agency is central to faith and moral development; children are not simply responsive to circumstance or unformed beings waiting to be formed, but persons with proactive agency. Miller-McLemore makes the argument that more scholarship and practice is needed around seeing the home as the location of divine encounter. This supports the assertion of developmental scholars in claiming that children develop an understanding of God based on the people closest to them and that children often recognize God in the everyday-ness of their life.

Childist Biblical scholar Julie Faith Parker argues that a child-centered approach is similarly important in church, encouraging faith communities to actively look for and publicly highlight stories about children. By centering the stories of children in the Bible, children learn that God's Word is for them. She writes, "We need to empower children in our congregations to realize that the Word of God is their Word too. Christian educators lament that congregations tend to think of children as the "future of the church"—but children who come to church are the church now. Whether or not they will still be part of the church as adults is a very open question. If children discover that the Bible includes children then story of God's people includes them."[52] Such an approach challenges the notion that only adult faith is relevant in the present story of a church. Parker argues that both children's stories in scripture and children's contemporary faith stories are highly relevant to a community's faith, not simply something to be developed *into relevance* in the future.

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[51] Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003), 145.

[52] Julie Faith Parker, "Embrace the Bible's Children: A Call to Seminarians, Pastors, and Scholars," *Trinity Seminary Review* (Fall 2016, Vol. 35), 12.

Children's spirituality scholar Rebecca Nye builds on this notion by challenging the default thinking that children are often to be understood to be "empty spiritual vessels." Her research builds on a study in which "60% of 11-year-olds and 80% of seven-year-olds mention times of being aware of God's presence. By comparison only about 30% of adults are aware of similar experiences."[53] She argues that the task for the church is to help children learn how to sustain into adulthood their natural inclination to recognize God already at work in their daily life. She notes that "children usually have their own natural sense of God, with or without a name for that."[54] The Godly Play approach, a Montessori method of faith development, builds on children's natural capacity for wonder in the life of faith and in the experience of God.

Several faith formation scholars claim that as children move into adolescence, their faith becomes more relational. In exploring early adolescence and faith, Ronald Nydham notes that teens "truly believe in God when they experience God in ways that give their life significance. They are less interested in the offer of atonement; they are more interested in the offer of relationship, including divine relationship."[55] Nydham's observation suggests that the relational component to faith – with God and others – helps a teenager experience God and grow in faith. This offers an important nuance to developmental scholars, who tend to focus less on peers and mentors and more on emotional and intellectual development.

Pastoral theologian Alice Graham expands this understanding by noting that late adolescence is generally the first time that one can begin to imagine God as spirit. "So a God that was experienced anthropomorphically as an old gray-haired man with a beard can now be

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[53] Rebecca Nye, *Children's Spirituality: What It Is and Why It Matters* (London: Church House Publishing, 2009). 9.

[54] Nye, *Children's Spirituality: What It Is and Why It Matters*, 34.

[55] Ronald Nydham, "Early Adolescence: Venturing Toward a Different World" in *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul,* ed. Felicity B. Kelcourse (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2004), 221.

understood as a being that cannot be seen and is everywhere. For adolescents, the qualities ascribed to God are a derivative of how they understand the self in relation to the significant others in their life. The religious beliefs of a relative or friend with whom they felt really loved and understood may be the source of their faith."[56]This again offers an important critique to scholars who assert that faith is primarily formed intellectually. Graham suggests that particularly in adolescence, the primary way that faith is formed is relationally.

Marriage and family therapists Bonnie Cushing and Monica McGoldrick note that for older youth and young adults, mentoring relationships are critical in the life of faith. They write, "a personal relationship to a mentor, teacher, pastor, rabbi, therapist, spiritual director, employer, and the like – can be pivotal for the young adult at this phase. The mentor relationship can represent developmental achievement that holds spiritual potential in the transference of wisdom in the offering of respect between generations."[57] This suggests yet again that faith is formed and transmitted through important relationships, particular in nature, not simply through universal ages and stages.

While relationships are central in these formative years, it is not simply individual relationship that form faith, nor is it only ages and stages; faith is also formed by the work of the entire church. Religious education scholar Maria Harris expands our understanding of "curriculum" by noting that all that a church does is indeed curriculum; "kerygma, proclaiming the word of Jesus' resurrection; didache, the activity of teaching; leiturgia, coming together to pray and to re-present Jesus in the breaking of the bread; koinonia, or community; and diakonia,

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[56] Alice M. Graham, "Identity in Middle and Late Adolescence" in *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul,* ed. Felicity B. Kelcourse (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2004), 231.

[57] Bonnie Cushing and Monica McGoldrick, "The Differentiating of Self and Faith in Young Adulthood: Launching, Coupling, and Becoming Parents," in *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul,* ed. Felicity B. Kelcourse (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2004), 240.

caring for those in need."[58] As a church engages in these tasks, which Harris traces back to the earliest Christian communities, these tasks form the church and its people. One does not learn faith simply in a classroom and only as a child, but in all ways that the church engages the ongoing work of the church. She notes that this model shifts us away from the church "instructing individuals to know the lore and obey the law of the church" toward one where "the whole community is educating and empowering the whole community to engage in ministry in the midst of the world."[59]

In Harris's model, which is a proactive model, a church achieves this by first recognizing that they, the church, are in fact the curriculum. Then they look closely at themselves, or in Harris's words, "Practically, this will mean that the responsible committee looks at the present experience of the people of this church in this world and hold it against the vision statement emerging out of contemplation."[60] As a church does this, they decide what to hold on to and what to let go of. Then comes the critical work of fashioning, which involves imagination toward the church's vision, followed by releasing the new model into the community. When a church understands that who they already are shapes faith, and then becomes intentional about the type of faith they wish to shape, a church can align its programs and functions with the end that they hope to achieve, which for Harris, returns to proclamation, teaching, prayer, community, and service.

To summarize, grounded in theories of human development, Fowler offers a foundational model for understanding how faith deepens and grows according to age and stage in life. While

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[58] Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1986), 16.

[59] Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church,* 46.

[60] Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church,* 175.

Fowler's final stages can happen at any age, Capps furthers this framework by narrowing these later ages and developing them through the end of life according to decade. Childist scholars nuance these stages by describing what positively forms faith in these years, namely a recognition of agency and important relationships. Harris offers a proactive model of faith formation, one that understands such formation as the work of the entire church, not simply a handful of relationships. These faith development models are primarily concerned with emotional maturation and relationship building. I will now turn to the work of Ted Peters, a Lutheran theologian who, building on the work of Paul Riceour, offers a theological model of faith development.

A Theological Model of Faith Maturation

Ted Peters introduces a three-stage model of faith development. Peters is not a scholar of human development, which means that his model is less grounded in studies of human development and experience than Fowler's and Capps's models. Peters is more concerned with a theological model, one that takes into account the broad movements of Christian history, including how a contemporary person might situate a growing faith that considers Christianity's premodern heritage, modern criticism, and our postmodern reality. Building on Paul Ricoeur, the frame he offers corresponds well with the work of several scholars in the field of faith development, outlined above. [61] While many of these scholars offer a helpful *developmental* frame, I appreciate Peters' model in particular because he allows all three stages to be present in a person at the same time. One is not limited to a stage because of one's age or stage in life, but Peters allows that many things can be true in a person at the same time. This sort of nuanced understanding will be helpful to interpreting the Holden interviews, which reveal this nuance within persons. Below I will briefly outline Peters' stages.

[61] Ted Peters, *God – The World's Future* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

Peters describes the first stage of faith as *first naivete*. He describes this faith as the stage "in which we exist in simple harmony with the symbols of our world and meaning."[62] Peters describes this faith as the faith of premodern Christians, who could readily believe in symbols as they were presented. Peters describes the way of being in this stage, with the participant easily believing in "the watchful presence of guardian angels, providential interpretations of tragedy, and thinking that deceased relatives are now happy in heaven and getting ready for final judgment."[63] For contemporary Christians, this is a stage that children easily inhabit, particularly those raised in a Christian homes.

In first naivete, the tension is primarily moral, not intellectual. Adherents primarily feel called to align with God in the ongoing battle between right and wrong. As Peters notes, "the fundamental issue becomes personal commitment."[64] Will they make the right decision and be on the right side of good and bad? Peters comments that there is nothing inherently wrong with this stage, and that some will stay in this stage for their whole life. As Peters writes, "The Gospel of salvation is as true and meaningful for children and naïve adults and was as true and meaningful for the people of antiquity as it is for anyone else."[65] It is only when this way of being is challenged by modern critical questions that one must move on from this stage of faith, which takes us to Peters' second stage, *critical deconstruction.*

In the *critical deconstruction* stage, the symbols of faith that were sufficient in earlier stages and phases break down and cease to make intellectual sense in the adherent. For example, when the Bible describes heaven as in the clouds, the critical mind, having flown through the

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[62] Peters, *God – The World's Future,* 23.

[63] Peters, *God – The World's Future,* 24.

[64] Peters, *God – The World's Future,* 24.

[65] Peters, *God – The World's Future,* 25.

clouds on an airplane, wonders how this can be true. When the Bible describes supernatural events, the critical mind defaults to the laws of nature. For the deconstructing mind, both can no longer be true. Naivete is lost. The adherent enters a time of alienation from God. This period can happen at any time in one's life, but is often associated with older adolescence or young adulthood. In Peters' own experience, it was the beginning of college, when he encountered critical thought for the first time.

In this stage, one might move in several directions. The first is toward fundamentalism, which takes an anti-change stance toward belief. To the above example, the fundamentalist might insist that because the Bible indicates heaven in among the cloud, *then heaven must be among the clouds*, even as they have flown on an airplane through the clouds with no evidence of heaven. The fundamentalist insists that the Bible is literally true and will adopt an anti-critical response to these challenges to faith. Peters would place traditions that assert that the Bible is literally true in this category, noting that the worship of the Bible becomes the idol in this faith community, as opposed to the worship of the transcendent God.

While Peters does not much develop it, a second option from this stage is that one may continue in alienation from one's faith development and faith tradition. Critical thought disproves the claims that Christians make about God in first naivete, one might assert, and so they want nothing of the world of faith, all of which must be fully untrue. Like fundamentalists, they take an all-or-nothing approach. While fundamentalists insist that the naïve world must be all true, those in alienation assert that the naïve world must be all false.

But from this second stage, Peters points to a third way: belief in a transcendent God, one who is in many ways unknowable, but chooses to be made known in Jesus Christ. Such belief leads one to Peters' third stage, *postcritical reconstruction*. Peters cites Riceouer, "Beyond the

desert of criticism, we wish to be called again."[66] In this third phase, one grapples with the wager that "belief in the Christian Gospel will be more fruitful for living in the world than the skeptical conclusions produced by a hermeneutic of suspicion."[67] One does not turn away from doubt, but allows oneself to be reoriented toward the places where "the divine touches the mundane, where God has revealed Godself, namely, in Jesus Christ."[68] In this stage, recognizing that one does not have direct access to the transcendent God, symbols take on a new meaning, namely that they exist at the point where the divine touches the mundane. This is a faith that makes room for mystery.

The reconstructed faith (or a faith in the process of being reconstructed) is concerned with the question of, *how then do we live*, trusting that God (whatever this may mean to a person) is present in this world. The questions shift. As Peters articulates, "When we reflect upon biblical symbols such as God's love, God's justice, and God's grace, we can but ask ourselves: am I loving? Am I just? Am I gracious?"[69] Faith moves from personal questions about right and wrong (first naivete) and existential questions about truth (critical deconstruction) to universal questions about love, justice, and grace. As participants take up these questions, their faith becomes expansive, concerned with partnering with God in the well-being of creation, or in the words of feminist theologian Letty Russell, "the mending of the world." As Russell describes, we become concerned with theology "that emphasizes the calling of the church as a witness to

[66] Peter, *God – The World's Future,* 30, citing Paul Riceour, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon, 1967), 349.

[67] Peters, *God – The World's Future,* 30.

[68] Peters, *God – The World's Future,* 31.

[69] Peters, *God – The World's Future,* 31.

God's intention to mend the creation by bringing about a world of justice, peace, and integrity of the natural world."[70] Reconstructed faith turns an adherent outward.

Peters' model has several limits, the first of which is that it relies first and fully on an intellectual engagement with faith, which corresponds with the assumption that faith is primarily about what and how you think. For Peters, *thinking* leads to the stages of faith. *Intellect* guides the process. Underlying this approach is his assumption that what you do is the result of how you think. While there is certainly value in this approach, this might be contrasted with an *orthopraxis* view that relies first on experience - what you *do* might in fact shape how you think. In fact, Miller-McLemore and others offer a direct critique of faith as primarily intellectual. She notes, "If children are to have faith, they must experience its distinctive expression within a small intergenerational community, grounded in the rituals of worship and joined in social efforts to fight political and economic injustice, and not sequestered in the educational "wing" of the church."[71] As many scholars assert, faith is not only – or primarily - intellectual.

Peters also claims that it is not the church's job to move people along the stages of faith – that there is integrity in each of them, and that one might have a full and complete faith in each stage. While there is truth to this assertion, I would claim that the work of the church is to be invested in the *maturing* process of faith -certainly not rushing people through stages, but also not indefinitely leaving one to the despair that might accompany a faith in the process of being deconstructed or the naivete that may lead to fundamentalism. The church is ultimately interested

[70] Letty Russell, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference*, (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2009), cited by Letty Russell at https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/18981/just-hospitality.

[71] Bonnie Miller-McLemore, "Whither the Children? Childhood in Religious Education," *Journal of Religion,* (Oct2006, Vol. 86 Issue 4), 643.

in shaping people toward mature, nuanced faith, which Fowler and Capps describe in the later years and which will be defined in the second part of this chapter.

Peters also assumed that the faith that parents pass on to their children will be a naïve faith. However, it is possible that parents or guardians will pass on the faith that corresponds with the stage of faith that they, *the parents,* are in. A parent might not teach a child that heaven is in the clouds, but that heaven is an unknowable mystery, even as some places in scripture point us toward heaven as above us. Similarly, a parent might explain miracle stories as not simply a suspension of natural law, but as a mystery that is unknowable. Children may very well be raised with faith that spans the categories, reflective of the parents' or their church's own faith. Peters' second stage, then, might not be as disruptive as he outlines, because the child or adolescent may already see a nuanced, mature faith active in their parent or in a mentor.

Even with these limits, Peters's model is helpful in this project because Holden Village is a community that takes theology and thinking seriously, consistent with the Lutheran church's wider emphasis on theology and learning. A Lutheran would assert that *how we think* matters, which perhaps explains why Holden invites teaching theologians, scientists, and a variety of other scholars to *teach* the community every summer, helping participants continually re-construct their own faith in light of ideas, research, and imagination. Holden's own approach implicitly mirrors Peters' understanding that much is to be gained in this third stage of faith, one that is being re-constructed throughout one's life. The limits of this approach at Holden will be explored in the implications section; however, for the purpose of this project, Peters' framework functions well as a primary framework for contextualizing the interviews.

This literature review suggests that no single model is comprehensive enough to understand the faith development of children and youth or the move toward mature faith.

However, holding Peters' vision of a reconstructed faith alongside Miller-McLemore and other scholars critiques of typical understandings of faith development that indicates that key relationships – with parents, the church, mentors, and clergy - are primary in the maturation of faith, yield a nuanced model that suggests that as one takes the intellectual claims of faith seriously, it is key relationships that give the child or youth a vision of what mature/maturing faith might look like practically. Harris reminds that the work that the whole church is already doing also has formative implications for children and adults alike. Both learning *and* experience are integral to the maturing of faith, even as a child moves through developmental stages that have particular implications for faith.

What is the Goal of Faith Formation?

I now turn to the goal of faith formation, building a description of what a mature or maturing faith looks like. Practical theologian and ethicist Christian Scharen reflects on an encounter he had with a congregant when serving as a pastor. The conversation led to his reflection on what faith *as a way of life* might mean, as opposed to faith as practiced on Sunday at church. He comments, "I no longer as directly equate seriousness about faith with increased hours spent at church. This book gives witness to the conviction that faith is lived out in daily life. Church, therefore, plays its part but faithfulness does not equal hours clocked under the shadow of the steeple."[72] Scharen goes on to give examples of faith as a way of life related to family, work, politics, and leisure. In his model, faith is no longer compartmentalized to church or the religious realm but integrated into the way one approaches all of life. In this model, the

[72] Christian Scharen, *Faith as a Way of Life,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008) 1-2.

work of the pastor is to coach the community to greater clarity around God's presence in these things and action toward God's reign in the world.

Like Scharen, and echoing Peters, Fowler, Capps, Miller-McLemore, and Russell, I would argue that a mature/maturing faith is one that is fundamentally concerned with the practice of faith, and specifically a practice that is wide, expansive, and works toward enacting God's justice in the world. Mature faith is not one that is static, or even primarily concerned with thinking or reconstruction. Rather, thinking, if that is a central component of faith, has been transformed into practice. As such, one may find themselves in first naivete, but also active in advocating for a living wage – I would argue this is a maturing faith. One might be deconstructing pieces of faith, but also a key volunteer at a food pantry – I would argue this, too, is a maturing faith. One in postcritical faith might also be a mentor to a confirmation student – again, evidence of a maturing faith. In short, when of one's own initiative, one chooses to practice the outwardly-concerned *behavior* of faith connected to peace and justice *because* of their faith, regardless of age or stage, I would call this mature/maturing faith and argue that this sort of faith is the goal of mature faith development. In chapter five, as we turn to the interviews about Holden Village, this is the definition we will be working with as we trace the participants' stories of faith: *is there an external practice of faith, informed by the stage of faith, that corresponds to the work of justice and peace?*

Developmental and theological models are often implicitly at work in churches and in faith spaces. To continue to build a framework for understanding the Holden interviews, it is worth examining how these theories are understood in the ordinary work of the church, specifically the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), which is the larger tradition that relates to Holden most closely. I will now turn to examining how such research is manifest

in the approach of the ELCA by outlining the baptismal vows, guidance toward faith development, and the approach of camping ministry, confirmation, and campus ministry, along with a brief glance at the literature on Christian leisure studies. In this next chapter, I will be asking the question, *for what are we specifically forming children and youth in the ELCA*. In other words, how does faith development theory intersect with actual practice in one denominational approach, which is the approach that has most formed Holden Village.

Chapter Four: The Formation of Children and Youth in the ELCA

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is one of the largest denominations in North America, with nearly 3.3 million members in 8900 worshipping communities across the United States, the Caribbean, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.[73] The ELCA was formed in 1988 following the merger of three Lutheran bodies: the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.[74] It is the largest Lutheran body in the United States, and the most socially and theologically progressive, with the conservative Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at nearly 2 million members,[75] and the ultra-conservative Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church at 340,000 members.[76] The ELCA is ecumenically-minded, with full-communion partnerships with six other church bodies: the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the Moravian Church, and the United Methodist Church. These agreements mean that the churches have enough in common to worship and commune together, exchange clergy, and work together in mission.[77]

The ELCA understands it vision as follows: "With a vision to live in a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ makes for all people and creation, the ELCA strives to be a welcoming, thriving, and connected church that introduces people to Jesus

[73] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "About the ELCA," accessed June 24, 2023, https://www.elca.org/About.

[74] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "History," accessed June 24, 2023, https://www.elca.org/about/history.

[75] Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, "About," accessed June 24, 2023, https://www.lcms.org/about.

[76] Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, "About WELS," accessed June 24, 2023, https://wels.net/about-wels.

[77] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Full Communion Partners," accessed June 24, 2023, https://www.elca.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Full-Communion.

so they can discover community, justice, and love."[78] The ELCA's commitment to community, justice, and love can be found in the baptismal liturgy of the church's worship hymnal, Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW).[79] As the rite of baptism begins, the pastor addresses the assembly with a summary of the church's understanding of baptism, namely that "God gives us new birth" and in this new birth, we are "joined in God's mission for the life of the world."[80] Parents and others are then entrusted with five central responsibilities, including living with the baptized among the church, bringing them to Communion and worship, teaching them foundational aspects of faith, placing in their hands the Bible, and nurturing them in faith and prayer, which are done for four specific purposes. Those four purposes are "so that your children may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and to work for justice and peace."[81]

A 1991 teaching document of the church entitled "The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective," explains what is meant by justice and peace, namely, "Along with all citizens, Christians have the responsibility to defend human rights and to work for freedom, justice, peace, environmental well-being, and good order in public life."[82] Since its beginning, the ELCA has released teaching documents and made public commitments toward eleven areas connected to justice: Indigenous peoples and the Doctrine of Discovery, economic justice, ecumenical and inter-religious relations, environmental justice, ethnic and multi-cultural ministries, gender

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[78] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Observes 35th Anniversary," April 28, 2022, https://elca.org/News-and-Events/8137.

[79] For the full baptismal liturgy, see Appendix C.

[80] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 227.

[81] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 228.

[82] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Justice Portal," accessed January 15, 2023, https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Justice-Portal.

justice, immigration justice, LGBTQIA and racial justice, justice against violence, and a strategy for authentic diversity. The ELCA also has a national advocacy arm that encourages its members to use their voice to speak on behalf of marginalized communities.

Shaping children and youth toward working for justice in ELCA contexts will look different according to the local faith community. The Children's Ministry of the ELCA offers broad recommendations according to age in a document entitled, "Recommended Practices for Lifelong Faith Formation."[83] For example, beginning in kindergarten, children are encouraged to bring canned goods to church. In middle school, to begin volunteering at a food bank. In high school, to fundraise for a cause of importance and to attend a service trip. As a young adult, to engage in advocacy, demonstrate care for creation, and support LGBTQIA+ persons and relationships.[84] While justice commitments may vary from church to church, service is a consistent theme across the ELCA. On the second Sunday in September, the ELCA sponsors a nationwide "God's Work. Our Hands." day of service. Churches engage in community-based service together, often wearing bright yellow t-shirts. As articulated by the ELCA Churchwide Office, "God's Work. Our Hands. Sunday is designed to emphasize this church's commitment to participate in the work of restoring and reconciling communities, and pursuing peace and justice."[85] Across all ages and stages, on this Sunday, faith is turned outward.

Even with robust faith practices at church, the ELCA, along with many mainline traditions, has come to recognize that faith formation happens primarily in the home, assertions

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[83] Janelle Rozek Hooper, "ELCA Faith Formation: Recommended Practices for Lifelong Faith Formation," *ELCA Faith Formation: Ministry Links Online*, accessed January 15, 2023, https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/ELCAfaithformation.pdf?_ga=2.6862578.1935893573.1673369857-1496052000.1665509970.

[84] For a description of all recommended faith practices by age, see Appendix D.

[85] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "ELCA commemorates 25 years with 'God's Work. Our Hands. Sunday,'" September 5, 2013, accessed January 15, 2023, https://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/7616.

supported by *The Confirmation Project. The Confirmation Project* was a three-year study that examined faith formation in five faith traditions across three thousand churches, including the ELCA.[86] Practical theologian Katherine Douglass notes, "One key finding from our survey was that faith in the home was the strongest indicator of high levels of faith among youth. The next most powerful indicator was going to camp."[87] When parents have an active interest in the faith formation of their children, practicing and talking about faith at home, children tend to remain engaged in faith. Douglass continues, "The implications of these findings are clear: if we want young people to have faith and understand the fundamental tenets of Christianity, we have to attend to the faith and religious instruction of the adults in their lives, especially their parents."[88] When parents are engaged in faith, not only does faith development in children happen, but by extension, it happens in the wider congregation. As stated by practical theologian Kara Powell, "In studying churches growing young, we found that parent's participation in church worship and programming correlates with more mature faith in young people."[89] Not only in the child, but also, as it turns out, in the entire community. She continues, "According to pastoral leaders, when parents are intentional about faith building outside of church, overall faith maturity and vibrancy within the congregation rises even more."[90] More than anything else, how faith is

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[86] Richard R. Osmer and Katherine M. Douglass, eds, *Cultivating Teen Faith: Insights from the Confirmation Project, 3.* These five traditions included the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church USA, and the United Methodist Church.

[87] Katherine M. Douglass, "Findings from The Confirmation Project," *Theology Today* 76, no 1 (2019), 7-16, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0040573619826956.

[88] Douglass, "Findings from The Confirmation Project."

[89] William Tyler Parks, "Overcoming the Greatest Challenge in Faith Formation: Equipping and Encouraging Parents to Embrace Their Role as Faith Leaders" (Master's thesis, Luther Seminary, 2020), accessed January 15, 2023, 16, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Jzvjh89v9wdMYbGG1EGVHDk4TssUsLRr/view.

[90] Parks, "Overcoming the Greatest Challenge in Faith Formation: Equipping and Encouraging Parents to Embrace Their Role as Faith Leaders," 16.

practiced, encouraged, and supported in the home matters for the formation of children and youth.

How homes explore service and justice formation, however, is less well-documented. In fact, it is not until the young adult years that explicit commitments to justice move to the forefront of conversation about faith, as evidenced by the ELCA's Recommended Practices, which switch from a service approach up until high school to a more just-centered approach in college (for example, one item listed under "faith-filled service" for high school is "to volunteer regularly in the community"; for young adults, it is to "engage in advocacy for justice and societal transformation.").[91] In the *Lutheran Campus Ministry Study*, which looked at the impact of ELCA campus ministry across college campuses, themes of justice certainly become more prominent.[92] As practical theologian Jacob Sorensen reports,

> The relatively small groups of students that gathered for weekly worship, meals, and faith discussions extended their ministry presence through service and advocacy on campus and in the local community. In fact, participation in service projects and advocacy work were some of the primary avenues of engagement for many survey participants that grew up as Nones. Some sites offered service learning trips to distant locations, but more sites frequently engaged in local service. Students at Syracuse University were actively engaged in outreach to the local poor and immigrant communities; their campus pastor involved them in service work related to their field of study, usually through an area congregation or nongovernmental organization. Students at other sites participated in and even helped organize campus demonstrations for the rights of immigrants, people of color, and other vulnerable groups, most notably the LGBTQ+ community. The inclusive and affirming witness of LCM offered a counternarrative to the dominant cultural understanding of Christianity among emerging adults.[93]

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[91] Hooper, "ELCA Faith Formation: Recommended Practices for Lifelong Faith Formation," 9-10.

[92] The *Lutheran Campus Ministry Study* surveyed 845 campus ministry participants, visited six sites in six regions of the country, and interviewed ten campus pastors/ministers. The *Summary of Major Findings* can be found at https://www.luminelca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Lutheran-Campus-Ministry-Summary-of-Findings-FINAL-.pdf

[93] Jacob Sorenson and Roland Martinson, "Ministry at the Crossroads: Lutheran Campus Ministry's Power and Peril" *Word & World* 38, no. 4 (Fall 2018), 406-407, https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/38-4_Letters_from_Prison/38-4_Sorenson_Martinson.pdf.

For students who remain engaged in faith through campus ministry, justice work often becomes a prominent theme of faith. However, as noted by the study, campus ministry groups are often small, considerably smaller than the number of persons on any college campus who grew up Lutheran. For those who remain engaged in a Lutheran expression of faith in college years, campus ministry has a maturing effect on faith. However, many do not reach this milestone, which leads us back toward the second marker of strong faith, attending a summer camp as a child or youth. How might camp experiences contribute to the conversation around faith development of children and youth in the ELCA?

The Impact of Camping and Outdoor Ministries

As noted above, the second strongest indicator of lasting faith formation in children and youth is participation in summer camp. For children who grow up in ELCA churches, and indeed in many other faith traditions, attending summer camp is often a regular part of faith formation, generally beginning in the elementary years. To study the impact of summer camp, in 2015, the Effective Camp Research Project began, which sought to answer the question: *What is the impact of the one- week summer camp experience on the lives of the primary participants and their supporting networks?*[94]

The project selected six summer camps, all of them ELCA and located in Wisconsin. Over the summer of 2016, researchers tracked the responses of over 1000 children and their parents related to the one week of summer camp experience, including a follow-up questionnaire several months later, to assess the immediate and longer-term impacts of summer camp for children between the ages of 11-14. The six summer camps held five core tenets in common:

[94] Jacob Sorenson, Amber Hill, and Kristen Middlesworth, "Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 1: Narrative Summary," May 2016, 1, https://sacredplaygrounds.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ECRP1-Narrative-Summary.pdf.

faith-centered, relational, participatory, a safe space, and *different from home*. As these tenets have significance for my own research questions, each of these will be explored briefly.

Faith-centered – Camp offers a week in the life of a child that is explicitly faith-centered. The camp day begins with morning devotions and ends with evening worship, with Bible study during the day. While these are undoubtedly a change in routine from a normal camper's everyday life, campers point to the events in between as particularly faith forming. For example, one camper was quoted as saying, "At home, you basically only go to church once a week. Here, you're constantly learning about God." She went on to say that "faith formative conversations and activities were integrated into virtually all aspects of camp life."[95] Another camper commented "No matter what we're doing, they intertwine the Christian stuff into it. When we were canoeing, it was about God's water. Same with the swimming. When we're doing the high ropes, it's our trust that God won't let us fall and our teammates won't let us fall. Wherever we go, we try to see God in whatever we're doing."[96] Faith practice and faith conversations are built into the fabric of the daily camp experience in a way that is appropriate for children's learning and geared toward the building of one's first faith. In this way, camp is an immersive experience in a child's faith life.

Relational – A second marker of the camper experience was its relationality, both between campers themselves and between campers and their generally young adult cabin counselors. Staff modeled welcome and inclusivity, encouraging campers and one another to a regular practice of welcome. Sorenson quotes a cabin counselor in saying, "It's a true Christian community here. We all care about each other, and we all love each other, and we truly care

[95] Sorenson, Hill, and Middlesworth, "Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 1: Narrative Summary," 15.

[96] Sorenson, Hill, and Middlesworth, "Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 1: Narrative Summary," 15.

about these kids that come here." [97] Children develop role models among the young adult leaders, and camp often comes to feel like a large extended family where everyone fits in and feels truly welcome.

Camp is Different than Home – A third marker of camp is that it feels and functions differently than home. Being at camp gives campers space to reflect on their home experience, as well as their experiences at church, school, and in other places. Sorenson reports, "Study participants repeatedly reported their perceptions that camp was a unique, set apart place with significant differences from their home contexts."[98] Participants reported that they learned new things, reflected in a different capacity, and could see their lives through a new lens. Sorenson reports that, "Homesickness was not a major theme in the data, but some participants described missing parents, pets, and other things about their home contexts. There is evidence that working through feelings of homesickness contributed to resilience and feelings of independence."[99] Being away from home, often for the first time, but experiencing that distance a caring environment is positively formational for children.

Safe – A fourth aspect of the camping experience is its emotional safety. Campers reported that because of the tone set by their cabin counselors, they felt included, respected, and like they fit in. Bullying incidents were generally low, and campers felt like they could be themselves without fear of judgment. As Sorenson reports, "Campers contrasted the feeling of safety at camp with contexts such as home or school, where they felt fear of being 'judged,' a word that campers at all three sites used for exclusion or ridicule experienced away from camp.

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[97] Sorenson, Hill, and Middlesworth, "Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 1: Narrative Summary," 5-6.

[98] Sorenson, Hill, and Middlesworth, "Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 1: Narrative Summary," 10.

[99] Sorenson, Hill, and Middlesworth, "Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 1: Narrative Summary," 10-11.

Campers credited their counselors with actively creating a sense of emotional safety, and staff members described taking intentional steps to make campers feel loved and accepted."[100] There is no tolerance for bullying or mocking at the camp sites, which is integral to the feeling of emotional safety.

Participatory – The final marker was that camp was overwhelmingly participatory. Campers felt that camp was designed in age-appropriate ways and geared toward their interests and energy. A camp day might include large group games, as well as hiking, swimming, challenge courses, canoeing, wandering in creeks, dancing, singing, and playing field games. As Sorenson reports, "The camp model at these sites facilitated kinesthetic, multi-sensory activities, which provided opportunities for campers to play, learn, grow, and engage those around them in unique ways… The data make clear that these activities were youth-focused and youth-approved."[101] Sorenson continues, "The campers had a strong sense that the activities were for them and their peers, in contrast to other contexts like church, where they felt things were geared towards adults.[102] Instead of simply tolerating adult activities, children and youth are engaged at their level.

When all five of the tenets were in place, the experience of campers was overwhelmingly positive. At the end of the camp week, many campers reported an increase in self-confidence, an increase in faith understanding and commitment, an increase in the ability to get along with others, and a general increase in well-being and happiness.[103] When participants were surveyed

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[100] Sorenson, Hill, and Middlesworth, "Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 1: Narrative Summary," 12-13.

[101] Sorenson, Hill, and Middlesworth, "Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 1: Narrative Summary," 8.

[102] Sorenson, Hill, and Middlesworth, "Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 1: Narrative Summary," 8.

[103] Jacob Sorenson, *Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 2 Executive Summary*, May 2017, https://sacredplaygrounds.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ECRP-Phase-2-Executive-Summary.pdf, 2.

two to three months following camp (when the "camp high" had worn off), results continued to indicate that one week at camp formed faith in highly effective ways in children. [104]

Interestingly, when one of those five tenets broke down during the week, then the camp experience did not yield the same positive results. For example, one week a significant number of participants in a cabin group reported feeling unsafe emotionally; another week, staff was ill-prepared and poorly trained; another week, camp was overbooked; all of these impacted campers' emotional safety and ability to participate fully. Creating an effective environment does not happen by default; the responsibility to actively create these and set a positive tone falls on camp directors and cabin staff. The study authors conclude that even among different locations and different populations, when all five tenets are present in the camp experience of a child, camp has both immediate and longer-lasting impacts on the faith development of children.[105]

Holden Village shares a number of these markers, with some caveats. Holden Village is *different from home* for the families who move there, although the Village is also the temporary home of families, who are assigned chalets that they are free to make home. Village norms encourage an *emotionally safe space* for children and their families, though poor management of conflict, unclear policies, and internal family stress can intrude on this sense of emotional safety. *Participation* and *relationship-building* are also central components of life in the Village, though it is often the adults who push back on requirements for communal engagement. Finally, *faith-centered* is at the core of Holden's identity, though its mission is not necessarily to directly shape the faith of those who live in the village. Perhaps these loose connections to these markers helps to explain why Holden is a "semi-intentional community," different in character from outdoor ministries, but overlapping in many values. Where outdoor ministries are explicit in their

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[104] Sorenson, *Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 2 Executive Summary*, 3.

[105] Sorenson, *Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 2 Executive Summary*, 4.

commitments to safety, relationality, faith formation, participation, and being different than home, the commitments and experiences of those at Holden Village differ depending on those who are participating. Even so, outdoor ministries are among the closest cousins to Holden Village in terms of experience, values, setting, and outcomes.

Christian Leisure Studies

While also not a sibling to Holden, another close cousin is the study of leisure and leisure communities. Christian Leisure Studies is a small, relatively new academic field that examines the place of leisure in the Christian life. There is no single definition of Christian leisure, and some writers understand leisure and Sabbath interchangeably, while some understand one as part of the other. For example, moral theologians Timothy Muldoon and Suzanne Muldoon understand leisure as "unscheduled free play," particularly in reference to overscheduled youth.[106] They write, "Free play is the activity towards which children spontaneously order themselves without adult supervision; it is, to recall the words of the American Academy of Pediatricians, practically the definition of childhood."[107] Leisure scholar Paul Heintzman summarizes a number of leisure scholars, beginning with Gordon Dahl, who was a Lutheran campus minister who wrote *Work, Play and Worship in a Leisure Oriented Society.* Dahl "conceived of leisure as a qualitative aspect of human life; a Christian experiences leisure when one comes into complete awareness of the freedom one has in Christ."[108] David Spence defined leisure as "the opportunity and capacity to experience the eternal, to sense the grace and peace which lifts us beyond our daily schedules." Jeanne Sherrow wrote that, "leisure is time that God

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[106] Timothy P. Muldoon and Suzanne M. Muldoon, "Youth, Leisure, and Discernment in an Overscheduled Age." *The Journal of Moral Theology* 7, no. 1 (2018): 112.

[107] Muldoon and Muldoon, "Youth, Leisure, and Discernment in an Overscheduled Age." 120.

[108] Paul Heintzman, "Leisure Studies and Christian Scholarship: Two Solitudes" *Journal of the Christian Society for Kinesiology and Leisure Studies* 3(1), 2015, 23.

has given Christians to make a difference in themselves, in day-to-day living, in relationships and in the world." Leonard Doohan wrote that, "that leisure is a spiritual attitude that must be integrated into every aspect of our lives in order to make us more fully human and more fully Christian." Heintzman also references Josef Pieper as one of the foundational scholars in the field, defining leisure as "an attitude of mind, a condition of the soul...a receptive attitude of mind, a contemplative attitude."[109] These definitions hold in common the conviction that leisure and Sabbath are God's gift to humans, a change in routine for the purpose of receiving a counter-cultural way of being in the world.

In an unusual article exploring the connection between [video] gaming, Sabbath, and leisure, Christian leisure scholars Rob Rhea and John Auxier note that "Many of the elements that point to our being fashioned in the image of God are given expression through gaming. In many cases it is activity that is creative, social, and joy giving. New worlds are created and explored. Adventures are undertaken which draw on all of the gamer's intellectual, relational, and educational capacities. All of these activities, in their proper place, can be a celebration of how we reflect the image of God."[110] Creativity and connection are central to the experience of Sabbath.

Paul Heintzman also picks up the theme of leisure, pointing to its intention as a period of renewal and refreshment:

> The connection of Sabbath and leisure in exploring a number of human benefits within leisure. Some examples include how rest and leisure imitate God's Sabbath from the work of creation on the seventh day (Exod. 20:8-11). Through Sabbath we experience joy in God's creation and in God himself (v. 11). Also, within Sabbath and leisure we recuperate and renew ourselves after six days of hard labor (Exod. 23:12), and we affiliate ourselves with God and his practices (Exod. 31:16-17). While the origin of the

[109] Heintzman, "Leisure Studies and Christian Scholarship: Two Solitudes," 26.

[110] Rob Rhea and John Auxier, "Gaming the System: Christian Leisure, the *Imago Dei*, and the Formational Influence of Video Games" *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 17(1), 2020, 149.

> Sabbath is grounded in honoring God and patterning our lives after him, it was also established for our renewal and refreshment as well. In speaking on permissible activities on the Sabbath, Jesus reminded the Pharisees, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27).[111]

Sabbath is intended not simply as a response to the command to pattern our lives in a certain way, but also because such a pattern is fundamentally good for humanity, offering renewal, refreshment, and joy. Leisure is God's good gift.

The Location of Holden in Research

How does all of this intersect with Holden Village? As indicated by the literature review and review of denominational practices, Holden Village sits between worlds. It receives children and youth, but its education forums are primarily geared toward adults. It is rooted in a Lutheran theological understanding of faith, and yet it has often been at the margin of church teaching and practice, particularly related to justice and peace issues. In fact, in many ways, it takes the formation of persons toward peace and justice more intentionally than many other expressions of the church. Similarly, it shares many markers with outdoor ministries, but diverges on important ones: the length of time, the presence of the whole family, the place of home. It holds leisure, Sabbath, and play at its center, but all parents in the village work and all school-age children attend school, which means that it is not a retreat center for those who live and work in it. It is committed to the formation of children and youth, but the home of each child is in the middle of Village life. A survey of the literature and practice in these related areas reveals that Holden Village has cousins in the research fields, but no siblings. Once again, it is truly a place apart.

A Constructed Model of Faith Formation

As we turn to the interviews, I am interested in whether and how time at Holden leads to the capacity for developing a mature faith, which I define as one that has at least one external

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[111] Rhea and Auxier, "Gaming the System: Christian Leisure, the *Imago Dei*, and the Formational Influence of Video Games," 149.

practice related to pursuing justice and peace. As a reminder, in the Lutheran baptismal liturgy, the goals of lifelong faith formation are named as part of the faith that we have committed to shaping the newly baptized toward, namely: "so that your children may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and to work for justice and peace."[112] In the first chapter, building on the ELCA's own commitments to justice and peace through eleven social statements, I defined "justice and peace" as "commitments of individuals or the church, in this case the Lutheran Church (ELCA), toward certain areas of communal concern, including protection of the environment, equity for LGBTQIA+ persons, people of color, and women, non-violent solutions for conflict, the alleviation of poverty, and other commitments that recognize the full humanity of each person." A justice and peace practice may come from a naïve faith, a deconstructed faith, a reconstructed faith, or, most likely, a faith that has characteristics of all of these. While the place of faith development is important to contextualize and understand the practice, I am mostly interested in whether there is a commitment that is actively shown forth in practice.

Should this prove to be the case for interviewees - that most have an external practice of peace and justice that is rooted in some type of understanding of faith - I am then interested in which communal practices of faith, practiced at Holden, created and deepened this capacity in these interviewees as children and youth. If Holden is indeed a place that forms children and youth for justice and peace, how do they do this? Chapter five will explore this question through interviews, with analysis and recommendations offered in the final chapters.

[112] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 228.

Chapter Five: The Interviews

Interviews

To explore these questions, in January of 2023, I put out a call for interviews through Holden's Facebook page, a group of nearly 2900 friends of Holden Village, mostly former volunteers of and/or visitors to the Village. My initial post read, "Hi Holden friends, I am working on a doctoral project (doctor of ministry) that looks at wilderness & faith formation. I am hoping to interview 4-6 adult children of Holden Village, that is, adults who spent at least one year of childhood (ages 5-17) at Holden and are willing to spend an hour in conversation about it. More info, including contact info, attached. If you are interested, or you know someone who might be, please send me a note. Thanks much~"

Attached to the post was my IRB approved call for interviews, which included more research about my project, as well as contact information (Appendix A). To this post, there were around 30 initial responses, with many folks volunteering themselves and others tagging persons who they knew fit the criteria or sending me private messages. I invited all who responded to the Facebook post be in touch with me directly by email; several others did not respond directly to the Facebook post but were also in touch with me directly (as was requested on the form). In total, seventeen persons who fit the criteria emailed me directly. I put together a sign-up for interviews and invited each of those seventeen to choose a slot (anonymously to one another) and return the consent form. Nine signed up for a slot and returned the consent form. These nine were all interviewed within a 17-day window.

Because the dispersed Holden community is small and well-networked, and because of my own involvement in it, I assumed that I may know some of the respondents. Of the nine who signed up, I knew two with some familiarity and had met two in passing; the other five were not

known to me. Out of concern for protecting the anonymity of the respondents, I will not describe these relationships further.

These nine were all interviewed in February of 2023 by Zoom. We began each interview by reviewing the consent form (Appendix B). One participant raised a question about privacy, considering the Holden network knew each other well and that answers might be identifiable. I responded that I would work with my advisor to ensure that the demographic information provided in the final report was broad enough to preserve anonymity, as well as to ensure that individual stories lacked individually identifiable information. Considering the reality that the Holden community is indeed small, however, all participants were verbally reminded (as well as in writing) that they had the option of withdrawing during the interview or withdrawing their data following the interview for any reason, but particularly if they were concerned about privacy. None followed up with this concern or withdrew their data. After transcribing the interviews, I sent a note to the one who expressed the specific concern about privacy to outline which quotes I intended to use from that interview. This person responded positively that this would be fine and that there were no further concerns about privacy.

Each interview consisted of the same four questions, which participants were given ahead of time. As noted in chapter one, the four questions were as follows:

- How do you understand your family's decision to live at Holden Village? What contributed to the decision?
- As you reflect on your time at Holden and your experience of faith formation there – through daily worship, teaching sessions, the Village's commitment to justice issues as an expression of faith – what experiences impacted you most significantly?
- How would you describe your adult faith and spiritual commitments now? Do you connect those to your time at Holden, and if so, how?

- What are the justice areas that you find yourself particularly drawn to, and do you trace a connection to those with your formation at Holden? For example, ecological justice, racial/gender/LGBTQIA+ justice, etc.

During the interviews, participants were invited to expand on some questions for clarity or connections; otherwise, the interviews stayed close to the four questions. Five of the interviews were between 44-46 minutes; two were above this time (1:02, 1:12) and two were below this time (34:39, 36:03). At the end of the fourth question, each participant was asked if they wanted to add anything; some returned to previous questions, some included anecdotes outside of the questions, and some asked about the project. Almost all expressed interest in reading the final project report.

The interviewees lived in the Village as children across a 40-year span, beginning in the 1970s and ending in the 2010s. Two arrived at the age of 8, two at the age of 11, one at the age of 12, one at the age of 14, two at the age of 15, and one at the age of 17. The length of stay lasted from one school year to several years. Several lived in the Village for multiple stints at different ages. Some moved with both parents, some with one parent, some as a blended family, and some without their family. Several moved to Holden following a family upheaval (death, divorce, job change). Some moved from a significant distance away; some already lived relatively close to the Village. Because the number of persons who lived in the Village as children is small and well-networked, for the sake of privacy, no further demographic information will be given.

Participants will be referred to as A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I. Letters were assigned in order of the interviews. All participants will also be referred to as “children,” even as the term “youth” more accurately describes most of them. The interviews have been lightly edited for clarity, removing repetitive words and phrases that do not change the nature of the response (for

example, when “you know,” “like,” “hmm,” and “I mean” were used repetitively in a statement or back-to-back).

Before exploring the interviews, it is worth noting that while all nine participants answered all nine questions, there are some patterns in the responses that suggest that my own social location, particularly related to gender, age, household, and profession, affected the interviews. The interviews that were the longest and yielded the most data were with persons who had significant overlap with my own social location, and those that were shortest had less overlap. For example, the two interviews that lasted an hour were with professional women around my age who had children the same age as my own children. The two interviews that were closer to thirty minutes were with men nearing or at retirement who had no children or adult children. The interviews closer to the average time (45 minutes) shared one or two social markers, for example, gender and/or age and/or household, except for one, with whom I shared no social markers, except for race. All the interviewees were white, which is consistent with the larger demographics of the Village and the ELCA.[113]

Themes Across Interviews

Five themes arose across multiple interviews: *the positive treatment of the child by the community; the child’s growing relationship to faith, particularly through the daily Vespers service; comments about justice as part of the nature of the community; the commitment to justice issues in adulthood or the pressure upon leaving the community to become a person who works to enact justice in significant ways;* and *the participant’s current church involvement and/or ambivalence they feel toward faith institutions*. If a theme was not particularly relevant for an interview, their responses are not included below. For example, one participant repeatedly

[113] See note in chapter two related to the Village’s demographics, their recognition of this as problematic, and their commitment to increasing diversity.

stated an aversion to faith language and engagement, which was true before, during, and after living in the village; during the interviews, while participants were given an expansive way of interpreting faith, this participant chose not to engage in this expansive option. Accordingly, those responses are not included in the faith section, even as this participant's responses are included elsewhere. Each of the following five themes were commented on by at least seven of the participants.

For clarity, I will treat each interview individually, structuring each summary around the five themes. This is for the purpose of helping the reader understand how faith grew (or did not grow) within each story, culminating in how participants currently practice a commitment to peace and justice, if they do. As a reminder, the question I am tracing is in what ways time at Holden in childhood helped to yield a mature/maturing faith, which as noted in the previous chapter contains an external practice of faith, regardless of the stage of faith, that corresponds to the work of justice and peace. At the end of each participant's section, I will offer a brief summary related to how their faith reflects or does not reflect this sense of a mature/maturing faith based on their comments connected to the five themes. For the most part, responses and themes will simply be reported in chapter five; analysis of these will be offered in chapter six.

Participant A

Participant A was the first to be interviewed, and her responses demonstrated a strong capacity to explore faith with theological nuance, which she traced to being raised in a particularly religiously-engaged family. Such theological nuance is present in several of her responses, which touched on all five on the themes and are outlined below.

To the first theme, the positive treatment of the child by the community, Participant A commented, "So I built some just really fantastic relationships with adults who were my

independent project leads… a couple of hours every week I got to go find [person] on a porch, and we would paint together and chat about life, and I thought it was so special." Participant A noted that such friendships were not simply with adults, but extended to young adults as well. She continued, "And yeah, we had you know, young adults who would bake cookies with us and take us on hikes. So just a real sense of having an important place in the community."

To the second theme, which touches on the growth of faith in community, Participant A noted that the community was far from perfect, as several other participants will echo. Along with the everyday frustrations of living closely with people in community, difficult and traumatic things also happened in the Village, and relationships were sometimes strained and broken. Participant A talks about the struggle of watching adults live in community with people who had hurt them:

> It was living in a really rarefied environment, but it was a very human environment to where we actually did have to wrestle with really, really hard things and fight for one another and forgive one another, and I had to watch my parents like really struggle to, you know I was a kid, but, like my parents, really struggled to live in community with some of the people there, but I got to watch them do that, and I got to watch them practice forgiveness and practice rebuilding relationship. Anyway, I just always think that's important. You know if you lived there, you know it's not perfect, but I think it's always such a strong reaction people have to just assume like, oh, what a fairy tale land! But it's a deeply human place at the end of the day.

To the third theme, justice as part of the nature of the community, Participant A had several insights. Queer justice was a theme that ran through many of the interviews, spanning from first participant (mid-70s) to the last participant (2010s), suggesting that this has been an important theme for Holden for much of its lifetime. Participant A commented that she knew of the community's commitment to LGBTQIA inclusion not necessarily because of ongoing community conversation, but because of the diversity of the community and how this was welcomed:

> Gender and LGBTQIA, I think a lot of that just came from living in community, you know, lived in community with gay and lesbian and trans and intersex individuals. And so, you know, as a kid just having the opportunity to grow up in close relationship with folks from a diversity of gender and sexual identities. So yeah, I feel a commitment to those justice areas because I feel a commitment to our shared humanity, not necessarily because it was like an explicit like agenda.

Continuing with this third theme, Participant A noted that environmental justice and care for creation has also been woven into the fabric of the community since its inception. She comments on the connection between loving a place and caring about its well-being.

> And you know I love that quote… You won't protect what you don't love, and you won't love what you don't know. I just think, like I was so lucky to grow up like really deeply knowing that ecological space, and really knowing what the seasons in that valley looked like. And from that deep knowing was a deep loving of that, and really feeling like that valley was a community member, you know, was part of the part of the family and so that deep connection to the earth very much lives with me, but it's also something that I have to tend, you know, just because you grow up splashing in creeks and hearing about God's love for creation that can so easily fade into the distance when you spend so much of your time in a built environment like I do living in a large metropolitan environment.

The fourth theme that arose during the interviews was related to the pressure to become a person who works to enact justice in significant ways or the ways that participants currently enact justice. Nearly all participants had a complex relationship with working toward justice upon leaving the community. All nine commented that it remained important to them; but many participants struggled to know how to enact a commitment to justice when not living in community. Participant A, for example, expressed it this way, in reference to leaving Holden and announcing to her Campus Pastor that she would be providing fresh baked bread for communion:

> Did I just eventually become a consumeristic, completely normal adjusted average American teenager and young adult? And then I like, have those moments where I'm like, Who does that, you know, like who just like marches up to the campus pastor and is like we have a different plan for you, and this is offensive, and we know how to bake bread, and we're gonna start delivering it to you? So yeah, those moments make me really happy. Because yeah, I was 13 when we left, and that's still a really young kid, but a lot of it did seep into me.

The final theme that arose across multiple interviews was the participant's current relationship with a faith community, namely a church, or their ambivalence toward engaging with a faith community. Of the nine participants, three currently have active engagement with a faith community (interestingly, all three are or were recently in leadership positions at their church), while five had some ambivalence toward being part of a faith community. For those who are active members, all tie their choice of congregation to some component of being at Holden. Participant A commented that she chose her faith community, at least in part, based on her on-going connections to Holden:

> So I am a very active member of my congregation... For six of those years, I was on Church Council. I was Council President for three years… we're really active members there, and my son was baptized there this last fall. And yeah, that community is just incredibly, incredibly important to me. I chose that congregation for many reasons, but there are a number of Holden people who attend there, and the style of worship and liturgy is very familiar to what I grew up with, both in and out of Holden, but is very familiar to me.

Participant A goes on to describe the nature of the church community and what appeals to her, namely that is the only place in her life where she has a strong sense of intergenerational community, a theme from her time at Holden.

> My church home is where I have intergenerational community, so maybe that would be a need I would feel regardless. But I would say definitely at Holden, that was such a hallmark of our of you know, of growing up, was getting to be in close community and relationship with people of all ages and people outside your nuclear family. And so I really crave that…
>
> I'm not a particularly pious person, but I think the influence of Holden on me is more that daily lived practice, communal expression of faith rather than, you know, it's like I have no personal practice of contemplative prayer or reading the Bible or - it's just not something I've ever done. You know it's not part of who I am, but I love that I feel as comfortable in that building [her church] as I do in my own living room, you know, and that's kind of what it means to me to be part of a to live out my faith and to be part of a faith community is to say, like, okay, we're in this, and I come whether or not I feel like it. You know I show up whether or not, I really want to be there. I show up and do tasks I wouldn't ordinarily volunteer for in any other setting. Because I feel that shared identity, shared faith, shared responsibility.

The way that Participant A touched on all five of these themes, but particularly the final question, suggest that her continued adult involvement (and leadership) in a faith community particularly around justice issues indicate a mature/maturing commitment to faith. This is seen specifically in how Participant A has wrestled with complex theological themes such as forgiveness, environmental ethics, and LGBTQIA inclusion in faith spaces, as well as how she traces these to her time at Holden. This suggests that she understands her time at Holden as central to her ability to develop a mature faith, as well as formative to the type of faith community to which she seeks to be part, as well as to give leadership.

Participant B

Participant B was the second person to be interviewed, and she also touched upon all five of the themes. To the first theme, the positive treatment of the child by the community, several participants commented on the fact that they were taken seriously and engaged as full members of the community, often for the first time in their life. Participant B picks up this theme as well, commenting

> It was cool to be sort of treated like a member of the community instead of like a kid. My sister and I have talked about that some actually, how it felt like it was a lot easier for us to converse with just a larger spectrum of ages and types of people than we had been before we went there, just because people would talk to us like we were on the same level instead of like we were, you know, 14 and 16.

For Participant B, the worship life of Holden was significant to her time there, which touches on the second theme, the place of worship in the deepening of a child’s faith. She entered the community following the death of a parent and spoke about the challenges and gifts of grieving in community and how one of the signature worship services, Prayer Around the Cross, was particularly helpful in her grief at the time. She says,

> Like grief-wise, there are some good things at Holden to kind of help you through the grieving process. Like you know, I felt like Prayer around the Cross was really like a meaningful thing for me at that time, and also just, I think the being in nature was, you know it's just really healing up there.

Participant B also commented on meditative nature of the worship and how worship felt expansive enough for people to come from a variety of faith angles:

> I really did feel like a lot of the worship when I was there was calm, very meditative, and not that I really meditate much now, but I think that that was something that resonated a lot with me, because it felt like it was very free to be able to kind of go about it in the way that worked for you. I don't know if when I was there, maybe there were a lot of people who didn't really know where they were at faith-wise, but it just felt like here was a lot of space for people to do whatever worked for them.

On reflecting on the place of justice work in her life, Participant B expressed that she wanted to keep it as part of a regular commitment in her adult life, something that she traces from her time at Holden.

> So I thought about that a lot, and I think you know there's still plenty of room for improvement, but that's just always been something that's kind of been on my mind is something that I want to do is just to try to make things a little bit better wherever I can… And so I just wanted to find some ways to kind of keep that as part of my life - like not always necessarily the center of my life - but just something that I want to keep working on and keep doing, because I feel like it can be really easy, like scarily easy to just like, not think about it at all. And so I think that's I think that's one thing that's definitely from when I was that Holden.

In fact, Participant B connects her current work as a Social Worker to the justice commitment of Holden, holding as a possibility policy-related work in her future.

> So I think you know, I think I went into social work in general to try to find something to give back, and something to try to make some changes where I can, and I'm here now. I want to try to find ways to make some more like policy type changes eventually, and sort of move from individual supports to trying to find some solutions that might have a broader impact. But haven't really gotten into that one too far yet.

Following her time at Holden, Participant B struggled with returning to her home church. While she had attended church before going to Holden, attending the same church after Holden no longer felt like it fit who she was or what her faith had grown into while at Holden.

> But I felt like when I left I could not find - we went back to the church that we had been going to before and after I think [for] a year. I told my mom that I couldn't go there anymore, because I just didn't - none of it felt like it was real, and I didn't know what I believed. And it was just it felt like a lot of the like ritual was meaning more than like what I don't know, I think, Holden is so much about service, and that was something that really meant a lot to me, and then going back to church it's not really about that. It was just about, you know, you do the hymns, and you do all of the tradition, and I know that that can be rich. But it was not something that I found meaningful. And when I didn't know what I believed, faith-wise, not even having that sort of Oh, but like the you know, it's about doing things to help others, and, you know, make positive change. It just kind of didn't really feel like a good spot for me. It just felt like it was all about the tradition and the ceremony rather than - and I know that Holden can have a lot of tradition and ceremony - but it just felt less like stuck on things have to be a certain way. Yeah. So I mean, I think Holden had a big experience on my faith formation. But honestly, I haven't really gone to church much since then.

While Participant B is not currently active in a faith community, she names her choice of profession (social work) as an extension of the faith ethic formed in her at Holden to care for others. This indicates that she is also engaged in a mature/maturing faith. What is interesting about Participant B's faith is that, in some ways, her faith is still in Peters' deconstructing phase, questioning ritual and tradition, even as she practices a primary ethic of faith and a strong commitment to justice by caring for neighbor.

Participant C

Participant C was the third participant to be interviewed, and she also touched on all nine of the themes. Her responses indicate an ability to grapple with these questions at a more complex level of theological engagement than many of the other respondents, which is consistent with her vocation of teaching religion.

To the first theme, the positive treatment of the child by the community, several participants commented on how meaningful it was to be taken seriously by the wider community, including Participant C, particularly when she helped lead worship, "I felt taken seriously." What is unusual about worship at Holden is that it is, as Participant C says, "a very

tactile, very inclusive experience." While worship each day follows a rotation, the two most commented upon worship services were Holden Evening Prayer (also called Vespers '86) and Prayer Around the Cross, which are part of the regular rotation of weekly worship. Holden Evening Prayer is a lively, sung prayer setting that was written at Holden in 1986 and has been sung most Saturday nights at Holden ever since. Prayer Around the Cross is a quiet service in full darkness, which happens on Friday nights. At this service, a large cross lies flat in the middle of the space. Bowls containing candles for lighting and are at certain prayer stations beside the cross, including spaces where the community can lay hands on one who is praying. While some are praying at the cross and some are laying on hands, the rest of the community sings meditative-style music.

While most participants commented upon Vespers as the primary means of faith formation, formation happened beyond worship as well. On the experience of Confirmation, Participant C talked about how she refused to be confirmed until,

> The pastor, who was a woman, gathered five women who met with me every two weeks all year to talk about what it is to be a person of faith on the journey, and these five women formed this group around me, and accompanied me and I to this day, I think that was absolutely stunning. I mean, like, in what world does any high school student get that kind of accompaniment in their faith journey? So I thought that was, I think that's remarkable.

Several participants commented about how the natural world and being outside formed their faith. Beyond worship, participant C commented that being under the Milky Way felt significant to her:

> Being under the stars. I don't think children mostly my own children don't get the experience of being alone at night under the universe, and I think there was something in that setting, walking home by myself alone in the pitch dark with the Milky Way I mean just inches away from your nose, it feels like, right? And I think this inspired a lot of big thinking in my life, like it inspired big questions. I am so small, the universe is so big. How can I matter? Who is God in all of this? Does God know me? Does God care about us? Where did the universe come from? And will it ever end?

> And I remember specifically on multiple occasions, I'd be walking home in the winter by myself, and the sky would be up overhead, and I would just allow myself to fall backwards into the snow and sort of have it cover me. And I would think about my smallness, like my disappearance into the earth or into the world. And I would do this actually in the summertime too, like, lay down on the dirt, and just think about holding still and letting the forest just sort of come around me. This is all I mean - I wouldn't say I've ever had mystical experiences, but I feel like this is as close. Somebody else could interpret it that way. I'm too cerebral to interpret it that way. But I have a deeply, ecologically informed spirituality. And I think it had nothing to do with anything anybody taught me or said. It was the place itself. And I had a deep sense that I needed to understand my place in creation as a precursor to understanding who God is that somehow those things were intimately connected. I don't know where else somebody gets that kind of formation. I think that's unique to a setting like this, or a kind of yeah wilderness setting. But I don't know. Maybe other people experience that in other ways. But to me, that was very significant.

To the third theme, justice as part of the nature of the community, Participant C commented that during the time that she lived at Holden, the community's justice focus was more on international issues than on domestic issues. But she also credits Holden's general ethic of love for neighbor as part of what continues to drive her understanding of faith and justice:

> So I can't trace all of my concerns back to Holden, but I think the general disposition to want to be educated, to want to build more diverse community, to want to want to stand up for what's right, I think, just sort of that baseline value.

Interestingly, the connection between faith and justice was not always explicit, and in fact, sometimes there was tension between the two. Participant C commented on how at one point, it felt like the village had lost the connection between faith and justice, and this could be seen in the communal meals.

> And so there was also this sense that maybe Holden had become so invested in its focus on justice that perhaps it had, in doing so, forgotten that our call to justice is grounded in a faith commitment. [For example], the kitchen at the time was a place of great control. You know, if we really care about justice, you'll eat this way and not that way. We should eat, you know why are we eating this while other people are hungry? It was really a place of – the kitchen was not a place of celebration, but of meagerness. I mean I'm not saying we didn't have enough to eat we - all I'm saying there was some anger embedded in the justice, and it wasn't healthy.

Participant C expands on this theme, noting that time in the Village was not idyllic nor was it an escape from the "real world." In fact, in many ways, because the winter community was insular, breaches of trust were felt more deeply. However, Participant C notes that the attempt at healing from these experiences were also part of the commitment to justice in community. She comments,

> It's not exactly related to faith formation, but my understanding of the church or Holden is not a perfect place and a lot of really hard and sad things happened while we were there. So I guess I want to say, part of the formation was also an up close and personal encounter with human sin, and the recognition that the wounds and the failures of human beings cannot be escaped, no matter how beautiful the wilderness is. People used to say, you know, when we would leave, they'd say, "Oh, how's your transition back to the real world?" They'd always use this phrase, and I was like you have no idea how real it got up there. And so I guess just in terms of faith formation, or justice issues, I mean, I think that is part of the formation. I learned as a child that even people in the Church fail us…
>
> I mean I think that's also part of the formation that for me. I could see how some people would have that experience and say, okay, this whole thing is a sham then, but for me, it was part of the formation to just think about or to realize like there is no escape from the hard stuff. But what matters is also how we deal with it.
>
> So I remember, for example, in the aftermath of one thing, some attempts at restorative justice, you know a circle that came together to talk about the harm that had been done, and so some real I would say something like, a faith-informed attempt at restoring community after harm had been done, but also use of law enforcement and the prison system, and, you know, not an attempt like in some cults, I guess, to like deal with it all internally right. But like no, there are limits and now law enforcement needs to be involved. And you cannot come back.

To the fourth theme, commitment to justice upon leaving the Village, Participant C offered an interesting response. While Participant B has found an outlet for her commitment to justice by way of social work, other participants commented on the pressure they felt to "live up" to who Holden had shaped them to become. Participant C comments,

> I think I felt a lot of pressure from my upbringing at Holden to - as much as I loved while I was there living this sort of counter-cultural life, you know, pushing back on the you know, forces of injustice and praying for peace, and you know, wearing clothes from potty patrol [the Village's free clothing exchange] against materialism of all kinds. Right? Like okay. So as much as that was formative to me then, and a good thing then, part of my identity, I think later there was not enough help, somehow, maybe…
>
> I think I left with a sense almost the weight of the world on my shoulders, like I'm still supposed to stand up for justice. I'm still supposed to be a peacemaker. I'm still supposed to be you know the kind of heroes that we really raised up while we were there… It's like we raise these people up as saints, and then we're sent out into the world to be these kinds of heroes. And but then, as a young person, I felt very alone in it, because the community that had formed me to be this kind of person for justice, and to live this kind of faith in the world, the community was disbanded. And so then it was like, how am I supposed to hold this weight, this work, but I now do not have a community I'm doing it in? And the church communities that I'm finding are really not that interested in this kind of work, or at least the one we joined when I was in eleventh grade, and we had left the village, you know. So I think there was a kind of loneliness in faith and in life, because I was formed to believe this was my community's work. But where was the community now? … It was like they disappeared. It was like we had lived in a dream…
>
> So I think there were periods of my young adulthood where I felt a little bit like I had been ripped off. Like I've been raised to believe the church was this a certain kind of thing, primarily having to do with community and work together for God's world… So I think I felt a certain kind of pressure, and I think I felt inadequate like I wasn't living up to what my incredibly rich and formative childhood how potentially prepared me to be. Like I wasn't going to go be Bonhoeffer, but I think I thought that's what I was formed for. I think I thought this rich experience should really lead me to something, and in the end I'm a very ordinary person. I try to do good work. I try to raise my children well. I try to share what I have. I'm involved in church, but I don't know that I - I think I thought the kingdom was closer, and then it turns out to have been including my own participation in it. So I think I'm wrestled with some feelings of inadequacy over the years.

To the fifth theme, current relationship with a faith community or ambivalence toward engaging with a faith community, Participant C became an active member of a faith community following her time at Holden, and also credits her experience at Holden as having a profound impact on her understanding of the meaning of church. She describes church as either being a club or being a witness to the Gospel that is all-inclusive. She admits not having patience for the "church as club" model. She describes her faith commitment, as follows,

> I'm an active member of the ELCA. I have been a member of many churches, many different congregations over the years, but that has remained consistent…
>
> So I'd say my adult faith is - It's complicated. I would describe it as living and evolving, and I would describe it as deeply embodied. I could not be the kind of person who just goes to church on Sundays, and lets it be with that. For me, it is a full investment, or it's nothing. So I'm either, either throwing myself into the life of the community, baking bread for communion, you know, doing storytelling for the children, offering adult forums, I mean probably I'm too involved now that I'm saying all this. But for me it's like, Is this our life together, or is it not? And if it's not, it's not my faith. It's not my church. So yeah… But I also, I mean, I will say, finding churches that feel like home has sometimes been challenging because I ask a lot of my faith communities. I want them to be real communities, and I want them to be countercultural, and I get pretty impatient when churches look more like the surrounding culture. Or you know, when it's just sort of, I don't know, Midwest Cultural expectation is to go to church or something. I have no time for that. I have no interest in it. I could join a different club if I wanted to club. So in that sense it really did, I think my time on Holden and just my parents own approach… was deeply formative of my sense of what Church is supposed to be. And if it's not, if we're not going out on a limb for people who are suffering, if we're not accompanying people in in situations of injustice or oppression, if we're not concerned about the earth, the creation around us, I mean, then what are we doing here? Forget it. Go home.

Along these lines, a particularly compelling final comment comes from Participant C, who refers to the hunger planted in her while at Holden for faith and her longing for community as an adult. This hunger seems to be present in many interviewees, regardless of whether they attend church now. She articulates the hunger as follows:

> But my sense of faith and spirituality is so - community is an essential extent of that. And I would say in my adult life, I hunger for community, the kind of community I think I experienced at Holden, and the kind of community I was taught to hunger for that Holden could never really fulfill. But I was taught to hunger for it and taught to want it as a good in the world and in my life. And nothing, nothing can fill that hunger in reality, especially not in twenty-first century, you know two jobs, two kids, working, you know it's a lot. But my eschatological hunger involves a kind of community that can never quite be tasted, you know, in in regular life. And maybe we got close to it at Holden, where we were told that we were getting close to it. But Holden, of course, has its own forms of brokenness and its own pain, and we were not immune to that there. But somehow, at least I felt like we were leaning toward it, and explicitly saying that it was something we should want, that God wanted for us, living this sort of community care for one another, community sharing of resources, community that not working for money, but for the good of the community. All of that was very formative to me, especially around materiality - relationship to money, to technology, to material things. I took all of that to

> heart that the goods in life are the goods we create together, that we make together, that the earth provides.

For Participant C, several markers indicate a mature/maturing faith commitment, namely: her current, fully invested engagement with a faith community, her articulation of her on-going faith development, her understanding that the purpose of church is to care for those who are suffering, and her continued hunger for and efforts toward shaping a faith community toward justice work. She also mentioned in this interview her leadership with chairing her church's RIC process, which is a process to commit the church to the full inclusion of LGBTQIA persons, as well as to engage in anti-racism work. All of these comments suggest that her faith is a mature/maturing one, likely primarily located in Peter's reconstructing phase.

Participant D

Participant D was the fourth to be interviewed. This was the participant who, as noted above, articulated a discomfort with the religious/faith language, as they located their commitments and meaning-making outside of this lens. When it came to several of the other themes, however, participant D shared several responses with other interviewees. To the first theme, the positive treatment of the child by the community, for example, Participant D echoed how much they enjoyed getting to interact with people across a wide variety of ages.

> It was good to be able to like interact with people of all of different ages, which, you get like a little bit of living elsewhere, but like it's mostly your peers in school, and your parents friends, which is fine, but it's not quite the same as interacting with little kids to interacting with like older people, and just getting this very like broad range of experiences that you're exposed to, and different types of people, which is cool.

To the third theme, justice as part of the nature of the community*,* Participant D commented on the theme of queer justice, noting the difference between diversity as a theory and diversity as a lived experience, the latter of which they experienced at Holden. While they had

grown up in a family and community that was open to gender and sexual differences, it was not until they were in residence at Holden that they built actual relationships with people across those lines.

> But, it's that like, you know, you have in in a big city, or whatever you have, these abstract concepts. And it's not really until you start interacting with people directly that I think, at least for me, it really starts sinking in. Like I had this in college, even where, like I hadn't really questioned my gender until then, because I didn't know that that was the thing you could do until I have a couple of friends that ended up being trans and like I was like, oh, this is a thing. And again, it's that, like you know, before that, like abstractly that, that was a thing. But like hadn't really had that personal connection. And I think that's one like the thing that like Holden really gives you is like, I mean, is that sort of that personal connection. And that like in, because you're in a pretty small community, which is nice.

To the fourth theme, the pressure upon leaving the community to become a person who works to enact justice in significant ways or the ways they enact justice, Participant D expressed an on-going commitment to "a very strong desire to be nice to people, for the most part, especially people who are struggling, less fortunate" and particularly to advocacy with and for the transgender community, which they strongly connect to their time at Holden. At the same time, Participant D also expressed a sense of being unsure how to help.

> There's nothing really that I specifically can do, which doesn't help, because, like I mean, I can vote. I can sign petitions, but, like I, I don't have the money to throw at, you know, fixing this kind of major problem that the entire world needs to fix.

As noted above, Participant D was the interviewee who did not have a faith commitment and strongly identified as atheist, a recurrent theme in the interview, which suggested that this commitment was central to their identity. I do not wish to assign a faith language or lens to a story that clearly resisted both of these; however, what is worth noting is that Participant D clearly traces their ongoing advocacy efforts on behalf of the transgender community to their time at Holden. This suggests an external commitment born of time in a faith community, which is remarkable.

Participant E

Participant E was the fifth participant to be interviewed, and she also touched on all five of the themes outlined in this chapter. To the first theme, the positive treatment of the child by the community, several participants talked about the affirmation they received at Holden and the non-judgmental nature of the community, which was particularly important because of the life stage that they were in. Participant E commented on how important this is during her early teen years.

> And yeah, and I think one great thing about Holden as a child, especially at the age that I was, just how affirming it can be of like whoever you are… And that is so important for 12 year olds and 13 year olds with like a lot of acne, and finding out you need glasses, and like dealing with like body image stuff - that's like really incredible to be able to see. That's just like something that has stuck with me from that time period is like how lucky I was to be able to experience that, and how it was just like to go back into the public school system after that was a little bit jarring.

To the second theme, the child's growing relationship to faith, particularly through the daily Vespers service, participant E reflected on several worship services, namely Prayer Around the Cross and Vespers '86. Of these two services, participant E commented,

> The other thing that I really valued was the rituals, specifically Prayer Around the Cross and Vespers '86. And yeah, I'd say, like those, those two were definitely really important to me, and have just been a constant grounding presence in my life… I would just like go up there [to Prayer Around the Cross] and like cry about, like I don't know what I was crying about when I was seven, but it was just like a really powerful space to kind of release. And I still use those chants if I'm like anxious, or whatever. I kind of like put them on repeat, and then they just like move from one to another without me really even thinking about it.

Others commented upon worship when it was experienced as the Village's weekly Hunger Awareness Meals. At the Hunger Awareness Meals (also called "Solidarity" or "Food For Thought," depending on the year), the community would eat simply one meal per week (rice and beans, potatoes, etc) and reflect upon food, poverty, and justice. For a while, Villagers could

sign up to tell a story as part of the meal. Participant E commented on the power of story-telling related to justice in these meals,

> And I think that that vulnerability in conjunction with justice work is something that I've like sought ever since then, and that I find so much meaning in, is like not separating those things, but like really incorporating like reflection and what it means to like be an active member of the world. And yeah, when I think about like my most meaningful Vespers services while I was a kid, they were those services when people just shared their life story. Or like a part of their life story. So that was definitely, really powerful.

To the fourth theme, the pressure upon leaving the community to become a person who works to enact justice in significant ways or the ways they enact justice, participant E commented on the need for community as part of justice work, which she understood as part of the gift of living at Holden – community accountability. Now that she lives in a city and away from the Village, she comments on how difficult it is to engage in justice work without community:

> That's what I'm seeking now, like living in a city like trying to figure out like what is the ideal, and like I don't know what that is, but I know that, like more consistent like community is something that's really important to me…. And that's how I've been able to sustain activism was when I was up there [at Holden], and now I feel like I'm not. And so that's just like a very clear difference is like what community accountability can do for a person, and how you don't have to seek that out like you're all just in this community together. And then it's so much harder to seek out when you're not - when it's not so clear.

To the fifth theme, current relationship with a faith community or ambivalence toward engaging with a faith community, Participant E struggles with attending church because she is unsure what she believes and does not want to attend a church and be seen as "faking it." She articulates this even as she continues to long for the meaning that she found in Holden worship services.

> But the active like singing in the dark together, and like going to the bowl and putting your hand on someone [at Prayer Around the Cross], whatever praying means to you like that's just like such a powerful thing. And yeah, so that whole service, I think, is just like a really meaningful space. And I do wish that, like I could participate in that now,

> because I don't go to church. And then I mean, I always like blamed it on wanting to sleep in. But I think there's also like me not like necessarily wanting to go to a church that I don't know if I believe in it. I feel like I'm like faking it or something, whereas I never, I mean, at Holden, partly because it was required, that was never a question of whether you believed it or not, it was like we're all gonna be in this space together. And that was the other thing that was really meaningful to have that like one time a day where everybody in the village was in one space.

Similar to Participant B, Participant E perhaps finds herself in a deconstructive stage of faith, unsure of how her beliefs match up to the beliefs of the church and feeling inauthentic in her desire to attend church. Even so, she continues to have a hunger for both worship and justice and traces this hunger to her time at Holden, even as she struggles to find a community in which to enact this commitment. I would suggest that the hunger to work for justice and peace indicates that Participant E's desire grows from a mature/maturing faith.

Participant F

Participant F was the sixth participant to be interviewed, and she also touched on all five of the themes in this project. She began by talking about the affirmation and support that she received at Holden, which changed her life in deeply significant ways. To the first theme, the positive treatment of the child by the community, Participant F comments,

> My stepmom- I'm getting emotional – my stepmom, she is adamant to this day. She says, she's always told me, she's like - Holden saved you. It saved you. It saved you because you were able to find yourself there in those two years, that independence, that ability to separate from the chaos that was the fractured marriage, the responsibility of caring for my younger sister. Those things were lifted. They were taken away. I didn't have to deal with those like I could just be me, in an incredibly non-judgmental place.

Several participants commented on the finding of spirituality as a component of worship, whether from the rhythm of worship or the feeling of worshiping in a community known to them. To the second theme, the child's growing relationship to faith, particularly through the daily Vespers service, Participant F, who had grown up in the Lutheran church, comments that it was not until living at Holden, did she find deeper meaning in the routine:

> I was confirmed Lutheran, like I did the whole shebang, everything... But I don't think I understood what it meant to have a sense of spirituality until I went there, and it wasn't like this bolt of lightning kind of a thing. It was just, it was the routines…And so the expectation was, you went to Vespers every night… I went, and I went, and I went, and I went, and to this day, like the one thing that - oh, I crave more than anything else - is the Holden Evening Prayer. Just, I miss it… But I missed that like probably more than anything. That and Matins. Those gave me a very, very profound love for liturgy.

To the third theme, justice as part of the nature of the community, Participant F highlights the importance of friendships at Holden and the importance of living in diverse community, which was a new experience for her as a teenager at Holden. She commented that she continues to try to incorporate this in her life and teach to her children.

> I think one thing that I learned up there and was exposed to was different ways of living, like I knew that there was such thing as lesbian and gay and questioning, and all that kind of stuff. I knew that that existed, but had I ever met anybody who had that way of life? No, and so that experience, those kinds of friendships and stuff like that, probably it would have taken me a lot longer in life just because of my norm of where I functioned… I was not living in any place [before Holden] that had divergent thoughts of ones that I thought, and so that was something that I felt was very eye opening, living in a place like that I was exposed to thoughts that I had not been exposed to before. And I think that was a really good thing. And I think that experience is one that I take with me now.

To the fourth theme, the pressure upon leaving the community to become a person who works to enact justice in significant ways or the ways they enact justice, Participant F struggles with what it means to be an activist, both as she looks back on her time at Holden and as she looks at activism now.

> It's really easy to be an activist in a crowd of activists. It's really easy to champion social justice, to be a vegan when there's a kitchen cooking your vegan meals. Like it's really easy to live simply in a community when you're surrounded by simple living, like those things are easy. You don't have to work hard. You don't have to make sacrifices. You don't have to wrestle with the mundane complexities of do I pay my healthcare bill, or do I buy groceries? Those problems don't exist there. They don't and so in that, there is, I think, when anything is Utopia-ish, you can't help but have rose-tinted glasses and become disconnected with the world around you.

Participant F also struggled with the nature of activism at Holden, commenting that during her time, the justice positions of the community were not taught and explained, but expected. This has led to some disappointment in her formation around justice at Holden. She comments that that approach is different than the type of activism she has come to understand as important in her adult years, particularly as a teacher:

> But it wasn't a culture of I'm gonna teach you how to be an activist and to care about something. I'm going to tell you what to care about. Like Thursday was our Hunger Awareness Thursday, where we would have our baked potato and that kind of stuff. But I have to say for me at that point, it didn't really mean a lot, like it was like, okay, I'm very aware of hunger, I can go write a letter and that's it. And that's probably a very poor example of what I'm trying to say.
>
> Having become an educator, my role is to facilitate *aha!* moments and realizations in children, like that is my primary focus every single day. My primary focus is not to tell them what to think. It's to give them information and guide them to draw their own conclusions, and to arrive at decisions, and sometimes yes, there is a right answer, and like that's why I'm saying like this isn't like "down with Holden" or anything like that. But like I think that's a really, it's a really hard thing to teach.
>
> So for me, my core of activism is, I feel like is in the classroom. I'm an activist in creating thinkers, and that's like, I feel like the best thing I can do for this world is that. Rather than going and marching for cause, or writing letters, or doing anything like that, it's like, I go into my classroom every day. I love them as much as I can of them. I teach them right from wrong as much as I can teach them right from wrong, and I teach them how to think and be critical, so that when they enter into the world and they're presented with information, they know how to evaluate it, and they can make the best decision for themselves.

To the fifth theme, current relationship with a faith community or ambivalence toward engaging with a faith community, Participant F noted that she is not opposed to going to church and even comments on the desire to be active in a faith community, but that circumstances make it difficult.

> And I am a terrible churchgoer, the worst in the world. My husband and I joke about every time we go to church, we're welcomed, “so glad for you to join us. Have you come here before?” Really - only for five years. So it's so bad… But I want to cultivate in my kids that love of liturgy. Right now, they pretty much just hate church because it's torture for an hour. I’m just thankful that at this point they're all old enough to know better now. And so like with threats and bribes like we can be quiet for an hour, which is nice. But it's still a Herculean effort. To get everybody out the door and to church, and sometimes it's just it's not even doesn't feel worth it, even though I know, like it's going to be great.

Interestingly, even as she is critical of Holden’s approach to justice, Participant F locates her specific commitment to teaching a critical approach to justice as an expression of her time at Holden. She also articulates the desire to be engaged in a faith community, even as there are challenges related to family and logistics. Her commitment to teaching, specifically around justice, suggests that she is also in a mature/maturing expression of faith.

Participant G

Participant G was the seventh participant to be interviewed, and the first to speak about Holden’s earlier years. He also touched on all five of the themes, four of which are outlined below. To the first theme, the positive treatment of the child by the community, Participant G commented on the friendships across school age kids, one of the unique components of the school program at Holden, where children of different ages would learn together.

> But you know it's one of those things where, as a third grader, most kids that age wouldn't have a sixth grader as their as their best friend. But Holden had this is a theme, a huge theme for me, with, you know, in terms of what you're getting at the way that Holden puts people together of different backgrounds and different ages was hugely formative to me.

While Participant G was a younger child during his school year at Holden, one who returned often in his teen years, he talked about how closely he listened to the teaching sessions and how these impacted him:

> As a gay man, I felt acceptance there before I even came out. Like they were having sessions, they were having faculty up there talking about those issues, and as a teenager I listened to every word of that before I even came out of the closet. So yeah, that's another big one, that is really interesting that that didn't even occur to me when you read me the questions. I think it's because it's not so much of an issue in my life right now, and nobody around me cares about that but a generation ago that mattered… But Holden was really one of the first places where I saw the possibility of that happening. Like I can't thank the village enough for that.

A third theme commented on by nearly every participant was that a commitment to justice was part of the very nature of the community. Participant G stated it succinctly, "It didn't matter what religious activity we were doing, the social justice thing was front and center all the time. It was always about being mindful of the needs of others." It was this type of intentional justice connection, along with growing up with parents who understand racial justice as an expression of faith, that gave Participant G a different (positive) understanding of the church.

> Honestly, if it weren't for Holden, I would have disregarded churches - well, if it weren't for Holden and my own, I think mostly good religious upbringing - so in other words, the example that my parents set in their churches, and with my father as pastor - I would have no interest in in religion whatsoever. I would consider religion inherently evil. That's strong language, but I stand by that. I would not only not want to participate, but I would want to actively do whatever I could to diminish religion's influence in our society. I saw Holden as people who read the Bible, who read, who studied the Gospel and the works of Jesus, and said "We should be nice to the poor. We should work for racial justice. We should support communities of faith in Latin America who are who are preaching a different sort of gospel, who are preaching, who are doing liberation theology, this sort of thing." And you know that had been taught by my father in our churches. But as I learned as I got older and learned some of the things that churches were teaching and religious groups were practicing, somehow connected to the Bible, or you know they claimed were connected to the Bible, I [would] think, "Well that sure isn't the Bible that I was taught and certainly not what was practiced in my parents' church and at Holden."

Participant G currently has a complex relationship with church and only occasionally attends, even as he is still somewhat open to a relationship with church. He notes that a church he occasionally attended in the past had a "Holden vibe" to it, and he enjoyed that.

> So I'm not involved in any church or faith community at this point and haven't been for probably 20 years. That said I still sometimes go to church, both here where I live, and more often when I'm with my parents, who are retired… And my brother in law.. the church that he had had a very kind of Holden vibe to it, and I enjoyed going there. I don't know, I wouldn't describe myself as a believer, but there are a lot of things I don't know. I guess if that puts me in an agnostic category, that's fine, but I sort of - I'm still at 54 years old, not entirely clear what I believe in, what I don't believe, but I have not rejected the idea of going to church outright, of course, or I wouldn't do it. And time at Holden once again is huge in terms of me, not wanting to just run at my first opportunity, from the idea of religion.

When asked about current justice commitments and which ones he gravitates toward, Participant G responded to the list of possible commitments, namely ecological, racial, gender, and LGBTQIA issues, by commenting, "Yes, all of the other issues, those are all hugely, I mean, if I'd made a list that that would have been exactly my list, too."

Throughout his interview, Participant G articulated a thoughtful faith journey, with several stops along the way that continued to deepen his understanding of justice, particularly ecological justice. Of particular interest is his comment that he would be working against religion were it not for his time at Holden and his upbringing among parents actively working in the Civil Rights movement. While he did not articulate his specific active commitments to justice areas, he commented that he was actively engaged with several. Even without a regular commitment to a faith community, his articulation of faith and engagement with justice work suggests a mature/maturing faith.

Participant H

Participant H was the eighth person to be interviewed, and like Participant G, brought a different perspective because of both his time in the Village (early years) and because his family situation was different than the other eight. Participant H lived in the Village as a teenager but without his family. He noted that he arrived at the village as a teenager who was struggling with

depression and his family relationships, and he commented on how the experience of living with the community felt like it saved him in some ways:

> But what I found more that really made a difference for me in my life was the community. Just finding a group of people so many different ages in the winter community, which is pretty small. That really made me feel a part of it, and people that you just in a way that was, that was a way of, I guess, a kind of salvation in a way.

For much of its history, Holden has sent visitors and staff out of the Village with a prayer known as the "Prayer of Good Courage."[114] Participant H commented on that sending prayer, its connection to building community at Holden, and the way the Eucharist interacted with that community.

> I mean that Holden prayer is like, 'We know not where we're going, only that your hand is leading us.' It's sort of like, so that's sort of thing, that kind of ties everybody together, in a way. Even if they come from very different backgrounds. And they are very different ages. Everybody's kind of open to ideas and other, whatever might happen, and I guess that's what's you could say is, the Holy Spirit, maybe. So yeah, I mean, what makes that community, I mean, I guess you have to share. I suppose that I mean the whole thing with the Sunday, the Eucharist is, the forgiveness of sins, you confess your sins so, and everybody's, I mean, you see the faults right. I mean you live close to community, feel everybody is not perfect, and you see everybody is very human and so you have to you share that brokenness. And so, in a way, that's how you realize as a community you need forgiveness - God's forgiveness.

Participant H comments on how his faith grew while at Holden, moving from someone who did not feel a deep connection with God toward someone who found the Sunday Eucharist emotionally moving and community forming. While many participants were hesitant to use explicitly faith language, a trend among many Lutherans, Participant H articulated this as the work of the Holy Spirit in community:

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[114] The Prayer of Good Courage: "O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us, and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." From Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Evening Prayer: A Simplified Form," https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/DailyPrayer_SimplifiedEveningPrayer.pdf

> I guess being growing up as a pastor's kid, I didn't feel like I had a very deep connection to God. I could say it was more of just, there are certain rituals that we do, and they're all just this is kind of how we do, how you perform these things. But at Holden, I remember the Sunday vespers being very, very kind of emotional and sort of feeling of everybody together with Eucharist, and it seemed to have a lot more meaning in a way. And then I guess you would say that, or what the pastor would say was, that's how that's how we learn about God, right? It's through other people, right or the community. It's not some, I mean it could be the Holy Spirit, but it's not some kind of vague thing out in the ether.

Participant H also reflected on the connection between the environment, climate change, and food insecurity, referencing Holden's food ethic as a way of reminding the community about hunger.

> I mean the ecological justice was probably the paramount, I think. I'm thinking about being close to nature and thinking about what's happening to the planet at large, and being aware of how that's changing. Even then, I think we were starting to talk a lot about the climate change. You'd hear some of that in the late seventies, and also I guess, just idea of justice for people of different races, but more, I think just people in different conditions, poverty, people in need that are just living in poverty, and so I mean, that's a situation of which Holden was often reminding us, I think. What was the - was it a Potato Night? Yeah, we have to think about people that didn't have enough to eat, and that's, it's a good reminder.

To his own justice commitment, Participant H commented, "I would say the ecology and poverty were the main issues that I sort of took with me, and I still feel strongly about. I don't necessarily take a lot of action on it on it, but I still feel that there's certainly a lot of that, what you call injustice?"

On the lighter side, Participant H commented on Holden's core value of "Holy Hilarity." Pranks, jokes, and shenanigans have informed the playful side of Holden. Participant H, who struggled with depression as a teenager, commented on how meaningful "Holy Hilarity" was to him at Holden – and also how rare it was in faith organizations:

> And I was just talking about Holden hilarity. So I mean it's like, Well, who does that? It's not justice, really, but that's a big thing that I sort of learned. There is kind of that just being silly and having fun, and that's I think, a big part of what the idea of that the Gospel was even at Holden. So it's not just justice, but it's this other thing. I don't know, I was trying to see if you could put that into a justice category. But I don't know the justice of humor or something. But Nancy Winder used to say, that laughter keeps the devil away, or something like that. I mean. There's lots of things like that make a lot of sense to me still. And so that's, I just want to mention that.

This connection between hilarity and justice is one that helps frame Holden as a community that also understood leisure and joy to be at the center of their life together.

Similar to many other interviewees, Participant H has a complex relationship with church. He spoke of an evolving clarity related to the meaning of church and the connections that it provides, but a desire not to engage with the structure of the church.

> I don't go to church anymore. It's really been quite a while… But I mean spiritually, I suppose I mean if there's a part of me that still feels like that, I think there is, I mean, just because talking to you about it, it's sort of becoming clear in a way. That it has to do with the shared experience with people, right? That it’s not just a surface thing, but has some meaning. I mean there's ritual, but there's some kind of connection to other people with it. So I still feel that's possible. I mean, I haven't been seeking it out. Maybe I will. I mean it's not like my life is over. So I could still find some of that. But the problem is that I don't feel like I want to necessarily engage in the structure of the Christian organization, I guess. I mean, it's sort of like going back to, I don't know, religion or those experiences that are kind of a part of the past. I guess. I mean that I don't know. That's about the best I can do I think on that answer.

While Participant H had less of an external commitment to action around justice, he did articulate that Holden’s teaching of justice remained very important to him, particularly around ecology and poverty. What was interesting about this interview was that the longer we spoke, the more openness Participant H seemed to feel toward returning to church and re-engaging with faith. In some ways, it felt like the practice of his faith had become dormant, but for the invitation, he would engage again.

Participant I

The final participant, Participant I, also began by articulating positive treatment by the community. Participant I talked about the validation she felt from the community: “I think also I really appreciated that people took me seriously - like I mean, I was a kid, but people didn't necessarily treat me as a kid.” Participant I worked in the Craft Cave (the arts and crafts center) and points to this experience as a continuing source of validation in her life:

> I had a lot of skills and knowledge that I knew, and I would be teaching things and like had responsibilities. And I feel like it was one of the first places that started feel like that Holden is what I think of as the first time where I was like, oh, I have like things to share that are worthwhile, and like skills, or like ability to lead things. Or even if I’m young, I can still like have an opinion that people want to hear. Or you know those kinds of things, I think was really cool.

When asked what formed her faith the most, Participant I commented on the rhythm of Vespers and the creativity that could arise from such a rhythm, as well as the blending of creativity and format, and how these continue to impact her today:

> Like you have this order - because we had worship every day you get more creative with, like the format like what you do. And so I think I really, really loved that sort of exploration, and like there was a rhythm to it for sure. Like, Sunday is always a full like Eucharist service. Saturday, you would do Holden Evening Prayer. Like you know, Friday is Prayer Around the Cross. Thursday, you'd usually do another sung vespers in the summer, like Monday, I think, with theme vespers. But Tuesday and Wednesday you have like kind of more room to play with that. So I think, looking at in terms of like how my faith or the sort of communities that I've been drawn to or helped create, have definitely had more of that like creative element in them, or sort of like playing with the format, building off of like set liturgies, or like traditions, but not like always keeping to them.

On the justice nature of the community, Participant I offered an interesting perspective as one who has lived in the Village more recently. While conversations around LGBTQIA inclusion were at the forefront of the Holden conversation for decades, she notes that by the time she lived there, it was simply part of the community:

> Sort of the thing about Holden has a long history of sort of being in front of the curve to some extent around, like LGBTQIA inclusion. And I think I, looking back, it's like, it was there, but I didn't notice it, and that was the great thing. It was like, it was just part of the - I mean, I'm sure people talked about it, but as a kid – no one really, there wasn't like a big conversation about it. It just was like everyone is loved, and, like everyone is welcome… But looking back it was like a lot of my friends were queer or gay, or like out in some way, and it wasn't an issue, and that was great. I feel like it didn't, it wasn't something that I had to think about. And it was also, I think, grounded in faith, too. It wasn't like a side thing. It was incorporated into the grace and love vibe that was just like infused through everything.

Perhaps faith and activism is an evolving concept at Holden. Later participants have found the living of this combination to a have come together a bit more easily. Participant I, for example, has found a way to blend her faith and her desire to care for creation, both of which were deepened for her at Holden. She comments,

> But I have, like my church community. And then, like in my work, I'm working with people who are in the environmental field. I feel like it's sort of bridging those… But I feel like part of the reason why I'm doing the work that I do right now is also because of my experience of Holden like being outside and hiking and backpacking, and I'd worked on trails a little bit, and at the time I was like it would be really cool to do this for my work I never thought I would, and now I am. I've done three or four seasons now in both habitat restoration and trails being around like outdoors people, and then also me coming in as like a person of faith, whose faith is also very connected to being outdoors.

Participant I is also an active member of a church community, and she also serves in a leadership position (Church Council) at that congregation. She traces the feel of the congregation to reminding her of Holden: the size, the progressiveness of the community, the flexible worship format, the focus on justice and equity, the place for doubt. She connects her experience at Holden with a desire to continue to be engaged in church.

> So I go to a small church… and I'm the treasurer… from the first service I was like, oh, my gosh, this place is like what I want from a church! So I've been going there since. I feel like it's not the same as Holden, but aspects of it remind me of Holden, for sure, like it's a pretty small - or it's like a close knit community, very progressive, sort of like also kind of exploring or playing with like how like what the format of a service is like, I mean, follow a rhythm, but like, have more like interactive parts, or you know, it's like more community focused rather than just like sitting and sitting through an order service, I guess. And then also very focused on like justice and equity and sort of just like, it's also a space where doubt is not bad, you know. I feel like that was one thing I really appreciate about Holden is that it's not like a dogmatic place. Yeah. And then sometimes I think like, maybe I would still be going to church if we had stayed [not lived at Holden]. But I think part of the reason why I still have a faith connection, and like, still want to be a part of the Church is because of Holden, because it was such like a life giving like place, and not just like once a week like oh, my friends, are there kind of place. I feel like in conversations with other young adults who did not go to Holden, sort of that, like struggle of trying to find faith communities that still speak to them.

Similar to Participants A and C, Participant I is not only active in a faith community, but serves in lay leadership for one. She traces her vocational work in environmental restoration to the ethic of creation care that was central at Holden. While Participant I was the youngest interviewee, what is interesting about her is that, more than many others, she can articulate both an active faith (church) commitment and an active justice commitment (ecology), which suggests that her faith indicates is both in a reconstructing phase and a mature/maturing phase.

Summary of Interviews

It is significant that in the nine interviews, all nine participants articulated an ongoing commitment to justice and peace in some capacity, with most articulating an ongoing *active* engagement, whether through their vocational choice (teaching, social work, environmental restoration), their church commitment (serving on council, chairing a justice-focused committee), or their service and advocacy work. This is particularly significant considering the possibility that the nine are in a variety of different stages of faith (with one outside of the stages). Some appear to be in a deconstruction phase, questioning what they believe and their place in the church. Others have walked away from active church engagement all-together,

although those who articulated this also articulated an openness to returning, should they find the right church. Still others made comments that suggest they are in a postcritical phase, having grappled with meaning, theology, and symbols, and returned to these in a new way as adults. It is also likely that many find themselves in multiple stages at the same time.

While I am unsure how these levels of engagement would compare to nine adult children of an ELCA church who did not spend a year in the wilderness, the fact that all nine adult children of Holden Village have a justice and peace commitment is stunning. What is particularly noteworthy is that all nine *explicitly* trace this commitment, at least part, to their time at Holden Village. At least for the self-understanding of these nine, living at Holden for a year or longer in childhood yielded some type of commitment to peace and justice.

If all nine have some type of active or passive commitment to justice and peace, the next question becomes *how* Holden has accomplished or aided in accomplishing this formation in these nine. We will explore this question in the following chapters, returning to the five themes as clues to help us understand *why* all nine are engaged in the work of justice of peace. Before turning to this analysis, I will offer a summary of each of the five themes, as well as a few comments on additional themes.

The first theme that arose was the general positive treatment of the child by the community, particularly through the opportunity to build relationships across ages and the sense of being taken seriously by the community. All nine participants commented on the positive treatment, welcome, and engagement they received from the broader community, with many commenting on the unusual gift of inter-generational friendship that they were able to build at Holden. Within this first theme, participants illustrate that positive treatment through a number of smaller themes: namely the value of inter-generational friendships, learning how to engage

with people of different ages, the feel of being taken seriously by the community, the affirmation of the community particularly at a time when many adolescents are feeling insecure or experiencing self-doubt, the non-judgmental nature of the community, the learning how to recognize one's own competence because of the community's confidence in them, the place to recognize and value one's emerging understanding of self, the gift of the community's small size, and the sense that the presence of the community "saved" them in some significant way. Across the board, participants stories suggest that coming of age at Holden comes with several profound gifts.

The second theme that emerged was the child's growing relationship to faith, particularly through the daily Vespers service. Daily Vespers has been part of the fabric of life at Holden Village for nearly as long as the Village has been open. Attending Vespers every day is a requirement of working and living in the community. Because this requirement has been controversial at times (in fact, the Village only recently made it optional for staff), I expected participants to have negative things to say about attending daily Vespers. While one participant resented the requirement to attend – Participant D – the other eight had consistently positive things to say about attending Vespers and the faith formation at Holden.

Within this second theme, then, a number of smaller themes emerged: the power of rhythm as a means to guide worship, the emotional release that worship could provide, the recognition of the place of community as integral to the liturgy (for example, the forgiveness of sins), the impact of community related to faith maturation and milestones, the movement from faith as something that felt rote and remote to faith that came alive in community, and the continued longing for worship in the way it was offered at Holden. It was not simply attending daily worship that was formational, but the type of worship and the participatory nature of it.

A third theme commented on by nearly every participant was that a commitment to justice was part of the very nature of the community. As noted in the interviews, Participant G stated it most succinctly, “It didn't matter what religious activity we were doing, the social justice thing was front and center all the time. It was always about being mindful of the needs of others.” In the nine interviews, three particular commitments to justice came up multiple times: ecological justice or care for creation, queer justice or LGBTQIA inclusion, and international concern, particularly around poverty and war.

Within this third theme, several additional smaller themes emerged: the commitment to LGBTQIA inclusion as woven into the fabric of the community even if not a topic of conversation, the power of living and working beside people who are different than them and how this forms community, the love of place and nature as motivators for environmental care, that justice can be seen even in the harder side of Village life – how attempts at forgiveness and restoration were also part of justice formation, and how good humor was important to the ethos of the village as well. Participants’ reflections suggest that the Village’s commitments to justice and inclusion was not simply for the sake of the wider world, but for the well-being and full inclusion those who lived and worked in the Village as well.

Interestingly, the comments related to LGBTQIA inclusion suggest that for the children of Holden, their experience around inclusion came less through formal conversation while at Holden and more through observing the way that the Village lived out its commitment. Because LGBTQIA persons were full participants in the Village, serving as neighbors, friends, and mentors, the participants’ own commitments to inclusion grew through relationships. Similarly, for many participants, environmental justice was woven into the ethic of the Village, connected

to how they ate together, how they came to love the land, and how they talked about good use of resources.

Within the fourth theme, the pressure upon leaving the community to become a person who works to enact justice in significant ways or the ways they enact justice, several minor themes arise: participants feeling like they cannot live up to the ideals that were that were modeled for them at Holden, some resentment around the way activism was expected but not taught, some feelings of paralysis around actually making a difference, and not knowing how to engage justice work when one does not have a community. At the same time, several tie their profession and their approach within their profession to a justice commitment of Holden, namely through social work, environmental care, and teaching.

As noted previously, three participants are in active lay leadership at a church, while five expressed some ambivalence toward church engagement, and an additional one fully outside of church. Within this fifth theme, the participant's current relationship to church, a number of smaller themes emerged: the participants' leadership in their church communities even at a relatively young (adult) age, the search for a church that holds in common some aspects of Holden, the search for a faith community that takes its commitment to the world seriously, the ambivalence many others feel toward church (not writing it off, but not seeking it out), and the hunger that continues to live in many of them related to cultivating and living in a faith community that takes justice concerns seriously.

A handful of additional themes arose in the interviews that were mentioned by many of the participants, namely the central place of the school in their experience, the opportunity to learn differently and at their own pace, their own family relationship while at Holden, the difficulty of transitioning out of the community, the ease of transitioning into the community,

and the ambivalence toward returning to visit the community knowing that the people have changed. However, because these responses speak less to the questions of this project, they are not included in this analysis.

A final theme that crossed all of the interviews was the on-going affection that participants feel toward the Village and their time there, as well as the recognition that this was a rare experience in childhood but one for which they continue to feel gratitude. Even among participants who mentioned harder themes at Holden, all nine spoke in positive terms about their experience at Holden. Several mentioned toying with the idea of bringing their own children to live in the Village, or the hope of returning to live in the winter community once more, perhaps in retirement.

Several also mentioned the challenge of explaining this part of their childhood to others. In part because Holden Village can be difficult to describe to anyone, but even when describing it to others who are somewhat familiar with the Village, participants commented that it is still difficult to explain the experience of living in this Village for a longer period of time *and* doing so as a child. None view their experience through rose-colored glasses, but all recognize that it is rare and unique. Once again, Holden shows itself to be truly a place apart.

In the next chapter, these five interview themes will be put in conversation with the research areas previewed in chapters two, three, and four. How might these specific stories and themes speak back to the literature, and how might the literature help contextualize and interpret the stories and themes that arose in the interviews?

Chapter Six: Conversation between Literature and Interviews

As all nine interviewees expressed some type of ongoing commitment to justice and peace, it is worth exploring why this might be the case with so many adult children of Holden Village. A caveat must be noted here, namely that while the nine participants each articulate some type of commitment to justice, and many of them trace this commitment to their time at Holden, the purpose of this research is not to establish causation (these nine are like this *because* of time at Holden in childhood), but to notice correlation. Correlation here observes that these nine bear something specific in common, which may or may not be in common with others, but that is noteworthy to this project: a commitment to justice as an adult.

What might account for this correlation? To explore this why, we will return to the five themes articulated by the majority of interviewees, which I assert will give us clues as to the unique faith formation at Holden. These themes will be put into conversation with the literature outlined in earlier chapters. How does the research help explain how and why the approach of Holden Village leads to faith formation toward justice and peace?

Theme One: The positive treatment of the child by the community

The interviews demonstrate an earlier assertion made in this paper – that in many ways, perhaps most ways, Holden is a place unlike others. That comes across by way of the first theme from the interviews: how formative the inter-generational nature of the community is for those who lived at Holden as children. In fact, this was one of only a few of the themes that arose in all nine interviews. It mattered to the children that they had friendships with children in different grades, as well as with young adults, retirees, and other families. These friendships were the catalyst into adulthood for many; in fact, it was because the members of the community treated them with respect and as individuals that they felt cherished, seen, and like their voice mattered.

This theme corresponds with the research presented earlier by Nydham, Graham, Cushing and McGoldrick, namely that in the adolescence and early adulthood, faith is shaped relationally. Holden provides mentors to the children in school, both officially and unofficially, as well as a full-time pastor in residence and the opportunity to build friendships across generations. Participant C commented on her Confirmation process, and how she was assigned five mentors to be in conversation with as she discerned her understanding of faith. Years later, she is still stunned at this deep and creative commitment made to her faith and credits it as the reason she finally chose to be confirmed.

This first theme also corresponds to the assertion that Capps, building on Fowler, makes in relation to the first and the second decade of faith. In the first decade, children want to know that the world and the people who care for them are trustworthy. While there were occasional breaches of trust at Holden, the community's response of accountability and restoration suggest that children would learn that even when the trustworthiness of an individual is challenged, that the community is trustworthy, in that they will make attempts to repair the breaches. It matters, especially to children in their first decade, that places and people are emotionally and physically safe.

In the second decade of life, Capps claims that there is a fundamental sense of *willingness* that lies at the heart of an adolescent, but one that is often overshadowed and even shut down through power struggles with parents. At Holden Village, however, most interviewees commented on the variety of relationships *outside of the family* as the most formational – with retirees, young adults, and other families. These additional adults treated them not as a child, but as an emerging adult, that is, with respect, equality, trust, and kindness. In these teen years, some even began to gain a sense of competence, generally a mark of the third decade, because they

were assumed to be competent by adults of the community. This is seen, for example, in Participant I's comment, "And I feel like it was one of the first places that started feel like that Holden is what I think of as the first time where I was like, oh, I have like things to share that are worthwhile, and like skills, or like ability to lead things." Because she was treated as competent by the adults in the community, she came to see herself as competent.

While I will turn to implications in the final chapter, this is a remarkable insight about the power of community and intergenerational relationships to invite a youth into a sense of belonging, self-confidence, and self-assurance. If parents fail in the task of letting a youth assert their will (perhaps because they still see their child as a child as Capps notes, or as Miller-McLemore notes, because agency is not appreciated), an attentive community has enormous potential. A community has the power to see the same child for who they are becoming and invite them into a future expression of themselves, one that perhaps even the child cannot yet see. What a powerful implication for the role of the community and intergenerational relationships in the process of a child's maturation. Intentionally designed intergenerational relationships matter in the development of faith.

As also noted in the outdoor ministry literature reviewed in chapter three, the place of the relationship with the young adult cabin leader is also important, forming one of the transformational pieces of the camp experience.[115] For many summer campers, this may be the first young adult person of faith with whom they have built a relationship. And yet, considering these interviews, this may also be one of the *limits* of the camp model. Campers generally only form relationships with children of the same age and one young adult. The young adult cabin leader is expected to invest in the lives of seventy to eighty children over the course of a summer. While the relationships are certainly meaningful while at camp, no young adult can

[115] Sorenson, Narrative Summary, 5-6.

continue to invest in the lives of those 70-80 children year-round. The mentor relationship, by nature of the camp design, ends after the week at summer camp ends.

While Holden Village children also spoke about the young adult relationships, many also referenced the relationships with retirees and others who lived in the Village. This is possible because in the Holden model, there are significantly more adults than children in the Village. For example, in the year that we lived there, there were ten children and seventy adults. Because of this, at Holden, multiple adults invest in the life of a child – through mentorship, serving on teams together, eating meals together, and more. These relationship did not end at the end of the time in the Village. Indeed, many commented that their Holden relationships extended well beyond their time at Holden, noting “the wider Holden community.” In fact, several noted that those currently involved in a faith community looked specifically for Holden connections in those communities.

Harris refers to these communal connections as *koinonia*, or the curriculum of community. She notes that the reasons that people join a faith community are fairly uniform – the desire to belong and to be part of a people that are moving toward union with others. Harris comments that “deep within the human heart is a longing for a holy time when ‘all will be one’” – she refers to this as the “undersong of every joining.”[116] For the Holden interviewees, I did not get these sense that many (or any) could have articulated this desire at the beginning of their time in residence; however, nearly all expressed surprise when that unarticulated desire for belonging was met with true belonging. Adults saw the capacity of the youth, invited them into conversation, served as mentors and role models (officially and unofficially), and in some cases, served as surrogate family.

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[116] Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church,* 76.

The surprise of this belonging by the participants is significant. Harris articulated koinonia as the first work of the church, since a people cannot be fashioned if they are not connected. I would suggest the same is true for the Holden interviewees and take it one step further. Because the children were *actively* included in the community, they were more open to the formation that the community could offer. Being welcomed into community, not by parents but by the community itself, created trust at the age, per Fowler and Capps, that trust is most important. Because the desire to belong was met with belonging, children and youth became open to relationships across the ages.

One interesting insight is that while summer camps do not have the capacity to build multiple long-term intergenerational relationships, or to build relationships across a variety of generations, local churches often do have this capacity. Unlike some churches that appeal to a specific demographic (i.e., young families only, Millenials only), most Lutheran churches are highly inter-generational.[117] In fact, when churches lose this generational mix, re-building it often becomes a priority for the church, recognizing that something is missing when only a limited number of generations are present. As churches become more inter-generational, the benefit is not simply one-sided. Friendships that form between generations can renew people of all ages.[118] In fact, outdoor ministry directors have seen a rise in programs such as "Grandparents Camp" and "Family Camp" to meet this very need.[119] This insight may help churches understand that their graying population is not a liability, but a potential gift to new members. This insight will be explored in chapter eight as we turn to implications and recommendations.

[117] Pew Research Center, "Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)," accessed June 25, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/evangelical-lutheran-church-in-america-elca/.

[118] Wendy Healy, "Generations of Faith: How Intergenerational Ministry Can Sustain the Church," *Living Lutheran,* October 2021, https://www.livinglutheran.org/2021/10/generations-of-faith/.

[119] Healy, Generations of Faith: How Intergenerational Ministry Can Sustain the Church."

Theme Two: The child's growing relationship to faith, particularly through the daily Vespers service

The second theme that arose in the interviews was the formative nature of daily worship. In fact, while only six are quoted, eight of the nine participants commented about the power of worship in community at Holden. For many, what felt significant was the move from worship as a ritual that one simply witnessed to worship as an experience of which one's presence was an integral part. Several commented on how when worship is embedded in the life of a community that does life together closely, worship took on a new meaning. Living in community, they saw one another's flaws, and thus came to recognize the need for grace for themselves and each other. The corporate confession of sins and receiving words of forgiveness, for example, was no longer a rote ritual, but the way that they stayed in relationship with one another. The movement of the liturgy called them back into life together when their own behavior got in the way of the community's flourishing.

In addition to this, or perhaps because of this, many commented on worship as an emotional experience, which was different than their experience of worship prior to living at Holden. Tears and healing were part of worship; many commented on the presence of the Holy Spirit in worship. Lutherans are generally hesitant to use faith-informed language, except for clergy. The level of faith language related to worship in these interviews is remarkable, especially among a group in which none are ordained clergy. This also suggests that because of the emotional connection to worship, this group feels more empowered to seek understanding of their experience of worship through a lens of faith.

This brings us back into conversation with Harris, who notes that the second work of the church's formation is personal and corporate prayer (*leiturgia*). She comments that reform of liturgy is often needed so that worship may speak to five critical elements: "these are the worship

services that *do* integrate sacred and secular, or refuse to allow the distinction, claiming that all reality is sacred; *do* acknowledge differences in worldviews; *do* anguish over the dimension of depth in worship and the power of the symbolic imagination; *do* challenge all present to their own best possibilities; *do* affirm the attempts of people to live religiously and morally in the midst of life."[120] She notes that churches practically do this work by attending to spirituality, integrating prayer and justice, and noticing how the form of worship is incarnated and enfleshed, particularly by leadership.

Harris's last three descriptors echo precisely what the interviewees suggest is significant about worship at Holden. The interviewees comment on the deep spirituality of Holden worship, shown by the tears and emotional responses of the community. The integration of prayer and justice is modeled by the comments on the Hunger Awareness Meals. And the incarnation and enfleshment of worship is perhaps best modeled by the reality that the children themselves are part of the worship leadership.

Such experiences of worship are illuminated by the work of liturgical scholars Aidan Kavanagh and Alexander Schmemann, who understand worship not as an unchanging liturgy, but as a transformational encounter with a living God, something that happens most profoundly in community. Schemann writes, "But this is not the original meaning of the Greek word *leitourgia.* It meant an action by which a group of people become something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals -a whole greater than the sum of its parts."[121] According to Aidan Kavanagh, "Urban Holmes once noted that good liturgy borders on the vulgar. He also said that liturgy leads regularly to the edge of chaos, and that from this

[120] Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church,* 101.

[121] Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World* (Yonkers, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2018), 33-34.

regular flirt with doom comes a theology different from any other."[122] In short, liturgy is an encounter, and a transformational one. Schmemann continues,

> My conclusions are simple. No, we do not need any new worship that would somehow be more adequate to our new secular world. What we need is a rediscovery of the true meaning and power of worship, and this means of its cosmic, ecclesiological, and eschatological dimensions and content. This, to be sure, implies much work, much "cleaning up." It implies study, education and effort. It implies giving up much of that dead wood which we carry with us, seeing in it much too often the very essence of our "traditions" and "customs." But once we discover the true lex orandi, the genuine meaning and power of our leitourgia, once it becomes again the source of an all-embracing world view and the power of living up to it – then and only then the unique antidote to "secularism" shall be found.[123]

These liturgical scholars recognized that when liturgy is a living expression of community and a transformational encounter with God, not simply rote recitation, that powerful communities are formed. These insights may help explain why the participants at Holden Village found worship to be transformational and engaging, a different experience than their home churches provided.

Interestingly, in both the faith development literature and the outdoor ministry literature, worship is mentioned less often than other components of formation. While faith language is infused in the camp day, and morning devotions and evening worship are mentioned,[124] there is less of a focus on the experience or the potential of worship. In my own experience, camp worship often feels upbeat and energetic, teaching children that worship can be engaging and fun. And yet, there is little crossover when children return to their home church, where worship is the same as it was before they left. This was also evident in the Holden interviews, where following Holden, it felt more difficult to engage in worship because nothing could measure up to the experience of Holden's worship. Participants had changed, but the worship service had not

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[122] Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1984), 74.

[123] Schmemann, *For the Life of the World,* 158-159.

[124] Jacob Sorenson, Amber Hill, and Kristen Middlesworth, "Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 1: Narrative Summary," May 2016, 5-6, https://sacredplaygrounds.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ECRP1-Narrative-Summary.pdf.

evolved to match the needs of those returning – namely, for worship to be contextual, engaging, and relevant, a living encounter with God.

And yet, in the faith development literature, Nye notes that more children can articulate an experience of God than adults, and that, in fact, as children age, this experience lessens. When pressed about their most significant spiritual experience, most adults name an experience in childhood.[125] This is curious in relation to the high number of adult children of Holden who point to Holden's worship as the most formational in their life, something for which they continue to long. Is it because childhood holds a unique capacity for formation or is it because the worship at Holden Village is different, or as one participant commented, "tactile, inclusive, sensory," and grounded in community? Certainly the insights of Schemann and Kavanaugh suggest that when grounded in community and a living expression of faith, worship can be a powerful experience for all participants. In chapter eight, I will offer a recommendation about how local churches might better understand this.

Similarly, in the outdoor ministry experience, the naming of faith as embedded in everyday life seems highly significant to good faith formation. The weaving of canoeing, swimming, and high ropes into understanding baptism or trust, for example, is intentional to the camp design.[126] This seems different than the experience at Holden, where the explicit naming of God often happens only in worship or teaching sessions. This speaks to a more adult understanding of faith, expecting participants to draw their own conclusions about the experience of God in their daily life.

This returns us to the work of Ted Peters. The distinguishing between child, adolescent, and adult faith, or in the language of Peters, *first naivete, critical deconstruction, and postcritical*

[125] Nye, *Children's Spirituality: What It Is and Why It Matters*, 11.

[126] Sorenson, Hill, and Middlesworth, "Effective Camp Research Project, Phase 1: Narrative Summary."

faith, is important to understanding the differing approaches between outdoor ministries and Holden Village. Many outdoor ministries operate at a teaching level of faith, which is appropriate for children, helping them connect everyday activity with the symbols of faith. Outdoor ministries shape *first naivete,* introducing children to stories and rituals in a way that speaks directly to the needs and capacities of children and making space for them to not only encounter God but also to interpret their encounter with God.

Holden's approach, through visiting theologians and scholars, speaks more to the mature capacity to continually reconstruct faith. In fact, I would describe Holden's teaching style as *only* concerned with reconstructing faith in light of emerging realities connected to justice. Participant G notes that as a teenager, he listened in on teaching sessions about human sexuality. While he may not have grasped all the nuance of the session as a young teen, what he did understand was that the community was striving to be inclusive and welcoming of LGBTQIA persons long before the greater church took up these conversations. This session was instrumental to his own coming out many years later.

This suggests that these two different approaches – teaching to first naivete and teaching to reconstructed faith – both come with value to children. However, as Participant F cautions, the teaching piece is critical. Because the teaching of justice was not explicitly taught to her at Holden, but justice engagement was expected, she struggled with continued expectations related to justice upon leaving the community *so much so* that she has centered this teaching emphasis in her career. This suggests that the teaching component is critical, which will be explored in the implications section in chapter eight.

Lutheran pastor Tim Brown notes, "Tending the soul requires someone to consistently—and wisely—inquire about it, help you see it and ask you the honest questions about what you

think it needs."[127] One of the gifts of the camp experience, then, is a jumpstart on helping children notice and name faith as already woven into their life, consistent with Nye's observation that children can more easily articulate an experience of God. This is significant in light of the fact that six of the nine Holden interviewees are not actively or regularly involved in a faith community, even as five of those six point to the formation of faith at Holden as profoundly important in their life. Practices around naming faith will be explored as a recommendation is the final chapter.

Theme Three: Justice as part of the nature of the community

The third theme, the weaving of justice into the fabric of the community, suggests that community values matter tremendously. Whether a community implicitly or explicitly names its values, participants will recognize them, and children will begin to absorb them. As noted by Fowler in chapter three, between the ages of 7 and 12, children enter a mythic-literal faith stage, where the stories of faith have a particular and unique capacity to build meaning in a child's life. Fowler notes that in these years, children absorb these faith stories as their own and begin to connect them to their place in community.[128] When justice is part of the nature of the community, children also begin to absorb this as significant to their own story. As five of the interviewees entered the community during this stage of faith, Fowler's theory helps explain, at least in part, why many have absorbed a commitment to justice as one of their own guiding values.

The other four interviewees entered the Village in the next stage of faith development, during the ages of 13-17. As noted in chapter three, Fowler claims that in this stage, a youth

[127] Tim Brown, "Soul Tending and the Art of Spiritual Direction," *Living Lutheran,* September 2019, https://www.livinglutheran.org/2019/09/soul-tending-and-the-art-of-spiritual-direction/.

[128] Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning,* 149.

recognizes that they are still dependent on others for faith but begin to sense their own capacity for faith building. Faith must become coherent and create a framework in which youth can hold their whole lives. As youth are often becoming more aware of the world during this stage, which includes the injustices of the world, it follows that the cohesive worldview that Holden articulates has certain appeal to youth in this stage. As Participant I commented, “It didn't matter what religious activity we were doing, the social justice thing was front and center all the time. It was always about being mindful of the needs of others.”

To be enculturated at Holden Village during these formative years means that a child or youth will be exposed to values and commitments connected to justice and peace. *Because* they are exposed during these formative years, they are perhaps more likely to understand Scharen’s assertion that faith is a way of life, not simply a Sunday practice. Scharen pushes back against the compartmentalization of faith that divorces it from the everyday realities of the world. Because Holden’s commitment to practicing justice is an embedded aspect of the community, this models a way forward for those seeking to integrate justice into the everyday experiences of Christians.

This also speaks directly to Harris’s claims that the final work of the church’s curriculum is kerygma, or the curriculum of proclamation. “The poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed: these are our brothers and sisters. Kerygma: preaching and proclaiming their release from bondage especially where we are the ones responsible for the bondage, through the sins of omission or not caring, as well as sins of commission, such as creating unequal economic and political structures.”[129] We engage with these through three principle tasks: listening, prophetic speech, and political advocacy. As many of the interviewees commented, this has often been the ongoing practice at Holden, as many were shaped to believe that this type of commitment should

[129] Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church,* 130.

be central to their faith and life. And yet, Harris puts these three in a specific order. One does not begin with political advocacy, but moves toward it through listening and prophetic speech.

This approach might help explain why some of the interviewees struggled with political advocacy. As children, they could see this action on the part of the community; however, they may not have also seen the process of careful listening, which Harris embeds as part of one's daily practice, or the practice of prophetic speech, that is, using one's voice to speak for those who are unable to speak for themselves. To speak for others, one must have the ability to empathize with the pain in their life – Harris names the mother of a child who has just starved to death as an example. While Holden children might see the final action (advocacy), they likely had not developed a daily practice of listening, nor might they have been invited into the pain of this mother, because such pain would have likely been not age-appropriate. So Holden children may learn advocacy without also learning the spiritual practices that ground this work, enabling it to be woven into the practice of faith.

Such weaving is less seen in the outdoor ministry literature, or perhaps it is seen in a more child-appropriate way. For example, one justice approach mentioned is the commitment of camps to emotional safety and to being a place where bullying or belittling of others will not be tolerated. Safety and stability are built into the experience for children. In some ways, safety is not built into the experience for children at Holden. Children at Holden are exposed to adult arguing, community disagreements, and difficult family dynamics, in addition to conversations about war, food insecurity, inclusion, climate change, and poverty. If exposed to any of these things at camp (this was not mentioned in the literature), they are likely presented in a child-appropriate way – for example, a food donation drive for those who are hungry or a backpack

drive for a local school district.[130] Camp centers the experience of the child; Holden Village centers the experience of the adult.

And yet, children notice the world, and many Holden interviewees talked about how being shaped by an adult community that wanted to take seriously justice concerns means that this has deeply informed their own understanding of life and their commitment to justice. The condition of the world is not sanitized for children at Holden, but because it is located within a faith community, is held in a place of Gospel hope. *The world is not hopeless* is the underlying approach to justice. Adult children continue to feel called toward a vision of the world that is inclusive, kind, and just, which many first came to taste at Holden.

This approach also suggests that, at least in the areas of justice, Holden Village operates in a way that perhaps actively invites children (more accurately, youth) from the *first naivete* stage described by Peters into the *critical deconstruction stage* that can follow this.[131] As noted previously, the critical deconstruction stage begins when one realizes that they can no longer live in the simple world of childhood faith; easy black-and-white answers no longer suffice in the face of questions about meaning, suffering, and God's presence. Through the questioning and wrestling that follows, Christians learn to understand God and the world with nuance and complexity, relating to these in new ways (Peters's *postcritical reconstruction stage*[132]*)*. This new relationship opens the door to deeper justice engagement.

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[130] For example, in 2015, Camp Lutherhill in La Grange, Texas, a Lutheran outdoor ministry, described their summer service project as follows, "Lutherhill focuses on serving its local community by providing 1,000 backpacks and schools kits to first graders in Houston ISD through a partnership with Communities in Schools in Houston and the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod." Elise Riggs and Geoffrey Roach, "Learning and Sharing the Good News," *Connections,* June 2015, accessed June 24, 2023, at https://tlgcconnections.wordpress.com/2015/06/16/learning-and-sharing-the-good-news/

[131] Peters, *God – The World's Future,* 25-29.

[132] Peters, *God – The World's Future,* 30.

Justice as part of the fabric of the community is also an interesting concept. Many Holden interviewees mentioned how there was not explicit conversation about inclusion, at least not in the later years – inclusion was simply woven into the community. Children were not taught to be advocates for LGBTQ justice, for example; rather, they were given the opportunity to form relationships with members of the LGBTQ community. From these relationships, then, a concern for justice emerged. Similarly, children were not taught how to be advocates for climate justice; rather, they were given opportunity to build a close relationship with the wilderness, to come to know and love the seasons, to see the earth as a sibling to them. Advocacy for the earth, then, springs from a love of place, not from an abstract theological idea.

This insight again speaks to the potential of the local faith community to focus on relationship-building before advocacy, or rather to recognize that relationship building is central to justice work. As Participant A, "You won't defend what you don't love." Local congregations have incredible opportunity to foster love among people and love for the earth – not simply as a goal, but as a way of being. Who do children learn to love at church? How is a theology of creation interwoven into a church's weekly practice? Suggestions for this as a practice will be offered in the final chapter.

Theme Four: The pressure upon leaving the community to become a person who works to enact justice in significant ways or the ways they enact justice

The fourth theme, justice as an ongoing component of one's now adult life, yielded several interesting comments, with all expressing a desire to continue to live a justice-focused life, but most being unsure how to actually do this. Not only unsure, but several expressed feeling a sense of obligation and guilt around enacting this. Several mentioned how difficult it is to do this outside of a committed community, and, in fact, not knowing where to begin. A couple even expressed frustration that these values were instilled in them at Holden, but that there was

no teaching or follow-through around how to be a person of justice when one left the Village. In short, the exposure to a justice-formed life is powerful and life-altering, but the lack of formation around what one does following this exposure can lead to ongoing negative feelings, including paralysis around action.

Capp's understanding of the third decade offers important insight here. As mentioned in chapter three, Capps notes that the third decade of life (20-29) is fundamentally about purpose. As a young adult discovers and attempts to live into a sense of purpose, they may grapple with a fear of failure, a fear of disappointment, or a fear of punishment. At Holden Village, children absorb values of justice and peace and then work to integrate them into their worldview. However, as they emerge into adulthood, whose decade is concerned with purpose, many young adults find that they understand purpose through justice engagement, but have little understanding of how to enact it outside of the community. Young adults are particularly susceptible to feelings of failure around purpose, which explains Participant C's comments related to feeling the weight of the world on her shoulders because she was raised to be a person of justice, "but then, as a young person, I felt very alone in it, because the community that had formed me to be this kind of person for justice, and to live this kind of faith in the world, the community was disbanded."

Without a clear way through this stage, it follows that many participants feel arrested in their development – committed to justice as a faith value, but unsure how to enact it in their daily life. For Fowler, they are longing for a *universalizing faith,* modeled for them at Holden, but stuck in an earlier stage. Fowler's insights around the fifth stage, often begun in one's 20s, 30s, or 40s, and the sixth stage are helpful here. In the fifth stage, as adults recognize and take responsibility for their own faith life. Fowler notes that the danger of this stage is for adults to

overemphasize their own ability to translate faith, sometimes leading to a break with church or previously held beliefs.[133] In other words, as participants take ownership for their own faith, they may take too much ownership, leading to disillusion with churches and faith institutions. We hear this in comments about several participants not wanting to get back into organized religion, namely Participant H, who commented, "But the problem is that I don't feel like I want to necessarily engage in the structure of the Christian organization, I guess. I mean, it's sort of like going back to, I don't know, religion or those experiences that are kind of a part of the past." Without a clear invitation to Peters' postcritical redevelopment phase, participants may not move beyond Fowler's fifth stage.

When a participant is able to enter the sixth stage, conjunctive faith, they begin to re-examine the faith they had dismissed, finding a new openness to faith through paradox and mystery. Fowler notes that at this stage, which does not correspond to age, adherents can appreciate the symbols, myths, and rituals that they had first come to know in an earlier stage.[134] Such openness hopefully leads to the final stage (stage six), which is Fowler's "universalizing faith stage," a rare stage where people become "incarnators and actualizers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community."[135]

Part of the break at Holden seems to be between the fifth stage (taking ownership for faith) and the sixth stage (re-engaging faith) or in Peters' language between deconstruction and reconstruction. At Holden, children and youth are given images of what a reconstructed faith looks like. As Participant C noted, she thought that she was expected to become the next Bonhoeffer. In my own experience at Holden, many of those on teaching staff model a

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[133] Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning,* 182.

[134] Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning,* 198.

[135] Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning,* 200.

universalizing or reconstructed faith, one that has come through rigorous theological engagement; *however, the clearest example of universalizing faith at Holden is the community, not individuals.* When youth leave Holden, they may wonder why they are not in this faith category, or why faith and justice engagement suddenly seems so difficult. As individuals, they are stuck in a stage of faith without mentors or a community to invite them into the next stage. It is no wonder many feel lonely and abandoned after leaving the community. They thought they were becoming universalizing in faith, only to realize they could not become this apart from the community's faith.

This speaks directly to Harris's theme of *diakonia* as the work of the church, but one that the church must undertake carefully. She cautions, "This one appears when the church finds itself unwittingly fostering guilt instead of graceful giving in trying to educate toward love and care for the needy and helpless."[136] Often such exhortations are heard as judgment and can lead to compassion fatigue, or they are heard as a call to love one's self less in order to love others. Harris makes clear that this external work of service must be grounded in compassion and not guilt. She also makes it clear that such work is not individual work, to be undertaken privately, but the work of the whole church, to be undertaken in conversation with each other. This helps explain why so many of the interviewees struggled with justice engagement upon leaving the community; they no longer had a community to engage the work with, and their lack of engagement led to feelings of guilt.

Another interesting insight to this theme is connected to the conversation to be had with justice and Christian leisure. In the Christian leisure literature, there is a significant emphasis on

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[136] Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church,* 146.

the understanding of Sabbath as creative, restorative, and joyful.[137] We are called into Sabbath, as we are called into the wilderness, to experience the depths of God. This experience is not about work or labor, but about letting ourselves be once again rightly ordered in the Christian life. When we encounter a profoundly loving God in these spaces, we are equipped to return to the world restored and joy-filled. It is from this place that we can engage in love of neighbor, which in turn equips us to engage in justice work.

As is indicated in the leisure literature, guilt and obligation are not part of Sabbath.[138] One participant commented on "the angry years" at Holden, which she understood as a period when justice work had been distanced from life in the Gospel. The community's emphasis on justice had evolved to lack groundedness in the larger life of faith. As such, it had become obligatory and guilt-ridden, losing the larger rhythm of Sabbath, healing, restoration, love, and from these, engagement with the world. In short, justice work did not spring from love of God and love of one's neighbor, but because it was expected. This may help explain the resentment that some feel toward the justice formation at Holden during a specific period of time.

But this also speaks to the potential of the local faith community to not simply be actively engaged in justice work, but to take seriously the formation of persons toward justice, as is articulated in the baptismal language mentioned earlier (namely that in baptism, promises are made so that the baptized "may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and to work for justice and peace"[139]). The ordering of these purposes is significant – in the life of faith, we first learn to trust the love of God, which leads us

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[137] Paul Heintzman, "Leisure Studies and Christian Scholarship: Two Solitudes" *Journal of the Christian Society for Kinesiology and Leisure Studies* 3(1), 2015, 23.

[138] Heintzman, "Leisure Studies and Christian Scholarship: Two Solitudes," 23.

[139] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 227.

to a particular Christian life, which leads to caring for others, and then working for justice and peace. Local church communities should certainly be engaged in some aspect of justice work, but should also be engaged in forming people toward justice work and in placing such work in the context of a larger faith life.

Theme Five: Current relationship with a faith community or ambivalence toward this

The responses to final theme, connection to a faith community, are also complex, with participants in many different places. While three are actively engaged in a faith community, five of the others are not opposed to it, but for various reasons, have not made a commitment to a faith community. In reading the reasons of those five, there continues to be a longing and a hunger for faith engagement – none have written it off. In fact, Participant C articulates it well by sharing that the hunger for a faith community that lives the Gospel was planted in her at Holden, and even as she is involved in church, she also knows that the hunger will continue her entire life.

To this final theme, we return to the opening chapter around the experience and the potential of the wilderness as profoundly faith forming. From national parks to summer camp, from monastic movements to scriptural stories of encountering God in wild spaces, the wilderness is rarely simply a setting for a story, but often a main character. One's relationship to the wilderness, usually profound and revelatory, is often thought to be climactic to the faith story. For many at Holden, the faith high that they achieved through the wilderness has almost functioned as the climax of their faith story. How can any faith community be as good as this one, many have wondered.

But in scripture, the wilderness is the catalyst, not the climax. Jesus is not crucified or resurrected in the desert. Elijah does not retire after experiencing God in the vast sounds of

wilderness. Hagar is not left to die under a bush. They are profoundly formed in the wilderness, but they are formed not simply for formation's sake, but for the sake of God's greater story. The ambivalence that many feel toward church following significant time at Holden perhaps speaks to a misunderstanding of Holden as the climax of one's faith story instead of as a catalyst toward a deeper faith.

Again we return to Peters' postrcritical faith and Fowler's universalizing faith, with the question of why development is so often arrested at earlier stages. Perhaps this is where the perspectives of Miller-McLemore, Parker, and other child-focused scholars have particular insight. When agency related to faith is assumed to be outside of a child or youth, then faith becomes something passed on to children, as opposed to something *realized* in children. If children and youth are able to realize their own agency in faith, then perhaps, in relationship with mentors, communities, and the church, adherents can continue to move through stages at their own pace, recognizing that even when they stall, they have not reached the end of the road. How might teaching about stages increase agency, so that a youth or young adult might have a roadmap of a life of faith instead of assuming that they have already experienced all that there is?

Harris's insights around the work of the church and teaching are significant here. While she claims that all of church life is the curriculum of faith, she also makes space for the explicit work of teaching, or *didache.* The Catechumenate, for example, traditionally offered a method of teaching before baptism that was grounded in the practices of faith, including worship.[140] What might it look like to include a forward-thinking roadmap about what a life of faith might look like for children and youth – and even for adults? How might the experience of Holden Village children been enriched by seeing themselves as early on a journey that would require their whole

[140] Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church,* 113.

life, as well as their active and evolving faith, to understand it? What if teaching about the evolution of one's faith was part of the journey of faith?

This is worth exploring; and yet, as asserted throughout this paper, my primary concern was not necessarily with a faith that is postcritical or universalizing, or even a faith that participates in the life of a church, but a faith that is active in justice. That all nine participants have a commitment to justice, even as they find themselves in a variety of faith stages and a variety of relationships to the church, is noteworthy. This speaks to the reality that the community of Holden Village forms a justice-focused faith well in children and youth who live in the Village long enough to absorb its culture and commitments and to begin to make them their own. But because time in the wilderness is always temporary, a new question emerges. How do non-temporary communities, namely churches, learn from Holden so that they might also form children and youth for justice *but also form them for long-term engagement in communities committed to justice?* As we turn to recommendations for practiotioners and faith communities, this becomes the primary question. After noting the limits of this project in the next chapter, I will turn to this question in the final chapter.

Chapter Seven: Evaluation and Limitations

Evaluation

There were four criteria named at the start of the project by which this project would be evaluated, which are again named below. For three of the criteria, this project meets and offers some answer or insight to the question named. For one area, the project does not. An analysis of each is below.

1) **Clarity of stories.** Did the stories elicited provide clear themes?
2) **Connection between stories.** Did the stories elicited provide crossover to the stories of other participants?
3) **Clarity of research area.** Did the stories point to a clarifying area of research?
4) **Clarity of contribution to practical theology.** Are there clear, decisive recommendations and insights that can be offered to the field of practical theology?

Clarity of stories. The stories did indeed elicit clear themes, which are outlined in chapter five, namely the child's growing relationship to faith, particularly through the daily Vespers service; comments about justice as part of the nature of the community; the commitment to justice issues in adulthood or the pressure upon leaving the community to become a person who works to enact justice in significant ways; and the participant's current church involvement and/or ambivalence they feel toward faith institutions. Those five themes showed up in the majority of the interviews, each having been named by at least seven of the nine participants. One interview was an outlier for many of the faith questions, as the participant had no interest in engaging in the faith aspect of Holden Village, which was true before, during, and after their time in the Village. In retrospect, to narrow the scope of the work, one of the interview criteria should have been an openness to conversing about faith themes, even if one did not identify with a specific faith group.

Because this participant had insightful things to say about their justice engagement that they traced to their time at Holden, many of their responses were included in other questions. In fact, the framing of their responses suggests that it would be interesting to interview people of another faith or of no faith who have spent significant time at Holden. Within the scope of this project, however, this simply meant that those responses lacked connectedness to the greater project, as the project involved tracing the evolution of faith.

Even so, the five themes that arose crossed a variety of markers: decade in the Village, gender and age of participant, length of stay, the presence and handling of conflict, and the particular justice commitments of the Village at that time. Even as stories differed considerably, this suggests that there is a commonness to the experience of living at Holden as a child that is picked up by these five themes.

Connection between stories. These stories did indeed have much crossover. As noted previously, the stories represented about 40 years of history at Holden Village. I suspect that most of the participants did not know each other, except for those who may have been in the Village at the same time. Considering this, it is surprising how many stories intersected with each other. For example, a story from the 1970s about Holden as place where a theology of inclusion was developing was echoed in a story from the 2010s. What the early Village fought for in terms of values, the later Village lives out, almost without realizing that they are doing this.

A similar connection is evident in stories about the worship life of Holden. The deep meaning found in worship in the 1970s was echoed by those who lived at Holden in the 1990s, the 2000s, and the 2010s. Holden's pastors change every two-four years, which suggests that it is not the pastors alone who have deepened this connection to the worship life at Holden, but the

very rhythm of liturgy, the nightly Vespers, the spirit of creativity, and the formation of Lutheran pastors in a Gospel-centered manner.

There was also a connection related to the evolution of justice. While earlier year participants articulate an intellectual commitment to justice, and middle year participants articulate some guilt around their limited engagement with justice, later year participants seem to have an easier relationship between the two. Astonishingly, this perhaps suggests a maturing of Holden's own faith life. As faith and justice have found a more natural balance, perhaps participants have found an easier way to engage the two or to see the two as being in relationship. Based on the small sample size, this cannot be drawn as an overarching conclusion, but certainly as a connection that would benefit from further study.

Clarity of Research Area. A single clarifying research area did not emerge during the interviews. Rather, the intersection of several research areas proved helpful, if limited: faith development across the lifespan, the wilderness as faith formation, outdoor ministries, Christian leisure studies, and the ELCA's understanding of lifelong faith formation. Indeed, Holden sits at the intersection of all of these, but not only these. As explored in the "limits of the project" section, Holden has perhaps no peers in terms of structure and experience, at least none found in my research efforts. "Unintentional Faith Communities" is not a research area; indeed "Intentional Faith Communities" is not a well-developed research area. While no single research area emerged, my hope is that this project helps to begin to fill the gap in the research related to these types of faith communities.

Clarity of contribution to practical theology. This project ends with five suggestions for practical theologians, specifically for those engaged in faith formation of communities. Those suggestions include: building the intergenerational capacity of churches, practicing worship as a

living expression of a community, interrogating the formation of a community around justice, understanding and communicating faith in stages, and teaching love as catalyst for justice. Because these contributions are directed toward practitioners of faith formation more than toward any academic field, these suggestions are more specific and practical than broad and theoretical. However, as practical theology is concerned with the practice of faith, I believe these still meet the evaluative criteria outlined in this section.

Limits of the Project

As noted throughout the project report, there are several limits to this project. The first is the relatively small size of the project. Nine participants were interviewed around four questions, with interviews lasting around 45 minutes each. While these nine interviews yielded good qualitative data, with ample crossover and interesting insights, the sample size is simply too small for overarching conclusions to be drawn about children and faith formation. In fact, the sample size is too small (and the generations too spread out) for overarching conclusions to be drawn even about Holden Village and children's faith formation. Because there was such strong crossover between the nine, however, I believe even this small sample size can offer insight into a particular kind of faith formation.

The nature of the Village presents a second limit. Holden Village is a small community, unusual in character and remote in location; as noted throughout this project, a place unlike any other. While most people have access to a local church, and many have access through their local churches to a faith-based summer camp, only a few have access to residency at a place like Holden Village, which requires monetary resources, career flexibility, faith connections, and robust health. Most persons will never live in a semi-intentional faith community in the wilderness and certainly not for a year or longer. Because the experience at Holden Village is

atypical, generalizing the experiences of those at Holden to the general population would not make good research sense. However, what is learned through this research may prove helpful to those outside of intentional communities; in fact, this is the very purpose of this project.

A final limit is the self-selection in of those who chose to participate. The nine who participated had a generally positive experience at Holden Village, although nearly all articulated some challenges. The ability to reflect on one's time was one of the criteria to be interviewed. And yet, it is likely that there are others who did not have a generally positive experience or who are unable to look back because of the pain that those memories may still hold. As noted in passing in the interviews (not quoted), one child committed suicide while at Holden. Others are in jail because of behavior while at the Village. There are several other troubling stories that were referenced in the interviews or from my own conversations about the Village. To my knowledge, I did not interview victims or family members of victims, who would likely have a different story to tell. While the design was to examine faith formation, and this design prevailed, limiting participants to those who could reflect on their time and speak about faith limited the scope of the project.

External Challenges to Applying the Research

One of the challenges to applying this research arises around how "working for justice and peace" is understood in the ELCA, which remains somewhat unclear. Does volunteering at a food pantry count as justice if the participant is unwilling to engage larger structures around food insecurity? What if a church becomes RIC but does not engage in advocacy against anti-trans legislation? The difference between service and justice is not a clear one in many churches in the ELCA and likely unknown by most Lutherans. Because Lutherans tend to be very good at

“caring for neighbor” and nearly every Lutheran church is engaged in service work, the next step – working for justice and peace – is not always articulated or understood.

Because it is not well understood, there is also a lack of data around how it is enacted. *Are we,* in fact, shaping children for justice and peace? Certainly this theme is prominent among the Holden adult children; however, anecdotally, it is does not always seem as prominent among church or camp children. Because we are unclear about what it means, we are also unclear about how to measure a mature faith and what contributes to it. When we measure “lifelong faith engagement,” does it mean simply going to church all of one’s life? This remains unclear. I believe this compounds the isolation that adult children of Holden Village feel when they join a faith community – they may be the only congregant who has received formation toward justice.

A second challenge is the evolving understanding of faith and community that marks Holden Village. Other faith communities may live by a rule that informs their life together. For example, the Iona Community in Scotland, similar to Holden in many ways, is shaped by a five-fold rule to which all members are held accountable. Holden, however, adapts and changes under the leadership of the directors, who serve five-year terms and are given wide latitude to lead. These directors are chosen by the board, generally to match the needs that have emerged and to move Holden toward an evolving future. How they do this, and how well they do this, varies between directors. If one director team loves the arts, and another understands food as hospitality, and another values inclusion, and another prioritizes faith formation, then the Village will take on that character, at least in part, for the years that they serve. Holden is also changed by who is living in the Village during a certain time frame and how those persons have experienced church and the world. Because Holden is an evolving community, the experiences of adult children are shaped by the ethos of the community *during a certain time*. That ethos is

often up to individual interpretation, as it is marked by a host of other factors as well. This makes it somewhat difficult to draw overarching conclusions. Holden in the 90s was different than Holden in the 70s, which is different than Holden today, even as each identity is built on the previous ones. The changing nature of the community means there is not a single experience of Holden Village. That these nine spoke to similar themes, however, suggests that there are certain enduring characteristics of Holden Village, even while other characteristics may change.

A third challenge of the project, as noted throughout the project, is that there are limited research areas that correspond with Holden Village. While Holden has some siblings by way of intentional communities, namely the Iona Community in Scotland and the Taize Community in France, two caveats arise. One, these are intentional communities shaped by a rule and a common way of living. These have a committed membership that host a residential center for volunteers and guests. While Holden also has a residential center for volunteers and guests, it does not have a formal membership. Holden *is* the residential center for volunteers and guests. Thus, Holden is often jokingly referred to as an "unintentional community."

The second caveat is that it is difficult to find either qualitive or quantitative research on these intentional communities. Anecdotal reflections are plentiful; however, in research literature related to the formational capacity of communities, these are rarely mentioned.

Similarly, a fourth challenge of the project is the use of outdoor ministries research as one of the primary research areas. Holden Village and outdoor ministries are different in significant ways. In the ELCA, camps have a formal relationship to synods, which means they are an official ministry of the church, held to the same standards and teaching expectations as other ministries of the church. Camps are expected to have safeguarding guidelines for the protection of children, to teach in accordance with ELCA theological and social teaching, and to be

grounded in a uniquely Lutheran witness to the Gospel. They are accountable to the church in ways that Holden Village is not, which can mean both greater freedom but also lack of church oversight.

But outdoor ministries are also very different in function. A camper comes generally for one week a year; at Holden, a child lives in the Village for a year or longer. At camp, one comes without family; at Holden, one lives in their family unit. As noted previously, Holden is centered on the experience of adults; outdoor ministries on the faith of the child. Thus, outdoor ministries, while having multiple overlaps with Holden, also does not provide research directly applicable to Holden. The gift of Holden – that it is a place unlike any other – is also one of the limits in terms of research.

A final challenge is the process of emerging history that is always ongoing at Holden. As I was writing this paper, for example, I recognized a lack of clarity around the Hunger Awareness Meals that multiple participants had mentioned. I put my question out on the Holden Facebook group. There were 33 responses, each filling in a bit of the history of this fifty-year, evolving tradition based on when the responder lived there and what they could remember. Some of the accounts contradicted each other. Minor squabbles around details ensued. Some could not remember the exact year that certain changes had been made; others responded by guessing the years based on memory. Between the 33 responses, I could trace much of the evolution of the meal, though not all. This demonstrates a limit: there is no source for a definitive history of this meal. Much of Holden's history lives in the memories of the people who have attended.

Chapter Eight: The Implications

Implications for Practical Theology & Recommendations for Practice

Even with these limits, the conclusion that all nine participants had some type of commitment to justice and peace, one that they traced, at least in part, to their time at Holden is remarkable. This suggests that there is something unique in the faith formation that happens at Holden Village, and we now turn to the question of what that uniqueness entails and how it might be understood and replicated. Here we return to the five themes outlined in chapters five and six with the assumption that these five, when working together, might offer insight into what it takes to form children and youth in a particular way, one that corresponds with the baptismal promise "to work for justice and peace." We also return to the work of Maria Harris, whose five formative areas (kerygma, proclaiming the word of Jesus' resurrection; didache, the activity of teaching; leiturgia, coming together to pray and to re-present Jesus in the breaking of the bread; koinonia, or community; and diakonia, caring for those in need[141]) prove helpful as framing categories for the recommendations offered. Even as most children will not live with their families in a semi-intentional wilderness community, I believe these five themes can be incorporated into the practices of local faith communities.

Those five recommendations are: *building the intergenerational capacity of churches*, *practicing worship as a living expression of a community*, *interrogating the formation of a community around justice*, *understanding and communicating faith in stages*, and *teaching love as catalyst for justice*. These five themes are previewed in chapters five and six and flow directly from the themes named by interviewees.

[141] Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church,* 16.

Recommendation One: *Koinonia* - Building the Intergenerational Capacities of Churches

The first recommendation is related to the intergenerational potential of a church community, or to use the language of Harris's curriculur forms, attending to the capacity and potential of *koinonia*. In the ELCA, indeed in many mainline churches, there is high anxiety around the disappearance of children, young adults, and young families from church and the dire predictions for the denomination as a whole, which are that it will cease to exist within a generation.[142] When coupled with the increase in the average age of worship attenders (58), which is nearly twenty years older than the average age of the population (39),[143] "the graying of the congregation" is seen as a liability to church growth; why would young people come to a church that is full of older people, the question goes.

When invited to speak about what was significant about their time at Holden, however, all nine participants spoke about the importance of intergenerational friendships and being seen as full members of the community. Intergenerational community was not seen as a liability, but a tremendous gift to these children and even something that they continue to search for in their lives now. As children, they *liked* being around retirees and families and young adults; for many, this was their first experience with such a community. As noted in the discussion on Capps in chapter five, often community can both provide trust and facilitate willingness in children and youth; they can also recognize agency, per Miller-McLemore, in a way that parents may not be able to do. The community is central to a child's ability to grow in faith.

In fact, according to several participants, it was the *active engagement* by the community that felt transformational to the children. They were mentored and included in conversation, their

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[142] Dwight Zscheile, "Will the ELCA be Gone in 30 Years?" *Faith + Lead* (blog), September 5, 2019, https://faithlead.org/blog/decline/.

[143] Robert C. Blezard, "Study Guide: 10 Under 40," *The Lutheran,* June 2015, https://livinglutheran.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/1506-10under40.pdf.

opinions sought and respected, the leadership welcomed. The recommendation that comes from these insights is two-fold: the first is to help shift the narrative in a congregation away from graying as a liability toward graying as a gift. When a community shifts to see itself as an active mentoring community, as opposed to a passive (and anxious) congregation, then they will be better equipped to build relationships from a place of genuine interest instead of survival. Retirees and older adults are assets to a congregation; often (though not exclusively, and not guaranteed) it is only in these later years, according to Capps and Fowler, that faith can reach a maturation point that turns a person to be fully engaged externally. When such a faith is practiced in community, then the community begins to take on the nature of this faith. In short, churches and faith communities need mature elders, specifically elders who can model faith that has not stalled or become despondent, but is moving toward the characteristics that reflect reconstruction and universalizing.

Closely related, a similar recommendation is to help faith communities take on an active role in mentoring. Here we return to Cushing and McGoldrick, who note, "a personal relationship to a mentor, teacher, pastor, rabbi, therapist, spiritual director, employer, and the like – can be pivotal for the young adult at this phase. The mentor relationship can represent developmental achievement that holds spiritual potential in the transference of wisdom in the offering of respect between generations."[144] Powell suggests that it takes *five* adults actively engaged in the faith maturation process of each youth for a child to remain connected with a faith community into adulthood.[145] The story of Participant C being mentored by five women of the Village as part of her Confirmation process is a stunning example of this practice lived out.

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[144] Cushing and McGoldrick, "The Differentiating of Self and Faith in Young Adulthood: Launching, Coupling, and Becoming Parents," 240.

[145] Kara Powell, "Preventing Teenage 'Faith Drift,'" accessed June 25, 2023, https://karapowell.com/2018/08/preventing-teenage-faith-drift/.

Churches have an abundance of elders, which means they have the potential to offer an abundance of mentors who invest in each child and youth.

What might active mentorship look like in a local faith community? One example comes from the story of a Presbyterian congregation in San Mateo that had been aging for some time. They note that while many churches add a contemporary service to attract a younger crowd, this congregation instead chose to focus on intergenerational worship, pulling from a variety of styles so that congregants across the generations could build relationships. Because of this focus, worship leadership each week is intergenerational, with children and adults helping to lead the service. To help achieve this, the church has created a one-week worship camp for children and youth during the summer, with adults offering mentorship and helping the kids learn about the service, as well as teaching them how to play instruments and lead in other ways.[146]

Recommendation Two: *Leiturgia* - Practicing Worship as a Living Expression of a Community

The second recommendation is around practicing worship as a living expression of a community, or in Harris's curricular understanding, of attending to the *leiturgia* or prayer of the community. Lutheran liturgical scholar Gordon Lathrop writes that, "When our worship services have instead become conventional ways of 'going to church' with our own identities and worldviews," then we lose the potential for "undergoing a transformation by the encounter with the surprising grace and truth of the Trinity."[147] Instead of a rote routine, as a number of participants described worship before and after Holden, worship at Holden instead felt like a living encounter with the divine.

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[146] Patricia Corrigan, "Worship Includes 'All Ages and Stages' at a San Mateo Church," *Faith and Leadership,* October 2014, https://faithandleadership.com/worship-includes-all-ages-and-all-stages-san-mateo-church.

[147] Lathrop, *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003) 48.

How might churches understand worship as a living encounter with the divine? We return to clues offered by the participants, namely that worship was tactile, sensory, and communally led (including by children); that it spoke to the actual tensions and the realities of the community; and that it was held at the heart of the community's engagement with justice. Worship at Holden both reflected the community's engagement with justice and one another *and* created the community's engagement with these two things. Worship was fundamentally contextual.

How then might a community understand worship as contextual? Lutheran Pastor Clayton Faulkner describes contextual worship as follows:

> Contextual worship makes use of the music, language, and artistic forms of the local culture the church is planted in. This means that Lutheran worship in downtown New Orleans will potentially be radically different than Lutheran worship in rural Montana. Regardless of how radically different they appear in form and content, they both remain faithful enactments of Lutheran worship. The willingness to connect to the surrounding culture and become contextual make their worship faithfully Lutheran, not their predilection for Baroque-era European music. Contextual worship requires rooting into the neighborhood. There are no shortcuts to contextual worship; real, relational, outwardly focused ministry is the only way to discern context.[148]

Holden Village does contextual worship well, as is evident from the stories of the children who were shaped by it. Helping pastors understand the importance of context and community are critical to creating faith communities that can receive persons seeking deep meaning in the liturgy – and allow worship to be shaped by the longings that they bring.

One example of a contextual worship could include beginning the service with a framing question that cues the congregation into that week's music and preaching. For example, if the Gospel reading is on the experience of Jesus being tempted in the desert, the framing question might be around reflecting on the wilderness experience members of the community currently finds themselves in, and then inviting them to listen for how God comes to each of us in

[148] Faulkner, Clayton, "How Do We Make Worship Contextual?" *ClaytonFaulkner.com* (blog), April 8, 2018, https://claytonfaulkner.com/2018/04/18/how-do-we-make-worship-contextual/.

wilderness by way of the readings, sermon, and songs. This prompt might be included in the week's email announcements, giving congregants several days to begin reflection on the question. The worship space, then, might include physical representations of wilderness that a worship and the arts team might have imagined. The proper preface during Communion might also then pick up a theme of wilderness, as might the prayer, the slides, or other worship aids.

Churches might also audit their worship services to consider children's engagement in worship and children's forms of worship.[149] One participant commented on wanting to teach her children how to love liturgy, as she had learned at Holden, but that they mostly felt bored and restless during worship. This is markedly different from the comments by most participants that they felt deeply engaged in worship and found greater connection to the community because of worship. Two recommendations arise related to children's engagement in worship. The first is the consideration of tactile experiences and movement during worship. At Holden, participants pointed to kneeling, laying on of hands, and lighting candles– all active, tactile, and inclusive. Could churches include a form of worship that speaks to the tactile needs of children?

One possible practice might be introduction of a stations-based worship service, where the liturgy is split into stations. A service might begin with communal singing, then dismiss participants into stations: candle lighting, service projects, guided meditation, hearing the story, drawing the story, prayers, active conversation, crafts, blessing, laying on of hands, communion, sharing the peace. Participants move between stations, lingering where they wish to linger that week before the community gathers to end in communal song and blessing. Because the service allows persons to move at their own pace and use their hands and voices, it is particularly friendly to children and youth. Theresa Cho, a Presbyterian pastor, offers several examples of

[149] For examples of questions to ask in this audit, see Janelle Rozek Hooper, "Intentional Engagement with Children in Worship," *ELCA Faith Formation: Ministry Links Online*, accessed June 26, 2023, https://www.ministrylinks.online/uploads/1/2/4/3/124396707/intentional_engagement_of_children_in_worship.pdf.

creative stations that serve this type of worship service.[150] One example is using the senses to understand the Easter story, inviting participants to smell the lilies, create an empty tomb, and touch rocks.[151] An additional way to engage youth would be to invite them to help design the stations for this type of worship.

For churches that are not ready for a new service, however, communities might consider the active leadership of children during worship.[152] Are they invited to read the lessons? Is there an age-appropriate telling of the story? Are there stations to engage with? Is there space for children to crawl or move? Are they invited to sit near the front? Can children submit prayer requests? These and many other recommendations come from the work of Dawn Rundman, who studies faith formation from the ages of 0-5.[153] There are many ways to take the insights of Holden children – that worship can be engaging and meaningful regardless of age - and translate them into the experience of the local congregation.

Recommendation Three: *Kerygma* - Interrogating the Formation of a Community around Justice

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[150] Theresa Cho, "Prayer Stations," accessed June 25, 2023, https://theresaecho.com/interactive-prayer-stations/.

[151] Theresa Cho, "Interactive Prayer Stations on Easter & Empty Tomb," accessed June 25, 2023, https://theresaecho.com/2012/04/16/interactive-prayer-stations-on-easter-empty-tomb.

[152] For excellent recommendations related to children's leadership in worship and in the whole life of faith, see Amy Lindeman Allen, *The Gifts They Bring: How Children in the Gospels Can Shape Inclusive Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2023), particularly Chapter Six: A Son and His Mother, 147-174. Lindeman Allen outlines six particular gifts that children might bring to church life: participation, proclamation, advocacy, listening, sharing, and partnership. In many ways, these six echo Harris's five, but do so through the lens of children's participation and leadership. Lindeman Allen offers several compelling examples of how centering the stories and lives of children, both children in scripture and children in contemporary life, might lead to a different engagement with children during worship. For example, Lindeman Allen suggests that churches examine the full inclusion of children, including in practices such as Holy Communion, encouraging churches to examine how a theology of inclusion includes all who are present, not simply all of a certain age.

[153] Dawn Rundman, *Little Steps, Big Faith: How the Science of Early Childhood Development Can Help You Grow Your Child's Faith*, (Minneapolis, MN: Beaming Books, 2018).

As noted in the previous chapters, children *will* absorb the culture of which they are part. It follows, then, that if we want children and youth to be shaped toward justice and peace, we must examine the faith communities that are doing the shaping. If a churchgoing child leaves the church at age 18 with no understanding of service, justice, or peace, then we might assume that the church did not actively articulate or practice a commitment to these. How, then, might churches understand their own culture? What are they proclaiming? Or in the curriculum of Harris, how is a church's kerygma practically lived out?

One suggestion would be to do a social justice audit. In chapter two, I defined justice and peace as the "commitments of individuals or the church, in this case the Lutheran Church (ELCA), toward certain areas of communal concern, including protection of the environment, equity for LGBTQIA+ persons, people of color, and women, non-violent solutions for conflict, the alleviation of poverty, and other commitments that recognize the full humanity of each person." Were a church to review the programming, sermons, hymns, and education options offered over a single year, for both children and adults, would they find an explicit commitment to any of these? Would these commitments be revealed through both learning and action? Could a random sampling of active adult church members articulate this commitment? How often are opportunities offered for learning or action? Does the leadership demonstrate a clear commitment to these?

These and similar questions might help a congregation interrogate their actual lived commitments, as opposed to the ones with which they might only *theoretically* be in agreement. A church might theologically understand themselves as concerned with justice, but if teaching, conversation, and practice do not also support this concern, then it follows that children will absorb a culture that does not reflect the active engagement of justice-related practices. Are adult

children of a congregation concerned with justice and actively practicing modeling a commitment for the next generation? If not, a church might examine what faith practices children are in fact absorbing.

Recommendation Four: *Didache* - Understanding and Communicating Faith in Stages

The fourth recommendation flows from the "stalling" of faith that several interviewees indicated, as articulated by those who found themselves (or currently find themselves) in a period of despair, disconnection, or disengagement (Peters' *deconstruction* stage). While these may have an active commitment toward justice, many of them do this alone, and several commented on how difficult it is to do this without a faith community. Their leaving of a faith community suggests crises related to doubt and disillusionment, which faith development scholars recognize as a normal part of faith. *However, these participants do not recognize this as a normal part of faith, but as the end of faith.* This raises the question: what might it mean for a church community to articulate and model faith as a lifetime journey of growth as opposed to faith as a static commodity that one either possesses or does not possess? In Harris's curricular understanding, how does a church attend to the practice of *didache*, or teaching?

McLemore and other scholars note that Godly Play is one such approach that helps children understand faith as an ongoing journey, one that allows their curiosity and imagination to lead their learning, which reinforces the agency of children in their own development.[154] In the Godly Play approach, faith is not information to learn, but an experience to inhabit.[155] Because

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[154] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Whither the Children? Childhood in Religious Education" *Journal of Religion* 86 no. 4 (October 2006): 635-657.

[155] For example, see Jerome W. Berryman *Teaching Godly Play* (Denver: Abingdon Press, 1995), Sofia Cavalletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child* (Rome: Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Publications, 1979), and Gianna Gobbi *Listening to God with Children* (Loveland, OH: Treehaus, Communications, 1998).

Godly Play often corresponds in churches with the first decade of life, it has the potential to contribute powerfully to the faith culture that children will absorb.

Creative approaches to confirmation can also model for youth a dynamic approach to faith, one concerned with growth, relationships, and the modeling of a deepening faith as opposed to simply learning information about faith. Both churches and parents have responsibility in this realm. As noted in chapter three, *The Confirmation Project* found that the strongest indicator of lifelong engagement in faith was when faith formation happened in the home.[156] When parents talked about faith and marked faith milestones, the chances of continuing faith engagement beyond adolescence increased significantly. The recommendation offered by the Confirmation Project is for faith communities to invest in the lives of parents and guardians, helping them name and recognize faith as part of the everyday experience of life. This is modeled well in outdoor ministries.

As mentioned earlier in the paper, one simple way to model this is to invite participants at various church gatherings to begin their time by naming what felt sacred or challenging from their week. This practice is a variation on *the examen,* which came from St Ignatius and is practiced by Jesuits.[157] Such a prompt is simple and accessible, and it invites participants to slow down, look backwards, and learn to recognize and give thanks for God's movement in their life. But more than this, this is a practice that is accessible to persons of all ages and in all stages, beginning with young children. This practice can be incorporated into a bedtime routine for children, youth, and adults, forming in them a ritual of active noticing and reflective faith. As Nye notes, because children articulate a more regular experience of God than adults, this practice

[156] Katherine M. Douglass, "Findings from The Confirmation Project," *Theology Today* 76, no 1 (2019), 7-16, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0040573619826956.

[157] "The Daily Examen," IgnatianSpirituality.com, accessed June 12, 2023, https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/.

might serve to help them transition into an adult faith that *continues* to notice and experience God in their midst.

Explicit conversation and perhaps workshops about faith stages and growth may also prove encouraging to persons to recognize that they are on a lifelong journey of faith. Lessons on stages can be incorporated into Confirmation curriculum, as well as adult faith forums. Similarly, an inter-generational panel on faith formation might prove insightful for a community. Listening to an elder whose faith is reconstructed and universal might offer encouragement to a youth or young adult before they reach a stage that separates them from the community.

Recommendation Five: *Diakonia* - Teaching Love as Catalyst for Justice

The fifth and final recommendation, teaching love as a catalyst for justice, flows from several interviewees who suggested that their commitment to justice was not formed because of how a particular justice issue was taught, but because they came to be in relationship with people or places for whom those justice concerns affected them personally. This suggests that not only may communities form powerful commitments to justice when relationships are centered in the work, but that individual participants may also form a strong commitment to justice when relationships flourish. This brings us to Harris's curriculum of *diakonia*, or how the church is shaping people for service and justice.

Bell notes that there are cautions with centering relationships as the basis for justice work, namely that being a good ally to those experiencing injustice often takes significant unlearning. Persons who seek to stand in solidarity with the oppressed must do so with humility and not solutions, listening to how oppressed people define their own needs (as opposed to how the dominant group understands their needs). Allies must be accountable and responsible, open to correction, and follow the lead of the oppressed group. Relationships may prove difficult if

there is not sufficient humility or openness among allies.[158] Even worse, allies may do significant harm in the name of relationship – as in, *I am doing this for you, please reward me*.

This caution is important and one that churches must consider. For children and youth, however, we return to Fowler's writing about children absorbing the culture around them, including understanding certain relationships as normative. It follows, then, that when children and youth form relationships with oppressed people, diverse relationships become part of the culture that they absorb. It becomes *normal* for them to be in relationship with marginalized people and then, as articulated by the Holden adult children, to care about their well-being and justice. A community will certainly need to model this well, heeding Bell's cautions to ensure the community's approach to relationships are grounded in mutual love. Church policies and actual practices around inclusion and leadership also matter here.

When a faith community does not have mutual relationships with persons they seek to stand in solidarity with, they might turn to a learning model that accomplishes this. Pastoral theologian Brita Gill-Austern suggests a three-part methodology for engaging diversity and difference that speaks particularly well to relationship building across difference.[159] The first of these is the concept of "Knowing Home." Gill-Austern argues that "to know our familial home means to see the patterns and habits of being and doing that have been passed down from one generation to the next, and how and where we have been shaped and misshaped by our parents'

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[158] Lee Ann Bell, "Theoretical Foundations for Social Justice Education," in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice,* ed. Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, Diane J. Goodman, and Khyati Y. Joshi (New York: Routledge, 2016), 21.

[159] Brita L. Gill-Austern, "Engaging Diversity and Difference: From Practices of Exclusion to Practices of Practical Solidarity," in *Injustice in the Care of Souls: Taking Oppression Seriously in Pastoral Care*, ed. Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook and Karen B. Montagno (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 29-44.

and family's culture, attitudes, and actions."[160] Those seeking to learn about others begin by understanding who they are. The second movement articulated by Gill-Austern is "Constructive Engagement with Otherness" which she recommends through the taking of pilgrimage. She writes, "Pilgrimage, as a spiritual practice, requires some kind of displacement that dislodges us from the known and familiar and allows us to see what has been inscribed on our body, mind, and heart by our own socialization and conditioning."[161] In pilgrimage, relationships are formed across difference, transforming those who seek to learn. The final movement articulated by Gill-Austern is "Returning Home." Gill-Austern writes "Returning home requires that we find ways to weave new connections with those we have left; that we bear witness to what we have seen and what we have learned."[162] She argues that part of the practice of returning home is partnering with others, "recognizing that our mutual survival and well-being depends on interdependency, not going it alone."[163] For churches who do not have active practices around justice and peace, a pilgrimage model may be an effective way to begin building relationships across difference.

Certainly a critique to this might be that one should not need to be in relationship with someone to care about their well-being. This is true; a commitment to justice should not only rely on personal relationships. However, as articulated by the Holden interviewees, for them, a lasting commitment to justice often *flows* from early relationships that were centered on mutual love and care, which were normalized for them during the formative years of childhood.

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[160] Gill-Austern, "Engaging Diversity and Difference: From Practices of Exclusion to Practices of Practical Solidarity," 37.

[161] Gill-Austern, "Engaging Diversity and Difference: From Practices of Exclusion to Practices of Practical Solidarity," 40.

[162] Gill-Austern, "Engaging Diversity and Difference: From Practices of Exclusion to Practices of Practical Solidarity," 42.

[163] Gill-Austern, "Engaging Diversity and Difference: From Practices of Exclusion to Practices of Practical Solidarity," 44.

This is illustrated by the breakdown at Holden happened during the years when the justice work felt rooted in anger and control, as opposed to the Gospel invitation to love one's neighbor. From these years, participants still experience some guilt or resentment that they are not doing enough or that they were not rightly taught how to continue the work. Conversely, it seems as though justice work had the most impact on children when it was woven into the fabric of the community; as if to say, in this place, we are a people who care about inclusion, peace, sustainability, and the earth, therefore, we seek to live in right relationships with these. Love is stronger than anger as both a catalyst and a sustaining motivator. Rooting activism in love and community matters.

A recommendation for local faith communities seeking to become active in justice work is to first focus on building relationships. Does a leader wish to help a congregation become more involved in the schools? Then one might begin by forming a friendship with a family whose children attend a struggling school. Does a leader wish to help a congregation become more involved in LGBTQ advocacy? Then one might begin by inviting the congregation to form a friendship with parents of transgender children, inviting their stories during an educational hour. Does a leader wish to help a community be involved in prison reform or food advocacy or racial justice or refugee resettlement? To be sustainable, all of these must be rooted in love of the neighbor and actual relationship. We return to the words of Bonnie Miller-McLemore, "If children are to have faith, they must experience its distinctive expression within a small intergenerational community, grounded in the rituals of worship and joined in social efforts to fight political and economic injustice, and not sequestered in the educational "wing" of the church."[164] Once again, faith grows most profoundly in relationships.

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[164] Miller-McLemore, "Whither the Children? Childhood in Religious Education," 643.

Recommendation for Further Study in the Field of Practical Theology

For the field of practical theology, several recommendations emerge, including equipping churches and pastors for the work outlined in these recommendations. How might a church comprehensively audit their practices around justice and how these are absorbed by children? How might a church design comprehensive faith formation practices with an eye toward eventually moving participants to a universalizing faith? How might all of these recommendations come together to offer a cohesive model for faith formation in communities? Using best practices and research, alongside insights from these interviewees, how might churches better understand the lifelong work of faith formation and build communities that are active in the work of peace and justice?

Similarly, while there is good research related to measuring and understanding faith formation across the ages, including how outdoor ministries and confirmation contribute to this formation, there is limited research related to how less-common faith forming experiences shape faith. There is a need for qualitative and quantitative research on uncommon experiences in faith formation. This area might be expanded to include how faith is shaped in the children of outdoor ministry directors, or children whose parents run a retreat center, or perhaps even children of intentional or semi-intentional faith communities. Because faith has been formed in significant ways in the children of Holden Village, such research might prove highly beneficial in exploring new models of faith formation. For example, can a local church adapt to be seen as an extended residential faith forming location, with the neighborhood serving as the context? Is it worth the investment of time and resources to re-imagine local faith communities in this way? Adequate research would be helpful in discerning how the Holden model might inform new models of church.

Future Directions

This project was small, listening closely to the stories of nine adult children of Holden Village, but their stories provided rich qualitative data. From this data, one potential future direction could be to expand this research, using the themes prioritized by the nine, to a quantitative study that invites feedback from a wider number of stories. Most years at Holden, there are between 6-12 children in the winter community of the Village. While some spend multiple years there, most spend only one or two. This means that in Holden's sixty-year history, there are hundreds of children who have been shaped by their time at Holden. Listening to these stories, and perhaps even matching themes to decades, would provide additional insight about faith formation in this wilderness setting.

Another potential future direction would be to interview parents whose children were minors in the Village during their stay there. The perspective of parents would certainly be different than that of children. It would be interesting to know how they sift through their memories to name themes that they believe were important to their child's experience and faith formation. Do parents and children have vastly different understandings of what formed them? If so, how might these differing insights contribute to what we know about what actually forms and nurtures faith in children?

A final future direction would be to invite similar qualitative research related to children of a sister community. If children spent a significant part of their childhood in the Iona Community, for example, what themes might arise through their reflections? Are they similar in nature to the Holden themes? Do they find themselves committed to justice work in the world? Are they engaged with a faith community, and how do they connect their time at Iona with their current faith community? Such a comparison might reveal that Holden Village does indeed have

sister faith communities, even if the specifics are different, or they might reinforce the general understanding at Holden that it is a place unlike any others.

Conclusion

In the Lutheran baptismal liturgy, parents and sponsors promise to help the newly baptized learn how to work for justice and peace as part of a life of Christian discipleship. *How* the church helps children and others learn this complex task is a difficult question, which was the research question taken up by this project: what might examining the stories of adult children of Holden Village who had lived in this unique wilderness community for one school year or longer teach the church about the formation of persons toward justice and peace? As it turns out, these stories have much to teach us. This returns us to the formational power of the wilderness, the theme that began this research project.

As noted in chapter one, the wilderness is often understood in scripture as a highly formative place, providing the backdrop for many revelatory moments of faith and experiences with God. And yet the wilderness is not the ultimate destination. Rather, it is a place to dwell temporarily so that one might encounter God in a profound way, then be sent back into the world with a clearer sense of mission and purpose. Scripture reveals that God calls us out of our life *to then call us back into it.* For a faith tradition concerned with people on the margins, the wilderness also serves as a metaphorical place. Many Christians, particularly Lutherans, understand that central to discipleship is the call to love our neighbor, particularly our most vulnerable neighbors. Are we able to stand on the margins and advocate for those who have limited access to the resources that enable thriving and full participation? The wilderness reminds us that many of our neighbors live in a wilderness that is not of their choosing.

In this research project, the nine interviewees touched on each of these themes. A year or longer at Holden Village in childhood means that as adults, almost all nine continue to deeply value community, faith, and justice, prominent themes of their time in the wilderness. Even as many have trouble realizing them in their current life, the longing for each of these continues to be profound in their lives. The good news for both faith communities and Holden's adult children is that all the themes raised by participants are within the reach of local faith communities. By focusing on intergenerational community, meaningful and interactive worship, relational approaches to justice, stages of faith, and love as a catalyst for justice, we step closer to our baptismal promise to work for justice and peace.

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Appendix A - Recruitment Flyer

Greetings all,

I am working on a research project through Texas Christian University called "Intentional Communities as Learning Labs for Faith Formation: How Adult Children of Holden Village Understand Emerging Faith Commitments" (IRB # #2022-425). I am hoping to interview 4-6 adult children of Holden Village, exploring with them how a year at Holden as a child now impacts their adult identity, specifically around their faith and spiritual commitments. Eligible participants are adults who spent one school year or longer at Holden Village before the age of 18. Participants will spend one hour on Zoom in a recorded conversation answering four questions about their time at Holden Village and their understanding of how that time has shaped their adult identity. If you are interested in participating, or know of others who might be, please contact me at mindy.roll@tcu.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research design, the Principal Investigator, Russell Dalton, can be contacted at r.dalton@tcu.edu.

Appendix B – Informed Consent

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Research: Intentional Communities as Learning Labs for Faith Formation: How Adult Children of Holden Village Understand Emerging Faith Commitments
Principal Investigator: Russ Dalton
Co-investigators: Mindy Roll

Overview: You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be an adult (over the age of 18) who spent one school year or longer at Holden Village as a child (under the age of 18).

Study Details: This study is being conducted via Zoom and is sponsored by Texas Christian University. The purpose of this study is to interview 4-6 adult children of Holden Village, exploring with them how a year at Holden as a child now impacts their adult identity, specifically around their faith and spiritual commitments. Participants will spend one hour on Zoom in a recorded conversation answering four questions about their time at Holden Village and their understanding of how that time has shaped their adult identity.

Participants: You are being asked to take part because you spent at least one school year at Holden Village before the age of 18. We want to see how your adult identity has been shaped by this experience. If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of 4-6 participants in this research study at TCU.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no loss of benefit or opportunity should you decide to stop the interview after it has begun.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your information private and confidential. Anyone with authority to look at your records must keep them confidential.

What is the purpose of the research? The purpose of this research is to explore how a year at Holden Village impacts your adult identity, specifically around your faith and spiritual commitments. This may inform how the wider church understands the connections between childhood faith formation and adult faith commitments.

What is my involvement for participating in this study?
We expect your participation to take about one hour, possibly up to one and a half hours. The questions asked include:

- *How do you understand your family's decision to live at Holden Village? What contributed to the decision?*
- *As you reflect on your time at Holden and your experience of faith formation there – through daily worship, teaching sessions, the Village's commitment to justice issues as an expression of faith – what experiences impacted you most significantly?*

- *How would you describe your adult faith and spiritual commitments now? Do you connect those to your time at Holden, and if so, how?*
- *What are the justice areas that you find yourself particularly drawn to, and do you trace a connection to those with your formation at Holden? For example, ecological justice, racial/gender/LGBTQIA+ justice, etc.*

The interviews will be video and audio recorded, and both the Principal Investigator and the Co-Investigator will have access to these recordings, which will be kept on a password-enabled laptop. The recordings will be maintained for three years after the Final Report is submitted to the IRB, after which they will be deleted.

Are there any alternatives and can I withdraw?
You do not have to participate in this research study.
You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time.

What are the risks for participating in this study and how will they be minimized?
There are some risks you might experience from being in this study, including emotional distress from recalling childhood events. You will be given a link to a database for mental health support should you wish to receive additional emotional support.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
You might benefit from being in this study because of an increased capacity for meaning-making related to reflecting on your time at Holden Village.

Will I be compensated for participating in this study?
No

What are my costs to participate in the study?
None

Is there any conflict of interest?
No.

How will my confidentiality be protected?
Every effort will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Your records may be reviewed by authorized University personnel or other individuals who will be bound by the same provisions of confidentiality.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

What will happen to the information collected about me after the study is over?
We may share your research data with other investigators without asking for your consent again, but it will not contain information that could directly identify you.

Who should I contact if I have questions regarding the study or concerns regarding my rights as a study participant?
You can contact Russell Dalton at r.dalton@tcu.edu or 817-257-6812 with any questions that you have about the study.

Dr. Brie Diamond, Chair, TCU Institutional Review Board, (817) 257-6152, b.diamond@tcu.edu; or Dr. Floyd Wormley, Associate Provost of Research, research@tcu.edu

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. A copy also will be kept with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

____
Printed Participant Name

____
Signature Date

____
Printed Name of the person obtaining consent

____
Signature Date

Consent to be audio/video recorded

I agree to be audio recorded. Yes ________ No __________

I agree to be video recorded. Yes ________ No __________

____
Signature Date

Consent to Use Data for Future Research

I agree that my information may be shared with other researchers for future research studies that may be similar to this study or may be completely different. The information shared with other researchers will not include any information that can directly identify me. Researchers will not contact me for additional permission to use this information.

Yes ________ No __________

____

Signature Date

Consent to be Contacted for Participation in Future Research

I give the researchers permission to keep my contact information and to contact me for future projects. Yes ________ No __________

____

Signature Date

Appendix C – ELW Baptismal Liturgy
Holy Baptism

Presentation
Candidates for baptism, sponsors, and parents gather with the ministers at the font. The presiding minister may address the assembly in these or similar words.
God, who is rich in mercy and love, gives us a new birth into a living hope through the sacrament of baptism. By water and the Word, God delivers us from sin and death and raises us to new life in Jesus Christ. We are united with all the baptized in the one body of Christ, anointed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and joined in God's mission for the life of the world.

Sponsors for each candidate, in turn, present the candidates:
I present *name* for baptism.

The presiding minister addresses candidates who are able to answer for themselves:
Name, called by the Holy Spirit, trusting in the grace and love of God, do you desire to be baptized into Christ?
Each candidate responds: I do.

The presiding minister addresses parents or others who bring for baptism children who are not able to answer for themselves:
Called by the Holy Spirit, trusting in the grace and love of God, do you desire to have *your children* baptized into Christ?
Response: I do.

As you bring *your children* to receive the gift of baptism, you are entrusted with responsibilities:
to live with *them* among God's faithful people,
bring *them* to the word of God and the holy supper,
teach *them* the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments,
place in *their* hands the holy scriptures,
and nurture *them* in faith and prayer,
so that *your children* may learn to trust God,
proclaim Christ through word and deed,
care for others and the world God made,
and work for justice and peace.
Do you promise to help *your children* grow in the Christian faith and life?
Response: I do.

The presiding minister addresses sponsors:
Sponsors, do you promise to nurture *these persons* in the Christian faith as you are empowered by God's Spirit, and to help them live in the covenant of baptism and in communion with the church?
Response: I do.

The presiding minister addresses the assembly:
People of God, do you promise to support *name/s* and pray for *them* in *their* new life in Christ?
We do.

Profession of Faith
The presiding minister addresses candidates for baptism as well as the parents and sponsors of young children. The assembly may join in the responses.

I ask you to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the church.

OPTION A: Three Renunciation Questions
Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?
Response:
I renounce them.
Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?
Response:
I renounce them.
Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?
Response:
I renounce them.

OPTION B: One Renunciation Question
Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God,
the powers of this world that rebel against God,
and the ways of sin that draw you from God?
Response:
I renounce them.

The presiding minister addresses the candidates and the assembly.
Do you believe in God the Father?
I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,

the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

**Or,* "he descended into hell," *another translation of this text in widespread use.*

Thanksgiving at the Font
Water may be poured into the font before or during the thanksgiving. At the font, the presiding minister begins the thanksgiving:
The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family, and through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection you set us free from the power of sin and death and raise us up to live in you.

Pour out your Holy Spirit, the power of your living Word, that those who are washed in the waters of baptism may be given new life. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.
Amen.

Baptism
The presiding minister baptizes each candidate. The candidate is immersed into the water, or water is poured on the candidate's head, as the presiding minister says:
Name, I baptize you in the name of the Father,
OR
Name is baptized in the name of the Father,
The candidate is immersed or water is poured on the candidate's head a second time:
and of the Son,
The candidate is immersed or water is poured on the candidate's head a third time:
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

After each baptism, the assembly may respond with one of the following, a sung alleluia, or another acclamation.
You belong to Christ, in whom you have been baptized. Alleluia.

Clothed with Christ in baptism, the newly baptized may receive a baptismal garment.

The presiding minister continues:
Let us pray.
We give you thanks, O God,
that through water and the Holy Spirit
you give your daughters and sons new birth,
cleanse them from sin, and raise them to eternal life.

Laying both hands on the head of each of the newly baptized, the minister prays for each:
Sustain *name* with the gift of your Holy Spirit:
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord,
the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever.
Amen.

The presiding minister marks the sign of the cross on the forehead of each of the baptized. Oil prepared for this purpose may be used. As the sign of the cross is made, the minister says:
Name, child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.
Amen.

Welcome
A lighted candle may be given to each of the newly baptized (to a sponsor of a young child) as these or similar words are spoken:
Jesus said, I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will have the light of life.
OR
Let your light so shine before others
that they may see your good works
and glorify your Father in heaven.

The ministers and the baptismal group face the assembly. A representative of the congregation leads the assembly in the welcome.
Let us welcome the newly baptized.
We welcome you into the body of Christ
and into the mission we share:
join us in giving thanks and praise to God
and bearing God's creative and redeeming word
to all the world.
Those who have gathered at the font may return to their places. An acclamation, psalm, or hymn may be sung.

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Appendix D – Lifelong Faith Formation Practices
ELCA Recommended Practices for Lifelong Faith Formation Faith Formation

Dear Faith Practitioner,

Perhaps you find yourself entering into a new faith community, or you've been a part of one your whole life. Wherever you find yourself, the Good News is that Jesus is there with you. And Jesus invites us to practice faith on a daily basis. We may never get it *all* right, but with Jesus by our side, we trust we won't get it all wrong, either. Our hope is that within this short booklet, you find practical resources for your ongoing faith journey whether you are an individual, a household, a congregation, or another faith-filled community. Please keep in mind these are RECOMMENDED PRACTICES so when using any suggestions adapt them freely to your situation and setting.

Tips for use: *This handbook gives concrete, easily accessible touchpoints for faith formation, but these are just a few examples. We encourage use of elca.org and ministrylinks.online for more comprehensive resources.

*The age brackets in the following material are meant for quick accessibility and not to limit the scope of where you might be in faith. Several of these practices you might already be doing, while the less familiar might stretch you--let the Spirit guide where to start.

*This resource also seeks to be gender inclusive with alternating uses of her/his/their so that we might all envision ourselves as faith formation participants.

Blessings to you as you live out your faith, claim your Christian identity, and share God's love in the world in creative and unique ways.

Together in ministry,

The Reverend Janelle Rozek Hooper
Program Director for Ministry with Children on behalf of the Domestic Mission Unit

Background

For years Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations have taught Martin Luther's *Small Catechism* as central to the rite of Confirmation, a traditional benchmark in faith formation. The fourfold **ELCA Recommended Practices for Lifelong Faith Formation** broaden our tradition beyond just goals for confirmation youth but for people of all ages in diverse ministry settings, including, but not limited to, congregations, campus ministries, Christian schools, outdoor ministries, and households/the domestic church.

Congregations, for the most part, teach us Christians beliefs and provide safe spaces to wrestle with them through worship services, education, acts of justice, and a variety of programming. As effective as church programming can be, it cannot replace home lives filled with faith conversations, rituals, and service to others. Whether we are "young" or not, daily connections to faith with the support of others exponentially strengthen us in our faith journeys.

These journeys are ongoing and build upon previous knowledge and experiences. So how can any- one else know where you are on the journey, and what you need to move forward? Conversations and questions are key.

ELCA Recommended Practices for Lifelong Faith Formation provides quick reference points for guidance when in-depth questions arise (e.g., "Should I ask my fourth grader to give to the offering?"). Answers may vary, so this handbook encourages faith-filled questioning and wondering while providing basic guidance for lifelong faith formation in four specific areas: spiritual practices, respectful relation- ships, guided learning, and faith-filled service.

Biblical Grounding:
In the book of Acts, Lydia engaged in a spiritual practice by regularly joining Paul's Christian community at the river to pray. There by the water, Paul and Silas engaged with Lydia, a worshipper of God, in a mutually respectful relation- ship. With trust established, Lydia experienced the Good News of Jesus through Paul's guided learning. She then decided that she and her household should be baptized in that very river. Immediately Lydia invited Paul and Silas back to her house for hospitality in faith-filled service to God's ministry.
ELCA Vision
The ELCA[8] has a vision for lifelong faith formation[9] that is grounded in biblical stories such as Lydia's, where four central faith formation components stand out. 10

Spiritual Practices
Respectful Relationships
Guided Learning
Faith-filled Service

Spiritual Practices are activities undertaken with intentional awareness of the presence of the Holy. Individuals and communities use these practices to revere and rest in the mystery of the Divine. Used repeatedly, they foster a habit of attention to oneself, God, and neighbor.
Respectful Relationships can be formed with family, friends, church staff, lay mentors, spiritual directors, and coaches. Healthy relationships always include trust, listening, challenge, compassion, and commitment to one another. Each person's location on her faith journey (e.g., wilderness or mountaintop) guides the interactions.
Guided Learning happens when we visit and revisit Biblical stories, or hear and share each other's faith stories, with a sense of wonder and discovery. Guided learning is not simply about garnering knowledge, but also about wrestling with how to live faithfully each day.
Faith-filled Service recognizes the need to act on behalf of one's beliefs. Whether or not the work is done outwardly in Jesus's name, the faith underlying the service makes it a demonstration of love for God and neighbor.

Children on the Way/Infants11

Spiritual Practices:

- Pray for the entirety of the child's life in faith, even from before birth.
- Have the child baptized.
- Play Christian children's music.

Respectful Relationships:

- Build trust through "attuned attention, engagement, smiling, holding, rocking, and
- singing."10
- Grandparents: pray, participate in the child's life, tell them stories, and be physically affectionate.
- Godparents: pray and attend church with the child, light baptismal candle yearly together.

Guided Learning:

- Read sacred stories and sing beloved hymns to the child while cuddling, building
- trust, familiarity with stories, and love for reading and music.
- Consider ELCA preschools.
- Join a parent group and/or Bible study group to grow in your parenting skills and your own relationship with God.

Faith-filled Service:

- When nursing and/or feeding the baby, view time together as a holy gift.
- When bathing or changing the child, stay present to her in the moment.
- Be aware of growth in your own spiritual gifts (such as patience) when the child awakens you in the night.

Preschool–Kindergarten

Spiritual Practices:

- Experiment with prayer with pictures.
- Start to learn liturgical responses (e.g., "Amen," "Thanks be to God").
- Become aware that the baptismal waters claim him with God's love, make the sign of the cross on her forehead.
- Come to the communion table for the elements and/or a blessing, understanding that we come because Jesus welcomes us all to the table.

Respectful Relationships:

- Develop an awareness that God loves her deeply.
- Claim themselves as created and beloved by God.
- Converse about faith as a lived practice when at home.
- Know name of her church, pastor(s), and/or teacher(s).

Guided Learning:

- Attend Bible class (e.g., Sunday school, Godly Play).
- Learn about Moses; Eve and Adam; Jonah; Jesus, born of Mary and Joseph; and Jesus' death and resurrection. Familiarity can come through listening to sto- ries or music, whether at home or church.
- Participate in day camps like Vacation Bible School.
- Experience church as a warm, welcoming, worship-filled community where they can wonder about God.

Faith-filled Service:

- Help at home: set the table, put away clothes, care for the family pet.
- Help at church: sing in children's choir, usher.
- Bring canned goods to the church or a local charity.

Grades 1-5

Spiritual Practices:

- Pray at mealtimes and/or before bed.
- Give a regular offering.
- Pray the Lord's Prayer by heart.

Respectful Relationships:

- Know by name and receive support from at least three Christian adults other than parents and grandparents (e.g., pastor, teacher, neighbor).
- Understand the body as created in the image of God therefore worthy of love, claim private body parts as private.
- Start to do more on her own with supportive supervision.

Guided Learning:

- Retell the basics of core Bible stories in his own words (e.g., the creation story, Sarah and Abraham, Moses, Mary Magdalene and Jesus).
- Read Bible storybooks and Psalters related to these stories.
- Attend day or overnight church camp (e.g., family camp for two to four nights).

Faith-filled Service:

- Serve at church as an acolyte, reader, altar guild member, vocalist, or instrumentalist.
- Be responsible for household cleaning tasks (e.g., setting the table, taking out the trash).
- Perform acts of kindness towards grandparents.

Grades 6-8

Spiritual Practices:

- Curious about God and engaging more in conversational prayers.
- Say Lord's Prayer or impromptu prayer.
- Fast for age-appropriate amount of time (e.g., one meal a week with family).
- Participate regularly in Sunday offerings (e.g., use church envelopes).

Respectful Relationships:

- Receive acknowledgment from congregational/community leaders.
- Develop a mentorship relationship with a congregation member.
- Help lead VBS or Sunday School.
- Show awareness of one's own gender and form appropriate relationships with people of other genders.

Guided Learning:

- Attend church camp.
- Come up with his own favorite Bible verse.
- Know a sacred story that most closely relates to her personal story.
- Learn about available resources (e.g., prayer book, faith website).

Faith-filled Service:
- Help a neighbor by bringing a meal, mowing the lawn, or babysitting.
- Volunteer at food bank.
- Serve as a eucharistic minister (e.g., bring communion to the homebound with a parent's help).
- Serve on a youth committee, in the church nursery or for a service organization.

Grades 9-12
Spiritual Practices:
- Become comfortable leading prayers and mentioning friends and family in petitions.
- Continue to give to the church and to causes that are important to her.
- Serve in worship leadership roles (e.g., reader, communion/worship assistant).
- Participate in a "spiritual mountaintop experience," perhaps the ELCA Youth Gathering, a service trip. or a summer camp.

Respectful Relationships:
- Be in a mentor-mentee relationship with at least one faithful, trustworthy adult.
- Mentor younger youth as camp counselor or nursery worker.
- Develop positive friendships that are encouraging and countercultural, particularly in their exclusion of gossiping and competition.
- Remain aware of changes in the body, discussing with a trusted adult the sexual aspects of dating life.

Guided Learning:
- Attend a Bible study with peers or adults.
- Dive deeper into Lutheran theology by learning more about the Reformation.
- Share his faith story (written or oral) with a group of peers or the congregation.
- Learn about other Christian denominations and religions and how they compare to the ELCA.

Faith-filled Service:
- Be involved with a congregational committee or team.
- Volunteer regularly in the community.
- Go on a domestic or international service trip.
- Lead or participate in a fundraising event for a local individual, charity, or cause.

Young Adults
Spiritual Practices:
- Pray for the needs of the world.
- Share sacred traditions, particularly around the holidays.
- Lead worship.
- Give to the church as well as to charities that are clear about their mission.

Respectful Relationships:
- Form intimate relationships shaped by faith, seeing the body as a gift from God and treating other people's bodies with respect.
- Maintain transparency and authenticity with at least one peer/adult in her life (e.g., former youth leader/pastor).
- Appreciate and respect other faith and religious traditions.

- Support gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people and relationships.

Guided Learning:

- Recognize the historical context of the Bible as the inspired word of God.
- Read books related to faith.
- Ask questions and wrestle with his faith/life in an open/nonjudgmental setting.
- Develop a personalized faith narrative drawn from tradition and reflection that strengthens her identity and quality of life.

Faith-filled Service:

- Engage in advocacy for justice and societal transformation (e.g., speak out on social
- media, march for a cause).
- Care for creation (e.g., recycling, shopping local).
- Utilize faith embodied in leadership gifts in or outside of church.
- Serve in global mission, in campus ministry, or as a camp counselor.

Middle-Senior Adult

Spiritual Practices:

- Pray regularly with friends/spouse/children/grandchildren.
- Budget responsibly so that she can both save and share with the church and other charities (even sharing sacrificially).
- Study the Bible outside of church, using commentaries/devotionals.
- Worship with the church community most weeks and invite friends along.

Respectful Relationships:

- Encourage faith-filled wondering in others, journey alongside godchildren/ children/grandchildren/children of the congregation.
- Model Christ's welcome, respecting those who are "different" in race, ethnicity, gender, age, economic status, sexual orientation, and/or religion.
- Support the person he/she is in a dating or committed relationship with, sharing in faith conversations and prayers for one another.
- Seek to make all groups inclusive and welcoming of newcomers.

Guided Learning:

- Become comfortable with learning and discussing the devotional, literary, historical, and theological dimensions of a biblical passage.
- Seek out movies, videos, and books with religious themes and reflect on how they relate to his own belief system.
- Model openness to learning, especially during times of transition, by hearing all sides and supporting the church's mission.
- Show familiarity with the lectionary, Creation, Exodus, the prophets, Psalms, Jesus' life, the early church, the Reformation, and salvation as a gift from God.

Faith-filled Service:

- Use talents and gifts to help others (e.g., teach English as a second language).
- Volunteer in the community (e.g., PTA, scouts, local government).
- Serve consistently in some role(s) in the congregation, intentionally welcome and train others to participate in the ministry.
- Pass on faith stories, perhaps in one-to-one interactions (e.g., as a parent,

Sources (for Appendix D)
1. Artwork commissioned from A Sanctified Art artist Lauren Wright Pittman, 2017.
2. White Paper "A Framework for Faith Formation in the ELCA Fall 2015" the outcome of two Faith Formation Summits (2011 & 2014), representing 30 organizations in the ELCA.
https://faithformationsummit.wordpress.com/chicago-2016
3. Kehrwald, Leif, et al. Families at the Center of Faith Formation. Connecticut: Lifelong Faith Associates, 2016. 85. Print.
4. Keep in mind the context of your specific setting for best use of these broad ranging practices.
5. "Search Institute's Effective Christian Education study found that faith conversations, rituals and service to others in the
home were more strongly associated with adolescents' faith maturity than was participation in effective Christian educa- tion programs." Kehrwald, Leif, et al. Families at the Center of Faith Formation. Connecticut: Lifelong Faith Associates, 2016. 12.Print.
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7. Acts 16 as retold by Pastor Janelle Rozek Hooper.
"Faith formation and practice: Support and provide resources for faith formation and practice with children and across the life span – within households, workplaces and communities – and share learnings across this church." Goal 2 of Priority 2 of the "Called Forth Together in Christ" ELCA Strategic Directions for 2025 published December 2016.
"Lifelong faith formation in the ELCA is guided by our baptismal covenant and the Holy Spirit's ongoing guidance as we live among God's faithful people, hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and strive for justice and peace in all the earth." Evangelical Lutheran Worship. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers. 2006. 227. Print.
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