ABSTRACT

Preachers' Kids Have Free Will, Too:

Discerning Best Practices for the Spiritual Nurture of Pastors' Children

by

Stephen G. Pichaske

The 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church identified four "Areas of Focus" to lead the denomination into the future. These four areas included Engaging the Poor in Ministry, Improving Global Health, Creating New and Renewed Congregations, and Developing Principled Christian Leaders. Reaffirmed by both the General Conferences of 2012 and 2016, these four Areas of Focus have been identified as key markers of congregational vitality by the United Methodist denomination. Within the fourth of these focus areas, the United Methodist Church has recognized the critical importance of developing new leaders to guide the church into the 21st Century. The denomination's self-identified focus is to include the forming of principled Christian leaders whose formational experiences have prepared them for service as clergy and lay leadership roles within the local church. Nurturing, developing, training, equipping and sending forth young people has thus been recognized as essential to the United Methodist Church's long-term survival.

The purpose of this project was to explore the United Methodist Church's effectiveness in "developing principled Christian leaders" from among the ranks of its own Preacher's Kids (PKs). In my personal experience as a United Methodist pastor, I have observed that many of my clergy colleagues grew up as PKs. The spiritual nurturing they received helped them experience both God's grace and God's calling upon their

lives in such a way that they have given themselves to serving the local church in full-time ministry. These ministry colleagues have also shared stories of siblings who are serving in strong lay leadership roles within the local church as well as stories of siblings/PK friends whose childhood experiences have pushed them away from the Christian faith and church.

Recognizing that PKs, like all children, enjoy "free will" with regard to choosing to follow Christ and serve the Church, this project sought to identity "best practices" with regard to nurturing the spiritual formation of PKs within the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church. The project offered an examination of the *Shema* found in Deuteronomy 6 as a basis for considering the spiritual nurture of children. The project also considered biblical and historical examples of "PKs" while also examining the research of contemporary youth ministry experts (including Reggie Joyner, George Barna, Tim Elmore, Diana Garland David Kinnaman, Chap Clark, Kara Powell and Mark Holmen) and others who have written about the realities facing ministry families (including Barnabas Piper, Jean and Chris Burton, Brian and Cara Croft, Laurie Denski-Snyman, Cameron Lee and Jack Balswick).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discern areas of harmony and disconnect between those authors who wrote about youth ministry in general and those who wrote about the unique challenges facing PKs with the goal of determining postures, practices, priorities conducive to helping United Methodist PKs grow into fully devoted flowers of Jesus Christ. Twenty-nine individuals took part in the project's research by completing the project's survey. Twenty-one of these individuals then participated in one-on-one or three-member focus group semi-structured follow-up interviews.

The project's research identified three key influencers in the lives of participating PKs. These influencers included the PKs' pastor-parents, local church leadership (in both formal ministry settings and through informal mentoring relationships) and the leadership of the annual conference (as the shepherding, vision-casting, and appointment-making body of connectional leadership within the United Methodist Church). While PKs certainly enjoy "free will," the project identified several tangible markers of an environment most conducive to producing a strong, authentic Christian faith and love for Christ's Church among PKs. Both for the sake of our PKs spiritual/emotional well-being and as a means of helping realize our denominational vision to raise the next generation of United Methodist leaders, these three key influencers must work collaboratively. In so doing, they will model postures, practices, and priorities most conducive to helping future PKs realize a love for God and a love for the Church that will guide them into adulthood. This project offers guidance towards that very goal.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

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Discerning Best Practices for the Spiritual Nurture of Pastors' Children

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Stephen G. Pichaske

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Dissertation Coach	Date
_____	_____
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The realities of completing this program have come at a great cost of time and energy. The irony of sometimes being pulled away from my own family in an effort to complete a dissertation related to the needs of pastors' families has not been lost on me. Beth, in those moments where I have become our family's Samuel Wesley, thank you for being our Susanna! Megan, Matthew, Addison, and Alexandra…you are amazing PKs! Thank you for supporting me in this endeavor, even when you probably did not want to. Thank you for allowing God to continue working in your lives as you grow into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. The Lord has great plans for you…and I pray that they include many years of continued service marked by a love of God, love of His people, and love of His Church. I further pray that the work you have allowed me to complete will serve those PKs who follow in your footsteps.

CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter demonstrates the critical importance of equipping today's pastor-parents with the resources they need for the spiritual upbringing of their own children. This chapter communicates both the biblical and theological importance of attending to the spiritual health of today's "Preacher's Kids" (PKs) while also offering a glimpse of the current difficulties facing modern clergy families with regard to disciple-making within the context of their own home. The chapter offers critical research questions along with a presentation of their importance within ministry families of the itinerant system present within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church.

In addition to offering a rationale for the project, this chapter presents key terms that will be used within the study, including "vital, active faith," "pastor-parent," "mentor," and "youth ministry." An overview offering justification for the decision to focus research on the young adult "PKs" of the Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church is also provided along with a preview of the existing, relevant literature regarding contemporary discipleship models for youth and children's ministry, realities facing today's PKs. Insight into the practice of spiritual development within the ministry family is also offered. This chapter concludes with a preview of the data analysis plan and data collection methods that will be used within the project.

Personal Introduction

My grandfather passed away in the spring of 2009. I remember joining my sister, cousins, and other distant relatives who had gathered to say their goodbyes and to offer support to my grandfather's five children at his funeral services in Virginia. My father,

the oldest of his siblings, gave a wonderful eulogy, highlighting his father's integrity, godly character and dedication to home and church. An aunt read one of my grandfather's favorite scriptures and my uncle quoted lyrics from a favorite poem.

God gave me a punch to the gut, a hard one, the evening after the services had concluded. With the family gathered in my grandparents' home, likely for the last time, I found myself contemplating the spiritual vitality of those sitting in the room with me. One of my grandfather's children is now an ordained pastor. Another is active in their local congregation. A third is willing to engage in deep theological conversation and professes his faith, but has no church affiliation, describing himself as "not being very spiritual." The other two siblings enjoy neither a church connection nor active faith. I am the only member in my generation of the extended Pichaske family that is active in the Christian faith.

What struck me in that moment was the fact that my grandfather was a retired pastor in the Lutheran Church of America (LCA). Both the LCA denominational leadership and the communities he had served regarded my grandfather as a tremendously "successful" pastor. The churches he served flourished as many came to know Christ as their personal Savior and many more saw their faith strengthened. Based on his success serving in the local church, he spent the second half of his ministerial career serving at the LCA headquarters in Philadelphia, PA. There he developed curriculum and wrote books that helped the entire denomination of Christians grow as disciples.

While my grandfather enjoyed great success helping to instill and develop the faith within families throughout the Church, I began to consider his "success" rate within

the most important family of all…his own. He and my grandmother raised five wonderful children, who themselves got married and started another generation of the family tree that is enjoying success in a wide variety of career and social endeavors. My grandfather's family has done much to make him proud. Yet, I cannot help but believe that his most heartfelt desire, as a pastor-parent, would have been to leave behind a crew of Pichaskes who proudly and passionately bore the title of Christian disciples.

Taking this conversation within my head to the next logical step, I had to ask own family?" My wife and I have four children, and while we are committed to ministry on behalf of all God's people, we trust that the "people" God has given us the most responsibility to help grow as Christian disciples are Megan, Matthew, Addison and Alexandra. Would I be satisfied if two of my own children grew into committed, active Christians (50%)? Would three out of four (75%) be sufficient? To put it another way, if I truly believe that Jesus Christ is *the* Way, *the* Truth, *the* source of Life and the only way through which we experience the genuine love of the Father both now and into eternity (John 14:6), can I imagine not doing everything within my power to help ensure each of my children knows the joy of life with Jesus in a personal, transformational way?

In truth, I yearn to see each of my children living as faithful disciples and want to do everything in my power to help them realize this blessing. I also believe this to be true of all pastor-parents. We earnestly desire for our children to realize the same kind of relationship with God that has been a part of our story. An outsider might imagine that the pastor's home represents an ideal environment for a child to experience and realize the Christian faith. Those "on the inside," however, recognize that the life of the

Christian pastor or missionary often creates an environment where tremendous roadblocks to experiencing God's love and grace are present.

Sitting in my grandfather's living room, I vowed that my children's faith development would remain an absolute top priority within my life and ministry. Like all children, my "preachers' kids" have free will, and I determined that I would do all in my power to help them decide for Christ. That was more than eight years ago, and I still find myself struggling to understand and offer what my children genuinely need to grow in faith.

My only son is now seventeen years old, and well into his teenage years. My wife and I are mindful that many of our conversations with him will reflect our jostling to test the waters of each other's authority within the family. Heated words are not entirely uncommon as the strong wills of both father and son collide over both significant and more trivial matters. Still, I was taken aback when, in the midst of a rather tense exchange, my son recently declared, "You're not a good pastor at all; you just look like it when you're at church." I was both impressed by his recollection that morning's sermon points on grace, forgiveness, and the "beloved nature" of all God's children and wounded by the blow his words inflicted.

In the midst of a Sunday afternoon of playing football in the front yard, our son quickly moved past our conversation. These same words, however, rekindled the process of reflection about my parenting and ministry, and the connection between the two. I began to ask anew, "What would my description of a 'well-discipled Pichaske' look like and what is my role in helping those who live under the same roof as I do attain this status?" Above all else, I found myself asking, "Am I being intentional enough about our

children's faith development and are other pastor-parents wrestling with the same tension I am now experiencing?"

I have found many clergy brothers and sisters wrestling with the same reality. Understanding the pieces that make up the puzzle of effective faith-development in the distinctive environment that is a pastor-parent home must become a priority within the Church. Failure to do so, opens the door to false measures of pastoral success that are born of growing congregations at the expense of growing disciples under the pastor-parent's own roof. The purpose of this paper revolved around my search for answers to the keys to raising children who are uniquely identified as pastor's children, especially those within an appointment-based clergy system, towards Christian spiritual maturity.

Statement of the Problem

The *Shema* from Deuteronomy 6 paints the picture of family-based, community *supported*, faith development. Too many pastors, however, fail in the role of parent. Some of these pastor-parents succumb to consuming pressures of their congregational/professional ministry or embrace false assumptions that faith will simply "rub-off" on their children. Others hope that leading their congregation's ministries well will translate to a healthy faith-development environment for their own kids. Regardless of reasoning, a discipleship disconnect exists in too many homes where a parent is engaged in "professional" ministry.

Many of my ministerial peers identify themselves as "preacher's kids" (or "missionary kids"), having emerged from the unique environment that is characteristic of a family engaged in full-time professional ministry with a strong faith and clear calling. Many of my pastor colleagues also boast of the strong faith exhibited by their children.

Painfully, for every story of a Preacher Kid (PK) growing up strong in their own walk with Christ, there appear to be just as many stories of PKs whose adult lives are characterized by a lukewarm faith, outward Church involvement without an inward commitment to the Lord, and/or resentment towards the Church.

Raising the PK "well" should not be left to chance and while no program or set of guidelines can ensure "success" in parenting or spiritual development, the Church should be dismayed at the scant amount of resources and focus it has provided to help the pastor-parent in the role of raising their own children. The PK (or Missionary Kid) should be recognized as a tremendously rich mission field for the future of God's Church. Moreover, the PK should represent the most critical mission field for the pastor-parent to whom said children have been entrusted. If the Church fails to recognize the importance of supporting its pastor-parents in their role of PK faith development, it will have failed Christ at a number of profound levels.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to identify the best practices for the nurture and development of growth towards spiritual maturity of children within ministry families in the context of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Research Questions

The bulls-eye in the center of this project's target was "children whose lives are marked by a love of God, God's Church, and all of God's people." To help pastor-parents hit this bulls-eye with their own children, this project endeavored to discern a process that best creates a path towards this goal. The effort to lay such a path required a sound understanding of the factors that most often lead to a mature faith. To that end, this

project worked to answer the following foundational questions regarding faith-development within the pastor family:

Research Question #1

What is the role of the pastor-parent in the spiritual development of his/her own children?

The project's literature review identified the important role that all parents are called to assume about the spiritual upbringing of their children. The project engages both positive and negative examples of historical and contemporary pastor-parents with an eye towards discerning the best practices. This project then targeted young adults whose parents served as local church pastors for all or part of the PK's childhood for their input.

While considering the role of the pastor as spiritual shepherd to all members of a local congregation, this study examined the perceived effectiveness of pastor-parents regarding spiritual formation practices within the home. Comparisons were made between young adult PKs who identified their pastor-parent as the chief spiritual influence on their lives as opposed to those who identified the ministries of the church or a third-party mentor/peer influence as the most influential contributors to their faith development. Consideration was also given to contrasting the effectiveness of practicing traditional spiritual disciplines (within the life of the local church and home) and the modeling of Christian discipleship.

Within the examination of this question, the project further examined the pastor-parent's ability to differentiate between these two roles and their ability to focus on both the heart condition and external behaviors of their children. A focus on the necessity of "individual thought" and freedom of expression within the ministry family was included

both within the literature review and research portions of the project. Research focused on the extent to which pain/frustration caused to pastor-parents by church members resulted in feelings of pain, anger and betrayal in the hearts of PKs and the extent to which such feelings further translated to frustration with God and the universal Church. In this case, the project sought to identity best priorities, practices and postures that would help pastor-parents communicate God's goodness and grace, along with the positives of serving the Lord through local church ministry, to their children. The project examined considerations of how ministry families handled job stress and the reality of moves within the itinerant system, along with their apparent influence on PK self-identity and spiritual development.

Research Question #2

How does the local church, through its formalized and less established ministries, play a role in the spiritual development of a pastor's kids?

This project also examined expectations concerning the role one's faith community has upon the spiritual development of children. The literature review sought to identify common challenges and stereotypes about congregational treatment of pastor's kids. The project's research discerned the perception participants had of their childhood congregations' priorities, practices and postures about nurturing their PKs spiritually, both positively or negatively.

Within the examination of this question, this project further investigated the involvement of the pastor's children across all activities, asking if such involvement was typically communicated as an "expectation" or "invitational opportunity." Surveys and interviews, in particular, discerned whether PKs felt the presence of unfair expectations

or higher standards than their non-PK peers. Moreover, the study identified the propensity for local churches to *assume* the spiritual vitality of its PKs as opposed to making conscious efforts to intentionality and genuinely nurture the faith of these children/youth. The project further examined the difference between the *impression* of spiritual maturity that church involvement and "being a good kid" often bring and the reality of authentic faith. This study also attempted to discern the degree to which PKs could experience church as a "safe place" to "be real" and express their questions and doubts regarding the faith. The research included investigation into the presence of summer Christian camping experiences and other opportunities to connect with other children/youth outside of the congregational setting where they might be known as individuals rather than as members of the "ministry family."

Research Question #3

How does the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church, and the larger system of a PK's community, play a role in the spiritual development of a pastor's kids?

This project considered existing literature relevant to denominational and organizational realities beyond the local church and the potential for the "connectional church" to influence the spiritual nurture of the ministry family. This study also considered the unique realities of the current manifestation of the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church.

Within the research portion of the project, participants answered questions related to their perception of the priorities, practices, and postures of leadership within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church. While not the

"everyday church" that these PKs associate with, the project information gathering process invited participants to consider their experiences with conference leadership. Experiences of both a relational and systemic nature found inclusion within the critical reflection dialogues of the project interviews. In addition to questioning the influence of appointment-based moves on their faith development, participants considered the broader implications of living within a pastor's family within a connectional system of ministry.

The project examined the difference and similarity of experiences of PKs who spent their formative years in small towns versus urban communities, smaller churches versus larger (multiple staff) churches, and blue-collar communities as opposed to professional/white-collar environments. Investigation into the presence of "alternative" faith development settings (YoungLife, Youth for Christ, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, neighboring youth groups, etc.) also received attention. The research also examined the impact of ministry moves at various life stages.

Rationale for the Project

The first reason that this study was critical to the nature of the Church and its appointed pastors, lies in the simple fact that the Pastor's Kids are--the pastor's kids. God's Word, most notably within the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6, has helped define "successful parenting" in terms of leading children "into life and not death (Deuteronomy 6:19-20). Brian Haynes notes that within the *Shema*, God's plan for the spiritual formation of future generations is both simple and clear: parents are to teach their children how to love God by loving God in front of them and by intentionally impressing the truth of God onto their children (34). Are pastor-parents willing to lead their families according to God's Word and standards, and will they embrace the necessary discipline

to model a life where all "may go well with you" in the land that God has provided (Deuteronomy 6:3)? I believe that the current model of "doing ministry" has created an unhealthy reality where too many pastors focus excessively on leading their congregations well, at the expense of leading their families well. While many pastor-parents hope that the churches they are leading will include ministries to help shepherd the PK, this represents an unbiblical and, arguably, unrealistic understanding of PK faith development responsibilities.

An additional theological/biblical reason this study was both important, and long overdue, lies in the fact that God has commanded the pastor-parent to serve in the role of primary disciple-maker within his or her own home. The Apostle Paul stresses that an elder (or overseer of the church) "must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?" (1 Timothy 3:4-5, NLT). Leading one's family is more than a good disciple-making strategy, church growth formula, or even necessary emphasis to maintain clergy health. The discipleship of one's own children is a biblical mandate that stands in dire need of attention.

The findings of this study were also critically important because PKs represent such a potentially vital role in the future of the Church. In 2008, the United Methodist Church identified Developing Principled Christian Leaders as one of its four essential "Areas of Focus" to lead the denomination into the future. As retirements continue to outpace clergy ordinations within the denomination, and as overall membership and leadership within local United Methodist Churches declines, the General Conferences of 2012 and 2016 reaffirmed this mandate. Nurturing, developing, training, equipping and

sending forth young people has thus been recognized as essential to the United Methodist Church's long-term survival. No other young adults have a better opportunity to see the Church at its best than those who grew up within the homes of its called and appointed leaders. If nurtured well, the Church should expect to see a significant number of its 21st Century leaders growing from the ranks of PKs.

Conversely, another reason this study was so important lies in the fact that this "fertile field" is not receiving the attention it deserves or, *needs*. While PKs enjoy many opportunities to see the best of the Church from an insider perspective, they also experience the pain, stress, and ugliness that the Church often exudes. Finding the keys to help pastor-parents, and their PKs, navigate the difficult waters of personal faith development in seas that are often inhabited by sharks was essential to fostering the health of these individuals and, ultimately, the life settings (including their local congregations) that these individuals will find themselves living within.

The final reason that this study was so important, lies in the fact that the pastor-parent, by virtue of their status as congregational leader, must *model* what it means to lead well within their own home. Too many pastors seek (exclusively) to create systems within a congregation that offer "plausible strategies for disciple-making" among children and youth, in the hope that families will send their kids to be nurtured within these ministries. Instead, the congregational pastor should focus on leading their own home with authenticity so that others begin to ask, "What can I learn from the way he/she is discipling his/her own children?" (Haynes, 38). Providing pastor-parents with the tools they need to help their own children grow spiritually also provides the benefit of modelling what counts as "successful" child-rearing to a culture where getting into the

right college, marrying the right partner, and making the right salary in the right profession too often serve as the only models of success.

Definition of Key Terms

Determining what a "vital, active faith" looks like was of primary significance within this project. This project thus sought to establish an appropriate definition for the *Description of a Christian Disciple,* a representation of what actually constitutes the markers of a mature, committed Christian. While every family and, for that matter, every individual may embrace a slightly different perspective to these terms, some core characteristics should be recognizable. Much as building codes in America govern basic construction standards for physical homes, the identification of key core values represents the spiritual standards that define a "mature faith." For this project, a *vital, active faith* was defined, at the basic level, as faith where a clear love of God, love of people and "fruits of the Spirit are evident within the life of the disciple.

This project's working *Description of a Discipled Person* (DDP) was drawn from the Great Commission, the Great Commandment (which, of course, includes the *Shema*), and an Acts 2 model of discipleship. The specifics of this DDP, with additional scripture references noted, includes a deep love and full trust in God, unselfish love for others in community (John 13:34-35 and Hebrews 10:24-25), a commitment to being a lifelong learner and teacher of God's Word, a missional attitude towards the spiritually lost and physically needy, the development of one's God-given character to its fullest potential (Proverbs 22:6), a strong sense of self-discipline in the pursuit of God's will (Hebrews 10:36 and 1 Corinthians 9-24-25), respect for self and others (Ephesians 6:1-6), a life of prayer as communication with the Almighty, a constant striving to understand and

embrace worship, a spirit of generosity in a culture of entitlement, and attending to the ordnances of God. The project examined these core values/evidences for application within the survey and interview portions of my study.

Clarification of the term *Pastor-Parent* was also necessary. For the purposes of this project, a pastor-parent was identified as one whose full-time vocation has them in "professional ministry" while at the same time raising children in their home. Within this project, research participation was further refined to include only those families where the majority of the pastor-parent's ministerial service has taken place within the local church. This decision was based upon the fact that the project's specific intention was to examine relationship/role of the local church in the spiritual development of the pastor's children.

It was expected that the presence, or lack thereof, of non-parent adult mentors within the lives of youth to represent a significant factor in faith development among "preacher's kids." A *Mentor* was defined as any adult, either in a paid position or serving in an informal, unpaid role, who embraced an intentional one-to-one relationship with the PK and whose specific intent was to offer a faith-based presence to the youth. The presence of a safe sanctuary where the PK experienced the freedom to express them self without fear of judgment legitimized the relationship. Moreover, the practice of one or more "spiritual disciplines" (including, but not limited to: Bible study, faith-based book discussions, prayer, and service opportunities), accountability with regard to both the practice of these disciples and intentionality with regard to decision-making that is framed within a Christian worldview was necessary for a relationship to gain mentoring classification.

Much of this dissertation examined the role of a formalized "youth ministry" and the role that PKs experience within these settings. For the sake of this project, *Youth Ministry* included all congregational and parachurch activities that are expressly Christian in nature. One's identification of a youth ministry influence included offerings in both well-organized ministry programs and less formalized congregational influences, but the project asked those surveyed to differentiate between the two when describing the influence of a congregational youth ministry on their faith development.

This project anticipated that that the level of the pastor-parent's job satisfaction would prove to be a strong influence on both their children's love for God, faith development, and appreciation for/love with the local church. Preliminary conversations with many pastors and PKs revealed that work frustrations, when brought into the home, have had a significant, negative affect on the faith of those living on the fishbowl that pastor's families often experience. *Job Satisfaction* was difficult to define. Both through the survey and in personal interviews, ascertaining how the pastor-parent's communication of their work experiences affects the spiritual attitudes of their children was intentional.

<div align="center">**Delimitations**</div>

Participants invited into the research portion of this project included the young adult (18-40 year old) children of full-time, appointed pastor's within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church. The purpose of this project was to help to identify best practices for the nurture and development of growth towards spiritual maturity of children within ministry families. Therefore, it was essential that the

research be conducted directly among families where the identifiable profession of at least one parent was Christian ministry.

The project sought to examine the unique impact that a parent's service to the local church may have on the spiritual upbringing of children, so only families whose principal ministerial work was through the local church were included. Additionally, only families wherein the *primary* profession of the parent(s) is local church ministry were included because the research was asking how the identification of *growing up as a preacher's kid* has impacted the spiritual development of family members. A belief that both the self-identity of the pastor-parent and PK is notably different between families where local church ministry is a full-time profession as opposed to a part-time commitment, particularly within an itinerant system that does not typically impose large geographical moves on clergy serving in part-time settings, led to this decision.

Young adult PKs were targeted within this project's research because it was believed that they are old enough to have intentionally processed their experiences of growing up in a ministry family setting. Moreover, PKs in this age group had likely developed a self-awareness of their own spiritual maturity/faith. Finally, most PKs in this age group had reached the stage where they have taken personal ownership of their own involvement within a local church setting. At the same time, the PKs in this age group were not so far removed from the at-home experiences of their own upbringing to have forgotten (or dismissed) the positive and negative experiences of their childhood.

Only PKs from within the United Methodist Church were included in the study, because the project sought to include the effects of the United Methodist Church's itinerant system on faith development within the ministerial family. This project

addressed several notable considerations of the United Methodist Church's itinerant system. Considerations included the reality that ministry families within the United Methodist itinerant system do not get to "choose their church" and the reality that ministry families are often asked to make significant geographic moves without significant input from the family (and certainly from the PKs). The project expected to discover that each of these realities contribute (positively or negatively) to spiritual development of PKs.

Confining the study to families within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church was also an intentional limitation. This limitation helped ensure all included parties had experienced the itinerancy within a reasonably common expression. This delimitation provided an opportunity to examine the role of PK relationships among other PKs within the same annual conference and the role of these relationships within the PKs' spiritual development. This delimitation also made the process of gathering names and conducting research manageable.

Review of Relevant Literature

The second chapter of this project reviews and offers insight into the relevant literature that exists about raising children towards mature Christian spirituality in general and the literature that speaks to the unique realities facing ministry families and PK s. The project's literature review begins with an overview of the scriptural imperative to promote environments that seek to foster healthy faith development. Much of this biblical review focuses on the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6 and later Old and New Testament offerings. Included are specific examples of living out the *Shema* (Eli, King

David), as are the interpretations of the *Shema's* disciple-making model provided by Jesus and the Apostle Paul.

The literature review also examines the example and writings of historical pastor-parents. The life and writings of John Wesley and George Whitefield, along with an examination of more contemporary Christian leaders such as David Livingstone, Billy Graham and Andy Stanley, finds inclusion in the project's research. These reflections provide insight into the potential challenges to living out God's call to practice effective disciple-making within the ministry family, as well as 20/20 hindsight into the perils of failing to give God's calling the attention it demands.

With challenges to the spiritual formation of today's American youth presenting themselves from a myriad of directions, there is no shortage of literature available offering insight to best practices for the youth ministry in our contemporary culture. A review and critique of the literature provided by many of today's leading voices regarding youth ministry in America receives considerable attention. The review of literature addresses the challenges facing youth ministry in our contemporary setting, markers of success that the church/ministry families should be targeting, suggested mindsets about effective youth ministry, and a syntheses/critique of specific best practices for disciple-making in the modern, American setting.

The project's literature review also presents an examination of writings that address the unique challenges and spiritual formation opportunities facing today's PKs. Pastor-parents offer much of the available literature, along with PKs who are writing solely from their own experiences and personal vantage points. Some attempt to offer the perspective of a larger sample of PKs in an effort to offer a generalized picture of the

typical PK experience. This project's literature review works to both integrate these varying perspectives into its research findings and ask the critical questions necessary to ascertain the accuracy of the picture they paint within the even-more-unique setting of ministry families of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church. The literature review for this project then concludes with an effort to synthesize the preceding sections. The review examines best practices for youth ministry in the current American culture with a particular eye towards those practices' potential for effectiveness within the lives of PKs.

Research Methodology

Type of Research

This project utilized a pre-intervention model, using both quantitative and qualitative research.

Participants

The participant pool for this project's data collection was limited to the young adult (18-40 years old) children of full-time, appointed pastors within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church. As previously noted, this decision was based upon the desire to establish a common control environment. For this project, all participants shared a common identity in that at least one parent served as the pastor of the local church where the family attended and claimed membership.

In addition to seeking a common control environment within the United Methodist Church's itinerant system, I limited participation to young adult PKs whose parents had served within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference (IGRC) of the United Methodist Church. Confining the project's research to this group offered the benefit of

allowing conference and district leadership to help in the identification of perspective participants. A larger participation group would have become (a) become unmanageable and (b) become too difficult to limit based on objective standards.

The selection of this specific target group of PKs aligns well with the project's goal of discerning factors that affect the impact that our conference leadership have had on the faith development of the PKs. Survey and interview questions probed the PK's involvement in conference camping, leadership development workshops, and annual conference networking opportunities. The project also determined how participation in such activities influenced the development of peer relationships, mentor relationships, PK coping skills, and/or other factors that would influence spiritual development and one's sense of self-awareness.

Instrumentation

The initial part of the project's research included a survey sent to the young adult PKs who grew up within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church. The research also included personal follow-up interviews with respondents who shared a willingness to offer additional insight into their survey answers. The project's research utilized a combination of semi-structured one-on-one interviews and (subsequent) focus group interviews.

Data Collection

The survey sent to eligible participants included a variety of questions about their PK upbringing. Questions focused both on the specific facts of their PK experiences (year that their parent(s) became a full-time pastor, number of times they have moved within the United Methodist itinerant system and the ages of the PKs when they moved and on

the more subjective aspects of their experiences of growing up as a PK (regarding "expectations" placed upon the PK by the local congregation and/or by pastor-parents, and participants' own thoughts regarding whether or not their upbringing as a PK helped or hindered their spiritual development and love of God). The survey also included questions regarding their present "level of spiritual maturity" (the strength of their relationship with God, their practice of spiritual disciplines, their connection with a local congregation).

The written surveys represented the initial step of the project's pre-intervention research process. Follow-up interviews facilitated the second step of the research phase of this project. The survey responses of PKs who revealed that their parents began serving in full-time ministry after the PK had left high school were removed from consideration. Responses from PKs whose pastor-parents spent most of their ministerial service in non-local church settings were likewise not included. Both of these decisions reflect the project's intention of examining the inherent challenges and opportunities associated with growing up as a PK within a local church environment.

Data Analysis

The follow-up research phase interviews served to more adequately discern the contributing factors that have led to the respondents' initial perception of their PK upbringing and present spiritual maturity. These interviews focused on identifying key differences within the upbringing of PKs who identify themselves (or who have been identified by their parents) as strong in their faith walk/church involvement and those who are not. The research did not seek to implement any test practices or establish any form of research-oriented intervention with those being surveyed/interviewed.

The project identified what existing positive and negative factors have influenced the spiritual maturity of our current young adult PKs in the hopes of pinpointing best practices, priorities, and postures for the benefit of current/future ministry families, their congregations, and the leadership of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference (IGRC). The results of the project have been made available to those involved in the research, and it is certainly hoped that the findings of the project will offer resources that can bring a measure of assistance to the families involved with the research. The resulting blessings of this project, however, will likely be of greater utilization to pastor-parents, local churches and conference leaders presently serving those "in the midst" of growing up as PKs within the IGRC of the United Methodist Church.

This project presumed that many pastor-parents would be inclined to see their children's spiritual maturity through "rose-colored glasses" (or that they would at least feel an internal pressure to report the positives more than the negatives) with regard to their own parenting and spiritual mentoring efforts. This project also recognized that it would be difficult to connect with many adult PKs, especially those whom have chosen to distance themselves with a relationship with the Church and faith in general, without parental references. As a result, I utilized pastor-parents and conference leaders to help track down young adult PKs with a connection to the conference, but I did not target these pastor-parents/conference for survey or interview input.

Generalizability

This project specifically addressed realities experienced among the young adult PKs of the IGRC of the United Methodist Church. Both the survey questions and overall research mindset, however, lent themselves to being easily replicated for similar research

within any other ministerial setting seeking to discern best practices for the spiritual

upbringing of PKs . The focus of this project occurred within the unique setting of the

United Methodist Church's itinerant system, believing that the itineracy affects both the

process towards and realization of "spiritual maturity" among its member PKs.

Congregations and/or denominations seeking to build upon this research will need to

revise this project's methodology accordingly if they are not utilizing the itinerant system

that is present within the United Methodist Church.

This project further established itself within the particular methodology from

which the itineracy operates within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United

Methodist Church. As such, other United Methodist conferences may reasonably apply

the research methodology to their ministry settings, but the realization of different

findings may vary depending upon variables that include clergy/congregation education

and the application of the appointment-making process within that setting. Ultimately,

every culture, every family, and every individual is unique. This project presupposes that

both the questions asked and the subsequent discovery of best practices will be

tremendously relevant to ministry families in a wide-variety of ministry settings. Even

though the research identified the impact that priorities, practices, and postures of

spiritual influences have upon PK upbringing, the project recognizes that best practices

are never a guarantee of success (particularly when success is defined as something as

personal and subjective as Christian "spiritual maturity"). The uniqueness of every

individual/family/culture will require the discernment of their own best practices whether

through personal application or follow-on research at a broader level.

Project Overview

This chapter has presented both the importance of rearing today's pastor's kids towards Christian spiritual maturity and the process whereby the Church might discern how well it is doing in this regard (within the context of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church). It has offered a picture of a "spiritually mature Christian," or "well-discipled person," along with the theological and practical rationale for seeking this goal within contemporary ministry families. The chapter also offered a brief glimpse of relevant work related to rearing spiritually mature children in today's American culture and the unique realities facing today's PKs.

In chapter 2, this project takes a deeper look at the relevant literature pertaining to the Christian theological/biblical understanding of disciple-making among children. Chapter 2 also examines the unique nature of growing up in a PK environment. It includes an examination of historical and contemporary examples of pastor-parents, and readers encounter the voices of PKs speaking from their own experiences. Chapter 2 then makes the connection between the best practices offered for raising spiritually mature children in today's culture and the unique environment facing today's PKs.

Chapter 3 presents the research phase of this project, restating and providing direction for a move from theories about to the experiences of young adult PKs who were raised within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Chapter 4 presents the facts, or evidence, gleaned through the project's research regarding the experiences of participating PKs.

Chapter 5 presents the findings, or implications, of the research evidence by articulating the priorities, practices, and postures identified as best practices with regard

to the spiritual nurture of PKs living in an itinerant system such as exists within the IGRC

of the United Methodist Church (UMC).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Like many adults attempting to balance work, family, and self, a local church pastor may all too readily offer the lion's share of their time and energy seeking to meet the needs of their squeakiest wheels. In many families, as the working parent(s) leads the charge towards a better life, spouses and children are taught to refrain from squeaking as a means of supporting the parent's work-related commitments. With many working parents equating a successful career with this idealized better life, too many families have blind spots when it comes to the needs of their families. Pastor-parents, like those in any secular profession, must recognize that they are a limited resource whose career goals and desire to serve the Lord in ministry must be tempered with the demands of home, particularly the demands of raising their children to love the Lord themselves.

Jesus commands, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33). In other words, even those in the pastoral profession must order their priorities around the Father's priority towards family before trusting Him to fill the gaps at work created by one's faithfulness and human limitations. Too often the pastor prays for God or the church to stand watch over their children while giving their very best to their congregations (and careers). While many pastors and congregations celebrate the spiritual self-giving that this kind of attitude appears to portray, giving all of one's energy to congregational leadership and then hoping that the congregation will minister to the needs of the pastor's own family can be highly problematic.

While the Christian Church in the United States has demonstrated an ever-increasing interest in evaluating its ministries to children and youth, little effort has been made to explicitly apply these practices to the unique setting of the ministry family. Voices speaking to the unique nature of the PK environment are beginning to emerge within the American landscape, but these voices typically speak only from a personal perspective. This chapter provides a framework for establishing both the biblical/historical necessity of home-based discipleship and the theological principles/practical principles that the Church must understand to effectively consider a plan for integrating best practices for effective disciple-making within the congregational ministry family setting.

To this end, this chapter begins with an examination of the theological foundations related to the importance of providing spiritual leadership for children. This section looks specifically at the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6 and the New Testament passages that offer support to this text. This chapter also examines both positive and negative biblical and more recent historical examples of spiritual mentoring. This section notes the emphasis God places upon ministry leaders to minister well within their own families, along with the apparent difficulty many ministry leaders have making home-based discipleship a priority.

The next section of this chapter examines the cultural realities facing the church's adolescent disciple-making efforts in America and the latest theories regarding best practices to meet these challenges. The next chapter undertakes a close examination of the unique realities facing preacher's kids (PKs). The unique challenges and unique

opportunities PKs may experience precede a discussion of the best practices for

discipling PKs. The chapter emphasizes the pastor-parent's role within PK disciple-

making, along with the responsibility of the local church and importance of effective

mentoring. The chapter concludes by exploring observed gaps within existing literature

and the means of developing a research plan to address these perceived gaps. Each

section specifically and intentionally applies the theories and principals discussed to the

even-more-unique PK environment found within the United Methodist system of

itinerancy.

Theological Foundations for the Spiritual Upbringing of Children

The importance of providing spiritual mentoring to the next generation of God's

children dates back to the covenant God made with Abraham and is prevalent throughout

the Old Testament. Nowhere is role of parental discipleship of children more clearly

presented than in the *Shema* from Deuteronomy 6. As Moses prepares for what should be

the culminating moment of his ministry to the people of Israel, Moses is clearly anxious

about how the realization of blessings promised to the people will affect their faith. For

more than forty years, Moses had led the people of Israel as God molded them into a

beloved community. Now, Moses recognizes his final and most pressing task is to

impress upon the Israelites the importance of passing their faith on to future generations.

Much was at stake, so Moses made his point both clearly and emphatically:

> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with
>
> all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These
>
> commandments that I give you today are to be upon your heart. Impress them
>
> upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk

along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on

your hands and bind them to your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of

your houses and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, New International Version).

Moses presents Israel with a plan to guard their heritage and transfer their faith on

to the next generation. The picture painted in the *Shema* is that of a family, with

community support, that is continuously engaged in lively conversation about the

meaning of their experiences with the Almighty and God's expectations of them. Parental

mentoring in the commandments or words of God's instruction is to be modeled in such a

way that the children's last thoughts before falling asleep and first words upon getting up

are about the Lord's claims and commands upon their life (Miller 108). The *Shema* is

clear in that the words of God are not merely known, but studied, discussed, and

internalized.

As the Israelites prepared to leave lives of wandering with the daily,

overwhelming presence of God for lives of outward prosperity and distractions, Moses

began the *Shema* with a reminder that 'God alone is God.' Moses reminded the Israelite

parents that *everything* hinges on this one key truth. Speaking as clearly to our

contemporary culture as his own, Moses insisted that spiritual mentoring that begins from

any other starting point risks ending in a terribly wrong place. Our culture presents

innumerable measures of success that include attending the right schools, marrying the

right partner, getting the right job, living in the right neighborhood, and behaving the

right way. In such a culture, parents and churches may find that it is easy to produce

children who are experientially rich, even righteous, but who never really know God

(Joiner 54).

Moses knew that maintaining the Hebrew families' focus on God alone represented the only certain means to properly shaping the next generation's identity and destiny. In that moment, the Hebrew parents were asked to consider, "Who do you want your children to become?" While the people surely had vision of prosperity for themselves and this next generation, Moses hoped that an understanding of who God is and who they are in God would frame their hearts' desires (Joiner 55).

The *Shema* reminds us that faith is not communicated through rules, practices, and even truths so much as it is transferred through relationships. The former strategy leads only to empty, destined-to-die religion, while the latter offers the hope of a genuine love connection with the LORD. Although there is often strong pressure on the pastor-parent to ensure their children are following the rules of church and society, it is far more important to help them develop a sense of trust in God. This typically occurs only when the parents are able to help their children first learn to trust them. The parent must fully embrace loving God with all their heart, soul, and strength as a model for their children.

Forty years before offering the *Shema* to the Hebrew people, Moses foreshadowed the foundational core of its purpose. In Exodus 6, God declares that he will show his love "to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20: 6). Prior to this passage, scripture offers little connection between a person's expressed love for God and their determination to follow his commandments. Here Moses begins to connect the dots between love and obedience, pressing God's children to better understand God's bigger picture of the divine-human relationship. Thus, when the Israelites forty years of wandering in the wilderness have come to an end, God's people can understand that God's faithfulness has been born of his unceasing love for them.

Moses also helps the Hebrew people understand that, above and beyond lifestyle or

practical obedience, God has been fighting for their hearts (Joiner and Nieuwhof 102-

104). Moses knows that there will be days when the people will question God's rules and

the circumstances they face will lead them to question the importance of obedience, but

there will never come a day when God's love should be doubted or unreciprocated with

trustful, loving faithfulness.

From early within God's scriptural narrative, it is thus clear that God wants God's

adopted children to embrace a "love God first" mentality. Without one's nuclear family

taking an active role in their spiritual development, God frequently becomes "only a

smaller part of culture and life." One's family is strategically and uniquely positioned

within the life of children to display the message of God's constant presence and

lordship. Speaking again to the Israelite families, Moses uses words like "impress,"

"talk," "tie," "bind," and "write" to promote a sense of teaching that goes beyond

informational-based education to "a systematic process that persists until the core truth is

understood or embraced" (Joiner 65-66). The nuclear family is best suited for this type of

teaching, because family life is uniquely blessed with the routine, interactive,

relationally-based opportunities for grappling with the Word of God and issues of faith

(*haverim*) necessary to internalize faith within a real-world setting (Spangler and

Tverberg 66-67).

Patrick Miller further notes that it is only natural as children reach adolescence to

push back against all forms of rules and regulations, seeing even within their religious

faith a constraining net of forms and constraints which leads them to wonder why such

authoritative forms exist. The answer comes from the parent and faith community's

ability to communicate the individual's place within the grand story that God has been

telling over the centuries and the "change of master" that exists within the family of faith.

Thus, the *Shema* reminds us that people of faith are to invite their children into the story

of God that these children may subsequently journey through life, not merely by faith, but

also by (spiritual) sight in the living God Christians know through Jesus (110).

Some scholars argue that Jesus replaces biological families with the church family

in the primary position for Christian discipleship. Jesus' own comments, "If anyone

comes to me and does not hate this father and mother, his wife and children…he cannot

be my disciple" (Luke 14:26) and "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is

my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50), are often cited as justification of this

notion. Most scholars, including William Barclay, emphasize that Jesus is not denouncing

the importance of the nuclear family. Jesus merely reminds Christians that becoming a

disciple includes adoption into a new, extended family as adopted sons and daughters of

the Most High God, and that the disciple's love of God is to take precedence over all

other relationships (Langford 10).

In truth, the New Testament writings consistently reinforce the importance of the

parents' role in discipleship. Paul mentions the capacity to manage a household well as a

necessary qualification for elders and deacons (1 Tim 3:3-4, 12; Titus 1:6). 1 Timothy 5:8

explicitly condemns the father for neglecting the material needs of the nuclear family,

while also implicitly abhorring a father's spiritual and emotional neglect of the home.

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul specifically directs fathers to "bring (children) up in the

discipline and instruction of the LORD." While Paul stops short of offering specific details

for the spiritual mentoring of children, the text clearly indicates that Christian fathers

should train their children in gospel-centered truths in addition to providing discipline that is shaped by the character of Jesus (Stinson and Jones 53). Even in the preceding verses, Paul commands children "to obey your parents in the Lord" as a means of upholding a child's mandate to embrace their parent's spiritual mentoring that "it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land" (Eph. 6:1, 3).

By quoting Exodus 20 in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul further reiterates his feeling of continuity with the family system of the Old Testament. Additional first and second century Christian writings, including the *Didache* and *Epistle of Barnabas,* support the primacy of parents as disciple-makers by declaring, "You shall train [your son and daughter] in the fear of God from their youth up." Leaders such as Polycarp of Smyrna and John Chrysostom further emphasized this theme parent-led discipleship within the early church (Renfro, et al. 19-20). As recently as Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church has referred to the family as the "domestic church," emphasizing that the family is not merely *like* the church, but truly *is* the church (Garland, *Family Ministry* 85). The Church must clearly communicate, and lend support, to its pastor-parents regarding the importance of their family's "domestic church" within their calling to serve the local/universal Church.

Biblical Foundations for the Spiritual Upbringing of Children

While the *Shema* provides the framework for the pastor-parent's role in the discipleship of their own children, 1 Samuel 2 offers a powerful example of the devastating effects of shepherding one's church flock without also offering spiritual discipline to one's own family. 1 Samuel 2:12 tells us that Hophni and Phineas, the sons of Eli, "had no regard for the LORD." Their whole life had been lived within the context

of religion. Religion occupied their time and paid their father's salary. They themselves were active within the life of community worship and ritual. Yet, they had no real knowledge of God (Evans 34).

In many ways, Eli was ministering well in his roles as the high priest for the sanctuary in Shiloh and judge of Israel. People were faithfully bringing their sacrifices to the sanctuary and Samuel was both growing up "in the presence of the LORD" (1 Samuel 2:21) and "ministering before the LORD" (1 Samuel 2:18) under Eli's tutelage. The activities of Eli's sons disturbs him and he even rebukes their actions, but he fails to adequately mentor them in the faith. As a result, Eli's ministry and life ends in failure. In the eyes of God, Eli's ministerial successes pale in comparison to his failures as an intentional disciple-maker within the home.

King David's legacy may be seen in a similar light. Considered "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14) and Israel's greatest king, his poor parenting skills ultimately led to the breakup of the entire nation. David was negligent in the upbringing/discipline of his sons Amon, Absalom, Adonijah, and Solomon. While David's sons each demonstrated many of the strong leadership characteristics modelled by their father, none had the spiritual maturity to serve God or the Israelite people well. David's indiscretions within the walls of his own home (adultery and murder) and acknowledged failure to prioritize spiritual leadership within his family's upbringing (2 Samuel 13:21) resulted in the devastation of the very kingdom (and Temple) David had worked so hard to establish.

Historical Foundations for the Spiritual Upbringing of Children

Seeking to frame these biblical examples within a more modern context, pastor-parents Brian and Cara Croft pose this question to today's ministry families: "What if God evaluated the faithfulness and greatness of a pastor, not simply by the successes of his local church ministry, but by how well he cared for and pastored his own family – his wife and children?" (Croft and Croft 23). Too often, our call to ministry provides a framework that envisions saving the world for Jesus as glorious and worthy of celebration, while at the same time relegating a vision for the care for one's own family as mundane. A pointed examination of the Methodist tradition's founding pastor-parent reveals just how subliminally grounded this de-emphasis of home-based ministry is within the life of church leadership.

Just a month into his own marriage, John Wesley wrote, "I cannot understand how a Methodist preacher can answer to God to preach one less sermon or travel one day less in a married than in a single state. I this respect surely 'it remaineth that they who have wives be as though they had none'" (Moore 32). Wesley divorced nine years after getting married, having apparently offered little if any spiritual nurture to his three step-sons. History may rightly consider Wesley a failure in marriage and his fulfillment of the biblical mandate to nurture the spiritual faith of his own family as "lacking." Yet most within (and many outside) the Methodist tradition consider Wesley to be the model of a dedicated pastor and spiritual giant. Moreover, Wesley's minimal regard for the pastor-parent's role as spiritual champion within the family setting extended beyond his own poor example. Writing to a circuit rider who was about to be married, Wesley

preemptively warned the young preacher to 'discourage any efforts of your future bride that may seek to prevent you from travelling to preach' (Moore 33).

Wesley's contemporary, George Whitefield, delayed marriage for many years because he did not want marriage or family life to "negatively impact" his ministry to the masses. When he did marry, it was with the understanding that his future bride would "not be allowed to hinder his ministry in the least" (Dallimore 110). Whitefield biographer, Arnold Dallimore writes that, "Try as he might, Whitefield could not avoid occasions when being married demanded some revision of his (ministry) plans. Finding it necessary even once or twice to say, 'I have a married wife, and therefore cannot come,' he became disappointed…and looked on marriage as a hindrance" (112). One can only imagine that Whitefield found similar "disappointment" in the burdens presented by parenting. Perhaps a devoted mother led Whitefield's spiritual nurture, like Wesley's, so exclusively that he himself was not able to embrace the role of the pastor-parent (or father).

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, manuals for pastors' families emerged on the American Protestant scene. By the mid-1900's, these manuals typically focused on the character that a ministry family should be expected to display as the model for a congregation. The ministry family was expected to function as a "model for ministry distinguished from other church members or the larger secular society," where members through "fellowship with Christ and keeping busy" were expected to learn to "rise above the level where (life's stresses and Christian sacrifices) hurt unduly" (Mickey and Ashmore17-18).

Among such "manuals," Carolyn Blackwood's *The Pastor's Wife*, written in 1951, became particularly authoritative. In this work, Blackwood applied the words of Ephesians 5:25: "Christ…loved the church, and gave himself for it" (King James Version) directly to pastor's wives, and by extension the ministry family. Instead of regarding Christ as the bridegroom and the Christian Church as his bride, Blackwood (and many others like her) elevated the ministry family to place of Christ as the "long-suffering, Christlike martyr" whose sole function was to represent themselves as the "contented supporter of the (pastor's) work" (Blackwood 13). The spiritual needs of the pastor's own family were not merely downplayed within this period; they were summarily dismissed within many of the Church's existing leadership structures. That such a mentality still exists to some degree today is evident in the "fishbowl" stress and the reality of low self-esteem/self-awareness that many PKs confess to experiencing.

It is far too easy for pastor-parents, and church leaders, to succumb to a misguided belief that pastoring and parenting well are either mutually exclusive or attainable only by means of adherence to the rigid confines of an "emotionally traumatic ministry family manual" that likened the family life of a pastor to "a coffin with breathing holes" (Mickey 16). History, however, offers many examples of "exemplary pastors" who also modelled the importance of parenting and care for the spiritual needs of the pastor-parent's own family. Jonathan Edwards' biographer, George Marsden notes that "(Edwards) began each day with private prayers followed by family prayers. Each meal was accompanied by household devotions, and at the end of the day (his wife) joined him in his study for prayers…care for his children's souls was, of course, his preeminent concern" (133, 321). Edwards would declare that his "success" in ministry was the

product, or "good fruit," of his home-based labors, not the other way around. Moreover, Edwards regularly declined outside the family ministry opportunities based upon the impact that they would have on his family commitments, and counted the fact that all eleven of his children "continued to follow the Lord" throughout their adult lives as his greatest marker of "ministerial success" (Croft 132-3).

Ministry "giants" such as David Livingstone and Billy Graham offer cautionary words to those serving in the role of pastor-parent today. Though Livingstone accomplished much for the kingdom of God, this amazingly "effective" pastor died regretting "his shortcomings as a husband and father," declaring a personal desire to "start over" with the intention of either being a more committed family man or remaining celibate (Croft and Croft 134). Graham, perhaps today's most iconic pastor and evangelist, often speaks of the pride experienced from seeing his own children carry on the ministry Graham began as a young adult. However, Graham also laments, "(My wife) says that we (the Billy Graham Evangelist Association leaders) who were off travelling missed the best part of our lives – enjoying the children as they grew. She is probably right. I was too busy preaching all over the world. I know now that I came through those years much poorer both psychologically and emotionally. The children must carry those scars too… I now warn young evangelists not to make the mistakes I did" (702-3).

Today's pastor-parent must learn from the examples and voices of the past. Pastor-parents need to trust that their desire to accomplish great things for the Lord's kingdom is not mutually exclusive of accomplishing great things for the Lord within the pastor's own families. On the contrary, pastor-parents cannot violate the principals of God in our effort to experience the blessings of the Almighty within their ministries. The

author of Hebrews declares, "Have confidence in your leaders…because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account" (Hebrews 13:17). God's will for the pastor-parent's role concerning the spiritual upbringing of their own children is clear. Pastor-parents will be held accountable before the Almighty for their efforts in this arena. The pastor-parent must regard the spiritual nurturing of their own children as a top priority among the myriad of competing concerns facing contemporary ministry leaders.

Contemporary Theories Regarding the Spiritual Upbringing of Children

Much has been written, and many ever-evolving theories have been offered, to address the importance of ministering to children and youth. Always recognized as the "next generation" of church leaders (and seat-fillers), many churches devote an increasing amount of their personnel, time, and financial resources supporting these ministries. In fact, strong ministries to youth and children are often seen as essential to the life of a congregation.

To a degree, these efforts seem to be producing results. Current statistics tell us that more than eight out of every ten young adults in America between eighteen and twenty-nine years of age report having attended Sunday school or some other form of religious "training" on a consistent basis before the age of twelve. Roughly seventy percent also reported past involvement in teen specific activities at least once per month.

The recollection of these young adults' connections, however, is often shallow and non-transformational, so much so that fifty-nine percent of those in this same age group indicate that they have "dropped out of attending church" and thirty-two percent indicate that they have "gone through a period where they significantly doubted their faith." Today's American twenty-somethings "are the least likely to say they are

confident that Jesus Christ speaks to them in a way that is personal and relevant to their circumstances" than any other generation of living Americans (Kinnaman 22-24). Having enjoyed the luxury of choosing their own media throughout the entirety of their formative years, today's youth have largely embraced a worldview that is changeable, relativistic, and highly customized with only between ten and fifteen percent of Christian young adults holding what could be conservatively called a biblical worldview (Fowler 28, 41).

While some would argue that the tendency for young adults to struggle with their faith has been a natural part of the maturation process for generations, our current generation of young adults is clearly unique. Tim Elmore points out that today's youth have been "overexposed to teen Web sites, social media, reality TV, explicit movies, and unlimited time viewing data," beckoning them into adolescence far earlier than in previous generations When this condition merges with overprotective parents, overscheduled but uncreative schedules, a lack of true risk-reward opportunities and poor adult mentoring, the result too often becomes what Elmore calls, "artificial maturity" (Elmore 4-6).

The "Google reflex" common among today's teens and young adults has helped them to know a great deal of information without giving them the necessary experiences, problem-solving skills or coping mechanisms needed to fully mature. With regards to their own spirituality, many adolescents within Generation iY (children born after 1990), are uniquely unprepared to distill what it means to be a person of faith from the Christian beliefs that they have been taught. These youths are likewise ill-equipped to distinguish the potential of the Church from the imperfect realities that they experience. To put it in blunt terms, the information overload available to today's youth is producing wonderful

intellectual maturity, while a dearth of social and spiritual mentoring is leaving the same generation emotionally immature.

Those who are struggling with their faith, or, more commonly, their relationship with the church, indicate that the absence of older adults who understand their faith-based doubts and concerns and a lack of guidance as to how they may connect their vocational dreams to their faith in Christ (both prerequisites to meaningful mentoring relationships) are among the biggest factors negatively impacting their church connection and spiritual development (Kinnaman 29). At the same time, Kinnaman notes that those young adults who report having experienced strong mentoring relationships are exhibiting a "passionate, committed, and bursting to engage the world for the sake of the gospel" faith that offers great potential towards transforming the "cheap, Americanized version of the historic faith that will snap at the slightest puff of wind" that is far too prevalent in the Church today (27).

Despite the preponderance of biblical direction emphasizing the primacy of family leadership, many churches in America have assumed the primary role of spiritual development for today's children and youth. In our age of professionalism and competition, most current youth ministry models find excessive grounding on the assumption that the right church-based *program*, with perhaps a dash of parental involvement, will both help youth grow in their faith and serve as an effective recruiting tool for the larger church (Renfro et al.12). Stafford goes so far as to say, "If your church doesn't have a strong youth program, consider finding one that does," arguing that neither the average parent nor their children possess the requisite tools to "augment whatever a church lacks" (40). This mode of thinking is certainly problematic for several

reasons, not the least of which centers upon its removal of the burden for spiritual development from the shoulders of parents. Instead, Stafford inappropriately places the *primary* burden for spiritual development on the shoulders of the church, not the family, while also failing to identify the requisite markers of a "strong youth program."[1]

Within this inherently flawed model, well-intended churches are tempted to move out of a biblically sound equipping/supporting role and actually inhibit the function of parents in the spiritual formation of their own children. Parents are led to believe that they should abdicate responsibility for their children's spiritual upbringing to the "professionals" (Renfro et al. 13-14, 146). As was the case for the children of Israel, today's youth live in a world that does not honor the reality of "one true God." A few hours each week in a youth program, even an outstanding program, cannot bear the sole responsibility of preparing our children to face the smorgasbord of false, pagan gods, that seek to pull them away from "God's exclusive claim on their worship and allegiance" (Brown 94). Equipping parents to help disciple their own children is as critical today as it has ever been.

The Unique Nature of the Pastor-Parent/Preacher's Kid Environment

The realities facing faith-development for today's generation of youth and young adults is well documented within contemporary ministry leadership literature. The bulk of this literature has noted an unhealthy swing towards ministry to youth that is predominantly "congregational leader based." Virtually all of the current literature

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[1] And if a pastor-parent within the united Methodist itinerant system is appointed to a congregation without a strong (or existent) ministry to children and youth, the PKs are stuck. Under such conditions, the potential for the PK to (a) be used as "tools" to help establish a new ministry (rather than individuals to be spiritually nurtured), (b) neglected spiritually by a congregation that does not value ministry to children and youth, and/or (c) welcomed into a setting where the entire church acts as a disciple-making family may all be realized.

addressing needed transitions in youth ministry has focused on the importance of home-based leadership and one-on-one mentoring. Far less research, however, has been done to offer significant insight to the unique challenges facing clergy families, statistical data regarding the spiritual health of today's young adult PKs, or advice specifically related to best practices for faith development in the pastor family setting.

Today's pastor-parent faces (at least) four distinct challenges with regard to disciple-making within the home: the struggle to balance work and family that is common to many adults; the challenge of helping youth within our current "iY Generation" reach spiritual maturity; the unique demands of raising preacher's kids while also serving as "Chief Disciple-Making Officer" within their congregation or other ministerial setting; and providing shelter and support to PKs against the negative stereotypes/unrealistic expectations often projected upon them. While a great deal of literature addressing the first two conditions exists, scant resources exist to address the latter.

In contrast to most children who grow up with a typical church connection, one may argue that many pastors' kids struggle with their faith precisely because of the markedly strong significance of church life in their formative years. Children of pastors grow up in a family environment that (hopefully) preaches a clear message of trust in the Lord. While other kids might experience the best of church for a few hours each week, the church can become a fishbowl in which the pastor's children live. While many clergy families are naturally, or professionally, inclined to integrate a sprinkling of spiritual disciplines into their regular routine, such disciplines do not guarantee righteousness. In fact, where Kara Powell and Chap Clark assert that such disciplines often help an

individual "be drawn into trusting Christ more fully," pastor-parents are often among the guiltiest in terms of making such disciplines inconsistent and/or so legalistic that they inhibit faith development (35).

Pastor and author, Andy Stanley notes that while "success" in business (and ministry) may be the result of unexpected opportunities, good timing, favorable market conditions and a strong team, success at home is always related to time and commitment. The minister who believes this must turn their prayers for success around. We are to constantly seek after God's will, give our very best to our families, and "pray for God to bless things at work." Since God already controls those things that make the most significant difference in our professions, "it is safe to ask Him to fill in the gaps at work when it is time for us to go home" and tend to the spiritual needs of our families (*Choosing to Cheat* 99, 122). To do otherwise is to invest too highly in that which we will eventually leave at the expense of those whose love is unconditional, whose connections will last a lifetime, and whose needs are squarely ours to meet. This is as true for the spiritual development of the pastor's family as it is for all others trying to find balance between work and home.

Stanley notes that, "I have seen way too many pastors sacrifice their family under the guise of doing 'the Lord's work,' when in fact it had little to do with the Lord's work and more to do with propping up their own egos" (*Choosing to Cheat* 96). Many children today have become disenfranchised with their parents' "pursue success at work at all costs" mentality, a reality that often leads them to steer away from the career choices of their parents. Even within a profession focused on serving the Lord and his Kingdom, the same thought process is present among many PKs as they enter adulthood. Instead of

merely rejecting their parents' profession, however, these young adults find themselves walking away from the faith behind the ministry. Stanley further notes that pastors must never accept violating the principles of God, particularly when it comes to giving attention to family, in order to attain or maintain the blessings of God in their professional setting. Stanley appropriately names the problem facing many pastor-parents, but fails to offer clarity regarding a process for remedying the condition.

With all due respect to Pastor Stanley, *some* work-family tensions do result from the priority many pastor's place on "the Kingdom nature" of living out their calling. In fact, Cameron Lee and Jack Balswick note that among all modern societal work systems, "the one that functions most like a family is the church or synagogue" (Lee and Balswick 58). The church represents more than a place where the pastor works. A local congregation, at its best, represents an extended family to all of its members, but to no one more than those who bear the title of "pastor." As such, the pastor's family finds itself living and breathing amidst a larger, extended congregational family.

In such an environment, it is not uncommon for the pastor to receive the joys, sorrows, and other emotional processes of church life not just as work-related issues, but as family matters. Parishioners are more than co-workers or clients; these individuals are family members whose needs and spiritual development should be held on par with the pastor's biological family. The pastor becomes the head of this extended family, which often results in a variety of conditions that threaten to undermine genuine spiritual development within the pastor's own home. Included among these conditions are unrealistic role expectations for the congregational pastor's family, clouded boundaries between the clergy family and the congregation/community that are either too rigid or

diffuse, and an implicit cooperation within the congregational family to maintain an idealized image of the pastor and his family (Lee and Balswick 59, 71).

The demand of ministry also presents for many pastoral families a condition referred to as the difficulty of having time together. While many careers place considerable demands upon the schedules of their members, pastoral ministry bears some unique challenges to having time with one's family. By nature, most clergy schedules include many non-negotiable weekend and evening commitments, the precise times most families are experiencing their best opportunities for togetherness. Moreover, while holidays, such as Christmas and Easter mean vacation for much of the secular world, these are among the busiest work seasons for those serving within the ministerial profession (Lee and Balswick 191).

While the pressures of ministry often inhibit, justifiably or not, the pastor-parent's effectiveness as primary spiritual mentor for their children, the pastor's family is frequently marked by an "impoverishment of (outside) supportive relationships" (Lee and Balswick 72). In many settings, this occurs when the pastoral family becomes either overly idealized and/or unfairly scrutinized. Within appointive systems such as is found within the United Methodist Church, the reality of frequent moves within a child's lifespan also negatively influences the development of nurturing relationships outside the immediate family.

Many clergy families, like others in more transient professions, adjust to the requirement of frequent moves by refusing, often subconsciously, to become too close to those outside of their immediate family. Thus, the very children within many congregations who are most unfairly forced to share the pastor's time, energy, and

disciple-making skills (the pastor's own children), are the very same children who are least likely to realize additional discipleship relationships within the extended congregational family (Lee and Balswick 194).

These realities of life as a preacher's kid represent more than just tough circumstances. They represent conditions that one might characterize as faith inhibitors. Preacher's kids see church differently than everybody else. They see church from the "inside out." The pastor's children know that what goes on at home is the litmus test of their parent's walk with God, "not how well he or she does once a microphone is strapped on" (Stanley *Deep & Wide* 12). While much of the church may recognize the pastor's giftedness, the pastor's children will be much more in tune with the pastor's godliness (or lack thereof). This, and the pastor-parent's efforts to personally disciple his or her own children, will impact the preacher kid more than any other factor.

As previously noted, far too many pastors and missionaries have been celebrated for their excellent work of fulfilling to the Great Commission within their broader ministerial settings, even while they simultaneously "missed the opportunity to get involved in the life of their own child in a way that produced a solid, mature, godly young person" (Gouge 432). For the church leader, it is easy to put reputation above reality within family life. As such, the children of many pastors and missionaries find it difficult to share their struggles with the faith and faithfulness in order to protect the "status" of the larger ministry. Under such conditions, it is not surprising that the ministry leader's children find it difficult "to know a God of truth and love when the home is founded on lies and deceit' (Gouge 435).

To that end, the potential for pastor's kids to struggle with their faith precisely because of the importance of church life in their formative years should not be surprising. Children of pastors grow up in a family environment that (hopefully) preaches a clear message of trust in the Lord. While other kids might experience the best of church for a few hours each week, the church can become a fishbowl in which the pastor's children live.

Thus, consistency between the message that the pastor-parent is preaching from the pulpit and what the pastor-parent models within the framework of the home is critical. Additionally, just as parishioners are encouraged to wrestle with questions related to their faith, the pastor's own children must enjoy the opportunity to openly process questions within the family setting. Where these conditions do not exist, it is not uncommon for these preacher's kids to turn from the faith of their parents once they reach the rebellious stage of adolescence or the independence of adulthood (Langford 35).

The importance of home-based spiritual mentoring, therefore, is perhaps more important for the pastor's family than any other within a modern church setting. Church plays such a vital role in the life of the clergy family that it may easily become the object of devotion, if not worship, in place of God. Moreover, when life within the local church becomes a struggle for the clergy family, feelings of frustration with the church easily go on to impact the PK's relationship with God.

Many congregations see their pastor as their representative of God. The pastor is held on a lofty pedestal and held to a high standard of righteousness. The congregational pastor must refrain from trying to compete with God for hero status in the presence of any of God's children. Instead, the pastor must obsessively point the LORD's children

towards God as their perfect Father, for God alone can forgive them forever, heal their hearts completely, understand them entirely, and give them eternal life. It should be considered heartbreaking for children to know all about God and even enjoy all of the benefits of the local church if they do not actually know God and receive the benefits of the only One who will love them unconditionally (Joiner 56).

This is especially true of the pastor's own children. The pastor's own family sees the pastor-parent as he or she really is, with all of their shortcomings. Preacher' Kids have a front row seat to the lives of the congregational leader. What they witness behind the scenes will have a far greater impact on their faith than anything that happens within the context of church itself. Does the pastor-parent's lifestyle communicate a constant pursuit of a better relationship with God, or does it make what happens at church look like a big show? Does life at home appear to prioritize Jesus above all else or does it make church look like just another tool of America's obsession with self-improvement? All parents must demonstrate their faith at home if they want their children to embrace faith for themselves, but this is doubly true for the pastor's own children (Joiner 63).

Troy Elkhe, himself a preacher's kid, notes, "I wanted to know what spiritual code my father lived by. I knew from his examples that he is an honorable man but I wanted to know the specifics of the driving force behind his life" (Elkhe 107). Fortunately, for Elkhe, his father demonstrated in word and action that God, not the local church, was the driving force that helped write the code for his life and ministry. Today's pastor-parents must be equally diligent in communicating this truth despite the pressures to let the congregation become the center of their universe.

Survey of Literature Dedicated to the Unique Realities Facing PKs

Ultimately, all children make their own decisions as to whether or not they will follow God as disciples of Jesus. This is no different for children of pastors than those growing up in any other setting. The unique realities of being a congregational pastor, however, present numerous potential challenges and opportunities to the framework within which such decisions will be made. Most of today's professionally trained pastors have received a wealth of disciple-making training that can greatly aid the establishment of healthy practices within the clergy family. At the same time, most clergy training offers neither focused guidance regarding the importance of applying these practices within a home setting nor an explanation as to *how* these practices might be applied within the minister's home with a mindset that is able to differentiate between church-based pastoring and home-based parenting.

Today's PKs often find themselves facing the dual reality of unrealistic congregational expectations and unfair negative prejudices. Barnabas Piper, the son of Bethlehem Baptist Church of Minneapolis, MN pastor emeritus, John Piper, writes pointedly from his own experience within the 'rarely understood, fishbowl oriented, unchosen role' of the PK. In his recently published, *The Pastor's Kid*, Piper details a series of false assumptions, described as "unfair expectations," that he felt growing up as a PK.

The following are among the assumptions Piper notes having experienced as a PK: the PK has a great relationship with God; the PK has a great relationship with his/her family; the PK loves the church; the PK is a natural leader (Piper writes from the perspective of a PK whose parent *is* regarded as a tremendous leader, where the

assumption is that these leadership gifts have been passed on to his children); the PK is a Bible scholar and theologian extraordinaire; the PK believes everything that their pastor-parent believes (ideologically and with regard to their "theological bent.) While Piper alludes to knowing of other PKs who had similar experiences, his writing is based more on his personal experience (that of a mega-church PK whose father was recognized both as the authoritative 30+ year pillar of the congregation and a denominational leader). Still, the expectations projected upon him each merit deeper thought and exploration within the research component of this project.

The PK's Relationship with God

Nothing says "devoted Christian" more stereotypically than worship attendance in a local church. No one attends worship more faithfully than the pastor's family. Nothing hints at spiritual maturity more seductively than church activity, and rarely are there members more active in a local congregation that the pastor's own family. Piper notes that we must all make a conscious decision for Christ, and the fact that one's parent is a pastor plays "no role in determining" the legitimacy of the PK's faith. The PK may grow up in an environment that helps them know all *about* Jesus, but this offers to no guarantee that they are any more likely to *know* Jesus than any other child (38, 74).

Christian writers and educators, Karl Graustein and Mark Jacobsen echo this sentiment, noting that opportunities for second-hand knowledge of God abound for the PK more than for any of the other children within a congregation, while warning that such "opportunities" cannot be mistaken for first-hand knowledge, or a personal relationship, with God (138). Graustein and Jacobsen add that the most significant danger facing PKs is the false assumption that they are actually Christians, that their activity and

their presence may be equated with genuine faith, while warning about the church's proclivity to look merely at 'behavior modelled after their parents/congregational expectations' when determining the faith of individuals, particularly PKs. Exploring "personal convictions," these authors note, is the means through which we may truly ascertain the faith of any individual (33, 102).

As is true for all individuals, even the PKs dedicated participation in the practice of spiritual disciplines that include prayer, scripture reading, worship participation, and service can be mistaken for signs of an authentic faith. Beyond examining mere practices, time and energy must be given to examining the motives behind such practice. For the PK, perhaps more than anyone else within a congregation, it is quite easy to present participation in such disciplines as a means of "looking good" more than as practices designed to help them grow in their love and devotion towards God. Assuming faith, and then assigning expectations of church involvement, only contributes to confusion between faith and works of righteousness for the PK.

The PK's Relationship with Their Family

Jean and Chris Burton note that most expect the ministry family to represent a good model for the entire congregation. They genuinely desire for the faith and practices of the pastor's family to rub off on other members, particularly from PK to other children and teens within the congregation. The hope is that the ministry family will enjoy the kind of ideal domestic relationship that most families desire for their own family. The problem, however, lies in the fact that many of these same congregations expect total availability from their pastor and near total participation in church related activities among the clergy family members. These "unplanned, regular interruptions to life

together," the Burtons note, represent the very factors that often preclude the ministry

family from enjoying the ideal domestic relationship they are supposed to model (24).

This fact is not lost on the average PK, and the combination of unrealistic expectations

and imposing barriers placed upon the ministry family easily leads to resentment.

Piper communicates his ownership of this false expectation, arguing his belief that

it is hard to find truly healthy families anywhere in our society. Noting that the ministry

family experiences all of the normal stresses of life (with daily conflict over matters as

simple as whose turn is it to take out the trash and whose dirty clothes are these on the

floor in tandem with the pressures of odd hours, tight finances, and "service to an entire

church of dysfunctional people," Piper wonders how healthy any PK's relationship with

their family could be expected to be (39). Ministry is a burden on the pastoral leader and

their family, one that is worth bearing, but a burden that certainly works to strain family

relationships nonetheless. Every church should partner with their pastor to foster a

healthy family life, but assuming that this reality exists is both common and unrealistic.

The PK's Relationship with the Church

"PKs," Piper muses, "have a complicated relationship with the church" (39). For

many it is a safe place where they have been well received, well cared for, well protected

and well discipled. For others, the church represents nothing more than a place where

their parent does business or the source of all the family's frustrations and hardships. For

all the church represents a large part of their personal identity. Most PKs, Graustein and

Jacobsen argue, feel the unhealthy pressure to grow ever more focused on pleasing the

pastor-parent and the congregation through their actions than they feel pressured to lead

lives marked by service to God (22). When the proclaimed message of "love God with all

your heart, soul, strength and mind" (Mark 12:30 NIV) is preached in a context where

loving and serving a *congregation* with heart, soul, strength and mind appears to be the

top priority, it should not be surprising that Piper's musings about the PKs "tricky

relationship" with the church would resonate with many of his peers (40).

The relationship many PKs have with the local church is further strained by

feelings that they are a resource to be used, not a resource to be invested in. Many PKs

felt that the church viewed them merely as resources their local churches could utilize in

their efforts to revitalize programs for youth and children. Receiving a ministry family

with younger children was often communicated as a blessing because the new pastor was

expected to understand how to help the church reach young families, while the PKs

would naturally want to invite all of their friends to church. Many PKs expressed

resentment over this mindset, even noting the irony of church members communicating

this mindset without themselves seeking to relate to the congregation's children/youth or

invite their own friends to participate in congregational ministries. Moreover, Laurie

Denski-Snyman's research indicated that many congregational youths ostracize PKs from

personal conversations, fearing the PK may pass on information to their pastor-parent

that would get them into trouble (22). Denski-Snyman's research implies, but failed to

explicitly note, that the very congregations who want to utilize their PKs as ministry-

growing tools, fail to provide the caring, nurturing, safe environment that a PK (or any

other child/youth) would actually want to invite their friends to be a part of. This only

heightens mixed feelings and the sense of hypocrisy many PKs are bound to feel about

the local church.

The pastor-parent should work diligently to protect the ministry family from the challenges of ministry, without deceiving the family. The natural tendency of the pastor-parent is to come home and "lose the litany" and "cast off the clerical collar," before beginning to verbalize the stresses of the day (Braddy 49). Far too often, the pastor-parent is guilty of revealing too many of the negative experiences from a life in ministry without effectively balancing such lamentations with a healthy dose of reflection upon the positive experiences and people that have been a part of their ministry journey. Thus, the pastor-parent who is prudent regarding how much ministry business they bring home will have taken a strong step towards helping the PK's vision of, and relationship with, the local church.

The Burtons note a particular propensity for confusion among PKs who spent part of their childhood in a seminary environment. Here, surrounded by other PKs and enthusiastic Christians who are ready to serve the church with great zeal, the Church presents itself at its best. Worshipping alongside other prospective PKs while mom or dad is one among many future pastors in a larger seminary setting, helps the seminary kid (and the entire family) feel normal. This common ground, however, gets disrupted once the ministry family leaves the friendly confines of seminary for the first pastoral charge, especially if this first charge is to a smaller congregation in a more isolated setting (12).

Conversely, PKs who experienced their parent making a career shift into the ministry noted resentment towards their change of societal and church status. Several of these PKs spoke of witnessing their parents feeling less respected within their ministerial careers than in previous professions. Moreover, the family contributions to the congregation were met solely with a sense of expectation, where there had previously

been praise and admiration. When the congregational leaders routinely criticized the pastor-parent, it only heightened the PKs feelings of resentment (Burton and Burton 71). All of these factors contributed to these PKs perceived shift in their perception of church. The added reality of mandatory increased involvement and elevated behavior standards left many with less than favorable opinions of the Church, at the very time when the local congregations that their pastor parents served communicated that they assumed the PKs also loved the church.

Brian and Cara Croft acknowledge each of these realities, but also offer potential helps for the pastor-parent. The Crofts note that continuing to lift up the blessings of serving within a particular church (I refer to this as noting God sightings) on a regular basis, while also communicating the importance of serving a local congregation from God's perspective, represent significant communicative tools at a pastor-parent's disposal. Lifting up positive examples from members of a congregation can also be of tremendous benefit to the PK. More than lifting up these members, the pastor-parent should promote opportunities for these members to grow in authentic relationship with the ministry family. In congregations where individuals who say, "We love you, pastor, and we love your kids, and we want to help care for you," do not readily present themselves , the pastor-parent should seek out candidates who might be willing to embrace a special relationship with the ministry family, and even individual family members (123).

The PK as a Natural Leader

Leadership *ought* to be an earned role, one born of gifts discovery and nurture. We, however, live in a culture that often assigns qualifications based on association. This

reality finds clear expression within the life of the Church. The title "PK" brings assumptions of both leadership gifts and a desire to express these gifts in helping lead within the congregation. The pastor-parent leads the larger congregation; the PK, by association, will lead the youth group. If the pastor-parent has done their job of home-based disciple-making well, the PK will have been "vetted for the right attitude, (the right aptitude), the right morals, the right reputation" for leadership within the church (Piper 42).[2] However, nothing about being a PK makes the PK inherently destined to exhibit either the spiritual gift of leadership or the desire to lead, any more than being the child of a surgeon makes one's hands or heart inherently inclined to wield a scalpel within their parent's chosen profession.

Sometimes the church pushes leadership upon the PK without discerning, or nurturing, the presence of leadership gifts. Sometimes the PK assumes their own right to positions of leadership without having asked themselves if they're truly called or prepared to handle such responsibility. In either case, assigning or assuming leadership without proper discernment is a widely recognized condition within many congregations.

Not all PKs want leadership. Not all PKs deserve leadership. Some may be shy. Some need seasons of absorption more than they need to be forced into production. Some are wired to serve from behind the scenes, even though their pastor-parent seems to thrive in an upfront role. Some simply lack confidence, and being forced prematurely into positions of leadership will damage the gifts that do lie waiting to be cultivated (but not forced into action).

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[2] The converse, of course, could certainly be expected. If a church does not recognize their pastor as a strong leader, it is entirely unlikely that they will to seek to discern and cultivate the leadership gifts of the pastor's children.

The PK as Bible Scholar and Theologian Extraordinaire

Piper notes that "It takes very intentional effort not to learn biblical facts and references when it is your parent's full-time job and home life both" (52). In my own home, family conflict is often resolved with a Word from scripture or a reminder of a biblical story that "paints the picture of this very situation"; when children find themselves without a book to read before bed, there are always plenty of Bibles and devotional materials readily available. Most PKs have listened to thousands of sermons by the time they reach young adulthood and tend to have great attendance records at Sunday morning discipleship classes (i.e. Sunday school) and other youth activities. Many PKs even bear biblical names as their pastor-parents draw from the stories of scripture to inject a biblical distinctiveness onto the core of their children's personhood.

Churches perceive this reality. When the Bible study class seems at a loss for answers, teachers invite little Johnny, the PK, to offer an answer, musing, "Surely you have heard this story before." Piper remembers playing "Bible baseball" in his childhood youth group. Students formed line-ups, and when their turn at bat arrived, they were given the opportunity to choose a level of difficulty for their question (single, double, triple, or home run). Piper remembers, for the "earliest of such activities…I felt the pressure to be more than just a 'hitter.' I had to be a slugger, to swing for the proverbial fences with every at bat. I was the pastor's son, and pastors' kids don't settle for base hits when there are home runs to be crushed" (52). Of course, every correct answer offered by the PK becomes a form of self-fulfilling prophecy—an affirmation that acts like a drug in the psyche of the PK. Every incorrect answer strikes a blow to the PK's self-confidence and perception of acceptance within the life of their pastor-parent's congregation.

Moreover, because many PKs know more of the stories and facts of the Bible than people twice their age, the church often tends to think the PK also enjoys a sound appreciation for biblical *truth* (Graustein and Jacobsen 139). Piper likens this to mistaking one's proclivity for absorbing facts for genuine "theological acumen" (53). Such an assumption presents a terrible level of unfair expectation, and misguided direction, upon the PK. While the pastor-parent is living out a calling to theological study, the PK's full-time job includes learning the basics of writing, reading, arithmetic, and whatever other hobbies they have chosen to invest in. Where the pastor-parent has (hopefully) embraced a passion for exploring and seeking to explain God's Word, the PK may find their passion in a myriad of other pursuits. Where the pastor-parent may be rightly pushed to discern the intricacies of God's metanarrative within every narrative of scripture, the PK is pushed into a corner where memorizing the facts is deemed to be both necessary and sufficient.

For this very reason, Graustein and Jacobsen assert that PKs are often the most prone among all church-connected children to gain second-hand knowledge of the Bible without experiencing the blessing of a first-hand knowledge that shapes thinking and drives action. PKs become like children who have heard countless stories of the magnificence of the Grand Canyon, but who have never actually been taken there for a personal experience (139-40). While the drug of biblical knowledge feels good for a moment, it threatens to leave the PK with an empty soul when faced with the necessity of letting God's Word provide direction, life transformation, and the building blocks for genuine spiritual maturity.

The Expectation that PKs Share the Same Theological Views as Their Pastor-Parent

The unfair theological expectations placed on many PKs extend beyond the need to differentiate between knowledge and personal experience. While some churches incorrectly assume their PKs have a right relationship with God because of their Bible knowledge, other congregations (and pastor-parents) impress that the PKs knowledge of God must translate into theological leanings, or perspectives, that are fully in harmony with that of the particular church (or, at least, the pastor-parent). Where the Church may be divided over matters related to human sexuality, infant/believer baptism, the way of salvation regarding free will and predestination, worship styles, the PK bears an expectation to tow the party line. Sometimes this line is established by the local church. Often the line is established by the pastor-parent who is preoccupied with maintaining a sense that her/his disciple-making efforts are up to standards.

Here, Piper uses the metaphor of travel. Remembering his own childhood, Piper recognizes that the effectiveness of his father's disciple-making efforts were both focused and demanding, with a clear vision of helping the yonger Piper get to the right destination with regard to his faith and service to the church. Piper appreciated his father's goal oriented spiritual leadership, but not always the path that he was being forced to follow towards the destination. Piper mused that just as different travelers may choose different routes to a road trip destination (or different observances of the speed limit), so too must PKs be allowed to choose some of the roads they take along the journey towards spiritual maturity. As the son of a preacher, teacher, author and denominational voice, Piper felt

that both his own father, and the church of his upbringing, dictated that he "believe the same things and express (my) beliefs the same way" as my father did (55).[3]

Graustein and Jacobsen echoed Piper's comments, reminding the Church that it often projects its theologically formed lifestyle expectations (concerning drinking, dancing, tattoos, television watching, dating, and similar issues) upon PKs much more harshly than it does upon "normal kids". Each also reminds us that changing lanes from the one being followed by a pastor-parent or local congregation is not synonymous with seeking a different destination, or even travelling a different road. Here, there pastor-parent must be able to distinguish between the overall objective of spiritual formation (a vibrant, growing relationship with the Lord, marked by foundational Descriptors of a Discipled Person) and less critical battles that could be won, but might be better left unfought.

In fact, Brian Haynes reminds all parents, and pastor-parents in particular, that focusing too exclusively on individual practices and behaviors often produces little more than shallow faith (115). While an automotive mechanic *could* commit to servicing each of his children's cars for their entire lifetime (ensuring their vehicles ran well, but passing on little training in the process), the same mechanic would be much better off (and more naturally inclined) to mentor his children so that they could soon service and repair their own vehicles. The mechanic, could also insist in certain brands of filters, oils, and tools as the only right way to get the job done, but would be better off promoting values and

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[3] If there is an opportunity for blessing within our United Methodist system, perhaps it lies here in the fact that our denominational beliefs as "United Methodists" have grown so diverse. A PK, even amidst their itinerant moves within an annual conference, may experience an easing of the expectation to "believe exactly what we believe," since, frankly, many Methodists are not themselves sure what we believe. I mean this not to offer license "to believe whatever you want to believe." On the contrary, we want our PKs to seek truth, but the diversity of our denomination's theological beliefs opens the door for the PK to experience this variation and explore their own convictions, hopefully in partnership with a consistent pastor-parent influence.

practices, with *recommendations* regarding personal preferences. Likewise, the pastor-parent's primary objective should focus more on helping their children navigate the difficult waters of their own faith journey, learning how to make biblically informed, theologically sound decisions on their own as a part of the spiritual maturation process. The pastor-parent who too strongly focuses on right behavior and right practices threatens to exchange a process that leads to genuine spiritual maturity for one that creates morally upright almost Christians or rebellious young adults with a sour taste towards the Christian faith.

Parent, Pastor, or Both?

Piper addressed his desire for his pastor-parent to function more as a parent while at home and less as a pastor. Piper, like many of the PKs he and authors like Graustein and Jacobsen referenced, expounded on the perception that this disconnect stemmed from a lack of role differentiation on the part of the pastor-parent. To an extent, however, this perception denies the fact that the pastor's role and identity stem, ideally, from one's own effort to grow into Christlikeness. The effective pastor who seeks to lead a congregation from their own faith maturation will find it difficult to not parent as a maturing disciple. This will necessarily bring a pastoral role to all parenting. It is the very goal every pastor should yearn to model and share with every disciple-making parent within a congregation.

Moreover, the longer a pastor spends in ministry, the more likely phrases such as, "Well, the Bible says…" and "I think Jesus would…" may be expected become a part of their biblical worldview and conversational language. Many teenagers may not appreciate this parenting perspective, but it should be recognized as normative for the parent who

takes Christian discipleship seriously. Such a perspective represents the contemporary embodiment of "writing God's Word on one's forehead" (Deuteronomy 6:8 NIV). Graustein and Jacobsen's work, in fact, supports the argument, that from this "bigger picture" perspective, the PK has an advantage when it comes to developing a personal, biblical worldview, precisely because the PK inevitably grows up in an environment where their pastor-parent demonstrates the necessary work of wrestling with difficult theological issues on a daily basis and within daily reflection (103).

The Case for Grace

Beyond these "assumptions" offered by Piper and others, Piper addresses, albeit briefly, the conditions he felt would have helped him manage his own self-identity and faith struggles. Piper's writing makes it clear that he identifies a lack of grace as the biggest failure within his own upbringing and spiritual development. Piper shares his perception that his own pastor-parent, like others he has known, preached grace exquisitely from the pulpit without modelling it at home. Too often, Piper notes, "Jesus is loving, gracious, forgiving and sacrificial. Dad is none of those things. Jesus accepts you as you are. Dad demands more. Jesus forgives sins. Dad harps on them. Jesus makes us white as snow. Dad finds every stain. Jesus loves children and is joyful. Dad holes up in his office and keeps a stern countenance." For Piper, at least in his own opinion, his PK upbringing was marked by "a life full of barriers" that included extra rules, black-and-white discourses, false forgiveness and a lack of empathy (77).

What was needed, and all that was needed in Piper's opinion, was an extra measure of grace, forgiveness, and freedom. Grace and forgiveness for the PK who is every bit as normal and prone to mistakes as the next kid; freedom to explore one's own

faith, theology and self-identity. Piper addresses his father's short-comings saying, "My dad has an intensely rigorous theology" and "pointed views on culture and morals" that he projected onto me (122). Piper also asserts that his father "simply did not understand what a PK's life is like" (84). Piper, however, also points a finger at the church, noting that "no man is adequate to be the pastor, especially not as the position of pastor is viewed today, where the church has made the call to 'manage his own household well' and 'keep his children submissive' (1 Timothy 3:4) a job description line item" (86).

Powell and Clark remind us that *many* young adults "shelve their faith" when leaving home for the first time. Most do so, simply because they feel a need for "release for the rules and high expectations" of living life in the church's legalistic system. The busyness of living on their own and simple desire to "enjoy the college life" leads to a season of separation from the church that can last a lifetime. Several of the students interviewed by Powell and Clark noted they began this stage of life thinking they could stay close to God, even without the disciplines of church involvement or private ritual that had marked their youth. While some would note that they were able to later recognize these as "one step backward" seasons in their spiritual journey that was later followed by two steps forward, many more saw this first step towards separation as the first of many along a slippery slope of diminishing spiritual vitality (54-5). For the PK, who has experienced a heightened feeling of legalism and unfair expectations from family and the church, we should not be surprised to see similar, if not more dramatic, findings.

While Piper asks many of the right questions, and raises legitimate concerns for the ministry family, his conclusions paint a singularly black and white picture of what the

PK needs if he/she is to have a "fair chance" at growing up spiritually and emotionally

healthy. Piper acknowledges that his own upbringing, grounded in solid theological

education, marked by seeing God use even imperfect churches to accomplish great

things, and forged by "being part of the rhythm of pastoral life," offered the very building

blocks he needed to answer his own call to ministry. Moreover, Piper acknowledges that

seeing the church "from the inside" as a PK enables these individuals to serve the church

well as adults (as either lay or pastoral leaders). The PK, Piper notes may take on

leadership positions without the naiveté he sees in too many "pie-in-the-sky" church

leaders and "wide-eyed seminarians" who head into ministry believing that the path

towards changing the world through their local church will be marked by smooth sailing

at every turn (136-137). Ultimately, Piper rightly declares that the most important thing a

pastor-parent (and church) can do for a PK is to help them "know the real Jesus" and

Jesus' desire to relate personally to the PK as he/she sorts through their own identity

issues (74). His "all we need is grace" perspective, however, has its shortcomings.

The Case for Discipline

Like Piper, Dorothy and Armour Patterson acknowledge that parenting *does* fit

into one's call to ministry. The PK *is* a part of the pastor's mission field. A strong vision

for nurturing the spiritual development of the PK is a *must* for every pastor-parent. Rather

than requiring an extra measure of grace, however, the route to realizing this vision of PK

spiritual maturity looks much different from the Pattersons' perspective. The Pattersons'

vision for a well-discipled PK begins with the end in mind. The primary function of the

ministry family is to serve as an example, or lighthouse, for other families. The pastor-

parent is called to lay a foundation of faith "upon which they build character and inspire

service to God and others." PKs are to be "polished" through diligent nurturing before being laid as "crowns at Jesus' feet." The best gift a pastor can give their congregation is the actual "rearing of his children according to divine patterns" (Patterson and Patterson 6).

While Dorothy Patterson had once found herself raising children as the wife of a congregational pastor, she writes as a seminary professor and spouse of a Baptist seminary president. Within their advice to the pastor-parent, the importance of PK freedom and self-awareness consistently take a back seat to the necessity of "disciplined instruction." These authors encourage pastor-parents to ensure their children "feel loved," but place far greater emphasis on "firm discipline in the life of your child (to) teach your child the joy of absolute obedience" through rituals and traditions that reflect a ministry lifestyle (Patterson and Patterson 29-30).

"Training a child in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6), for the Patterson's, refers less to a child's "natural bent" and more to the ways of godly wisdom.[4] Specific advice to the pastor-parent includes building a good theological library at home wherein each family member, including young children, develops their own collection of appropriate books. Patterson notes that for her family "space allotted to library holdings resulted in less space for other family pleasures," but argues that the sacrifice becomes a blessing, especially if it allows children to see their pastor-parent modeling extra study within the home (39). Patterson also offers lengthy instruction regarding the importance of "teaching proper etiquette," the importance of having missionaries live in the pastor's

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[4] I totally agree with Patterson in her interpretation of this text and her emphasis on wanting ministry families to serve as godly examples for other families within a congregation/community, but not with the rigidity of practice with which she would have pastor-parents pursuing this vision for their children.

home to foster a globally-sensitive influence, and the importance of strictly monitoring television viewing/radio listening.

Certainly, the Pattersons acknowledged, these practices will make the ministry family look "abnormal," but that is exactly what God's desire is for all Christian families: marks of abnormal behavior as compared to the rest of culture. Amidst a culture of "helicopter" parents, overly-entitled children, and morally relativistic families, this couple should be admired for encouraging pastor-parents to draw a line in the sand that can promote authentic godliness within the home while serving as a model for other families. The Pattersons, however, seem overzealous in their preaching of discipline at every turn. Insisting that "it is never too early for children to start maturing and learning to behave as an adult," Dorothy Patterson tells a story where her husband corrected their six-year old son in a restaurant. She argues that her husband "needed… to become the 'pastor' on the scene, with necessary harshness and indignation…which seemed like sudden anger" (to properly) "introduce spiritual truth and its application on the scene" (35-36, 41).

Undergirding the Pattersons' work is the ethos that God is good, but churches (and the people within them) are often broken. The pastor-parent's role is to help the PK find their place within the family's ministry of lifting up a good God within this brokenness. This is simply part of the calling that God places upon the ministry family. While local church ministry brings disappointments and disillusionment, this is no different than any other setting a child might find themselves growing up within. The PK, however, enjoys the *advantage* of having parents who will help them see God's hand even within the difficult realities. Thus, the pastor-parent must instill sufficient discipline

within their children that they may see how blessed they are to be part of God's redemptive solution for humanity.

Of course, this is exactly the kind of stereo-typical PK upbringing that has Piper falling onto a fetal position, overwhelmed by the legalistic upbringing he claims to have experienced personally and observed among friends. Moreover, Patterson's work seems to absolve the local congregation from any role or responsibility for helping nurture the faith of its PKs. The Pattersons' desire to help train pastors for their role in congregational leadership by strongly emphasizing the pastor-parents' need to serve as model for the congregation is understandable and biblical. Yetthey seem to ignore the communal nature of the *Shema*, giving neither the pastor-parent nor congregational leadership insight as to how they might effectively function as a team in their collective efforts to prioritize family over work demands and foster an environment where faith has a chance to develop in a healthy manner.

The Patterson's approach to raising PKs offers much sound advice…*if* the only goal is raising these children to become church leaders. Their mindset that firm discipline trumps grace pushes PKs into precisely the kind of legalistic, fish-bowl environments that Piper feels are suffocating today's ministry families. Certainly, the Pattersons' insight should be applauded as it pertains to the seriousness of raising children within a ministry family. Without making a specific reference to Deuteronomy 6, her emphasis on the intentionality that the *Shema* calls for in spiritual childrearing is unmistakable. The call upon pastor-parents to not neglect the mission-field represented by their families is likewise praiseworthy. Her work simply fails to acknowledge the cultural realities facing today's PKs and the grace-filled means of ministering to them. Perhaps the Pattersons

are simply too many seasons removed from the role of serving within a congregational setting.

The best answer to the grace-discipline argument, most likely, is found in the middle ground, a place where grace and truth are held in healthy balance. Where Patterson begins with a vision of where the PK should end up (strong faith marked by leadership within the local church), Piper focusses squarely on the perspective of the PK reality in the here and now of growing up in the fishbowl of a ministry setting. Both offer wise insight, and the insightful pastor-parent must minister to their own family as they would to any member of their congregation (only with even greater devotion and intensity). There will be times where grace is called for and other moments where discipline and diligence are the best things we can offer. Discernment will always be key.

For instance, Powell and Clark embrace how important it can be for the pastor-parent to share the struggles they experience in life. The distinction these authors and youth ministry professors emphasizes the difference between sharing frustrations generated by work realities and those created by our efforts to grow towards complete trust in God's goodness and power (46). The former only leads the PKs to feelings of resentment about church. The latter helps the PK grow in their own efforts to wrestle with God on the journey towards spiritual maturity and greater self-discovery.

Like many American parents, pastors are hesitant to ask for help in any area of personal need. Pastors feel especially uneasy about asking for help regarding with spiritual growth, fearing that a need for help denotes inadequacy. "There still seems to be a lingering aura of religious self-sufficiency surrounding clergy families, an aura which would lead some to believe that clergy families mysteriously have the power to minister

to themselves in all of their human needs" (Troost 75). Misunderstanding 1 Timothy

3:4's call to "manage his own household well" by trying to manage the household *alone*,

this "condition" appears to be as prevalent within the arena of their own children's

spiritual development as anywhere else. These pastors feel that inadequacy with home-

based discipleship may undermine the ability of the congregation to see them as a

competent authoritative figure qualified for congregational discipleship and leadership.

The Itinerant PK

Paul Mickey and Ginny Ashmore note additional peculiarities facing those in

appointment-based ministry settings. Chief among their observations is the potential for a

congregation's expectations of the pastor, and their family, to be poorly communicated

within itinerant systems like that employed by the United Methodist Church. Mickey and

Ashmore note that in typical "call" systems, the process of bringing a new pastor to a

congregation is marked by a prolonged interview process whereby all parties

communicate expectations of the pastor and congregation before coming to a "no-

nonsense, contract oriented term of employment." In an appointment system, there are no

negotiating sessions and the initial meeting between pastor and congregational leaders

merely serves to present a pastor and his or her new congregation's leaders to one another

(86).

In such a setting, both parties typically seek to offer a positive, enthusiastic

presentation of themselves. Specific expectations for the pastor's leadership receive only

vague commentary, and expectations of the pastor's family rarely get addressed at all.

Thus, when a ministry appointment actually begins, both sides bring a presumed set of

expectations. While Mickey and Ashmore note that pastors within most denominations

understand the "fiduciary relationship" they are to have with the congregation at a personal level, the United Methodist Church's appointment-based process often provides little or no direction for what the ministry family might expect to experience within the life of the congregation, a reality that significantly inhibits many pastor families' ability to set healthy boundaries. This condition is exasperated when clergy move between urban and rural ministry settings or between congregations where the principal member make-up shifts from professional to working class, or vice versa. (88-89). Most clergy families, particularly within an appointment system, are simply not equipped to seamlessly navigate the varying expectations that diverse congregations place upon their pastor-families without significant challenge to their own understanding of the expectations and boundaries they bring to the relationship.

Jean and Chris Burton add that their research has revealed that many PKs (even those who do not live in an itinerant system) live with a mindset marked by the "inevitability" of regular transitions. From the moment a new appointment begins, the itinerant PK naturally begins to ask, "I wonder how long we will be here before our next move." Many younger PKs interviewed by the Burtons expressed their internal sense that unplanned, itinerant moves represented a form of punishment from God or "the system." Teenagers, in particular, noted their reluctance to accept their place in a new community, school, and church, saying "you don't want to get too close to somebody because you know that sooner or later you'll be moving on." Teenagers, for whom peer approval and outside relationships are of critical importance, tended to have the greatest difficulty with ministry moves. Of course, many of the same PK teenagers recognized that it was exactly at the point when they began to let their guard down that their pastor-parents were

beginning to be considered for the *next* pastoral move. The emotional effect on these teenage PKs was universally described as "devastating" (52-53).

Parents in every career face difficulties balancing the demands of work and family. Piper, however, notes the unique challenge facing the ministry family by asking the rhetorical question, "Why do pastors go into ministry? I mean the good ones, the ones who live the Bible, have a passion for Jesus, and want to see people come to know him?" (25). Piper turns to the notion of calling. Pastors are called to ministry…by God. This calling often precedes marriage and family, so children are pulled into a life of ministry without having had the opportunity to sign off on their parent's answer to God's invitation (25). Piper further notes that those children who are old enough to sign off on a parent's decision to enter ministry cannot fully understand what this will mean for the family and their own role as congregational PK. Piper, of course, is correct, and the notion of calling might seem to place an unfair burden on PKs. Such logic, however, fails to acknowledge that it is rare for any child to have been born early enough to sign off on a parent's career choice. That the pastor might feel the assurance of God's leading into a ministerial career (and affirmation of the Church's arduous endorsement process) should serve to comfort the ministerial family. If God is indeed both powerful and loving, He would not call a future parent into a career of ministry without including both the means for the family members to also experience this calling and the resources for the pastor-parent to balance the needs of both career and family.

Thus, while Piper's assertion that many PKs blame God for calling a family into ministry, his reasoning fails to address the pastor-parent's readily available answer to this frustration. The solution to the PK's dilemma that says "I blame and don't trust God," is

not a pouring out of cheap grace, but rather a pouring in of disciple-making focus. At best, this occurs within a setting that allows both self-expression and an environment of discipline. In essence, Piper's experience paints a picture of the Church's need to better care for PKs and the pastor-parent's need to distinguish between the calling of a good God, the brokenness of the churches this same God calls pastors to lead, and the dedication it takes to bring both polarities into perspective for the PK.

The Positives of Growing Up As a PK

Not all families are created equal. Some children are born into families with greater financial resources than others. Some families are marked by strong education or athletic genetics that are often passed down from generation to generation. Some families lend themselves to having a greater emphasis on the importance of faith and those practices that made lead to a vital faith and spiritual maturity. The ministry family should be marked by these wonderful blessings: godly parents, training in the Word of God, natural connections to other Christian families, and lives that are markedly invested within the life of God's Church. Graustein and Jacobsen note that in addition to these conditions, children of pastors should enjoy that added benefit of having parents who parent from a godly/biblical worldview. The monitoring of friendships, entertainment consumption, cultural leanings towards materialism, and one's general exposure to the things of the world may not seem pleasant for any child, but the PK enjoys the blessing of knowing that such monitoring within the ministry family is grounded in the standards of scripture and a desire for godliness. Moreover, growing up as a PK provides the opportunity to realize that one may make a genuine for difference for Christ in the world as they move into adulthood (20).

Graustein and Jacobsen liken spiritual development to investing in one's retirement investment portfolio. An investor who places $1000 into an account at age 18 may expect to realize a retirement savings of $88,000 by the time they retire at 65. A second investor who likewise starts with a $1000 investment at age 18, but who adds $100 per month until they are 65 may expect to have more than $1,000,000 in retirement savings based on compounding interest. An investor who already has $10,000 saved at the age of 18 and who continued to invest $100 per month will have nearly $2,000,000 when they retire (218). Spiritually speaking, the PK represents the third investor, the one who has been given an opportunity for a tremendous head-start over their peers regarding spiritual investing. These family conditions should bring both feelings of security and godly excitement to the child blessed to grow up in such an environment.

John Westerhoff adds his voice to those who celebrate the spiritual development positives that accompany growing up as a PK. Just as many authors have noted the importance of ritual within spiritual formation, Westerhoff notes that such ritual is often more prevalent within ministry families than most others within a congregation. Noting that worship and study should represent two pillars at the top of the ritual blueprint, PKs have an inherent advantage. By nature, the congregationally-based pastor-parent will be present in worship every weekend, and will likely place significant priority on youth activities that include Bible study or Sunday school. In a culture where families are increasingly inclined to consider attending worship one or two times per month as acceptable while travelling/exploring others activities regularly on Sundays (and/or Saturday evenings), the PK is much more likely to experience the ritual of worship and congregational discipleship activities on a *weekly* basis (58).

Westerhoff further defines spiritual maturity in terms of "being shaped by God's story" (66). While the PK may not appreciate being a weekly worship attender (or the style of worship at their pastor-parent's congregation), such consistency certainly plays a role within the development of faith-based priorities. In a culture where the pull of alcohol, drugs, cheating, premarital sex and a host of other temptations bombards our children, the PK also enjoys living in an environment where at least one parent is both trained and experienced in exhorting God's answer to these temptations, something the typical parents of our culture feel ill-equipped to do (Powell and Clark 72). Moreover, the rituals of worship attendance, discipleship activities, and Christian conversation represent the very practices God would have all Christians engaging within as a means of being shaped by His story. The responsibility still falls upon congregational leaders to ensure that worship and discipleship activities indeed promote the formation of a biblical worldview and genuine faith stimulation, but no one is in a better position to ensure this trajectory than the pastor-parent.

Moreover, no one *should* have more influence over the spiritual formation practices of a local congregation that its pastor. The pastor-parent who successfully leads a church towards the mindset of offering meaningful worship and discipleship ministries not only promotes an environment for the entire congregation to grow towards spiritual maturity, they create an environment for their own children to be blessed spiritually. The pastor-parent will also naturally tailor particular ministries within a congregation to the particular interests of the clergy family (for example: if the clergy family enjoys meeting

with God through outdoor camping, the pastor-parent can help lead congregational

camping trips that should provide a particular blessing to his/her own family).[5]

While the importance of home-based discipleship activities and mentoring

relationships has been stressed throughout the literature review, such practices should

never be allowed to serve as *substitutes* for corporate worship and group-based

discipleship activities. The pastor-parent who invests hours into sermon preparation,

worship planning and Bible study preparations should have ample material to promote

spiritual formation dialogue within the home. In fact, the pastor-parent even enjoys the

unique opportunity to tailor preaching and teaching lessons in such a manner as to

provide sound material for at-home application, along with access to a wealth of

resources that should promote creativity within said practice.

Throughout this chapter, we have noted the *Shema's* emphasis on community

based faith development. Parents must take the primary role in the spiritual development

of their children, but must also seek out additional mentors/voices who can pour into the

life of a child through both example and presence. When it comes to seeking out gifted

mentors for the PK, no one has a better insider's view of perspective candidates from

within the local congregation and the fraternity/sorority of community Christian leaders

outside the local congregation.

While every congregation is filled with "wolves in lambs clothing," the church

pastor is usually in a position to observe these realities, bringing an opportunity to point

the PK towards "genuine Christian role models," declaring, "This is what a true Christian

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[5] The pastor-parent who makes it clear that his/her own family's spiritual development is a priority can foster such direction in ministry. The pastor-parent who fails to establish such a priority within the congregation will often try to force the PK into ministry events that they have no interest in ("You'll go, because I'm the pastor!"). Such a mindset creates a myriad of problems for the PK and resentment is understandable.

looks like" (Graustein and Jacobsen 110). Many PKs experience negative feelings towards the church because they have experienced the behind-the-scenes biting of the wolves. These same PKs, however, will also find themselves in environments where the pastor-parent can steer them towards the best possible role models for Christian living, while also witnessing how true disciples learn to deal with those whose actions seem less than Christ-like.

Finally, while unreasonable expectations are *unreasonable*, healthy expectations are often a precursor to realized success. PKs bring an instant "in" when moving to a new church, and as such *may* experience favored status. They are often received in a congregation with the assumption that they have already been immersed in God's story, expectations that they have an inside view of genuine faith, and the belief that the ministry family expects the church to foster the PK's faith development in an intentional manner. Placing such healthy expectations on the PK, with a measure of grace, opens leadership doors and raises the bar for them to achieve great things for the Lord, even at a young age.

The PK's Transition to Adulthood

As the PK reaches young-adulthood, the pastor-parent would do well to help their child make wise decisions about choosing a local church, or Christian college/ministry setting, of their own. Most PKs, if they have grown up in an appointment setting such as that within the United Methodist Church, will have never enjoyed the luxury (or responsibility) of choosing their own congregation. In fact, the PK will not even have had the opportunity to explore congregations of other denominations, nor will they have been exposed to natural differences between churches within the same denomination that have

widely different theological/stylistic differences than the ones their pastor-parent has served. The itinerant PK simply goes where mom or dad has been appointed. Helping the PK assess the theological bent, worship style, missions focus, ministry leadership model, and other church values that they would best connect within a local church setting, will invariably provide a great blessing as the PK leaves home for the first time. The pastor-parent who is particularly strong in their self-confidence may even offer their PK the opportunity to experience other congregations while they are still living at home.

For PKs living in larger metropolitan areas, choosing to connect with a para-church ministry provides an added potential blessing. Connecting within such a setting (YoungLife, Youth for Christ, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, or other para-church organizations allows the PK to find their place in a ministry setting where mom or dad is *not* the leader of the ministry. These settings often provide an environment of more "normal" expectations than the local church and a place where questions of faith/confession of struggles can be offered without fear of getting "ratted out." Moreover, connecting in such settings allows the PK to find value in who they are, not in who their parent may be as a spiritual leader within the community. Moreover, when the PK experiences God's presence outside the local congregation that their parent serves, it provides opportunities for the pastor-parent and PK to discuss matters of theology and spirituality that have originated from the inspiration of outside perspectives.

In some settings, church leadership may push back against a PK's involvement in such activities. Church leaders who see the PK as a tool to help grow the ministries of the congregation will seek to have the PK's energy focused solely on activities housed within

the local congregation. Here, it is the pastor-parent's responsibility to help establish reasonable boundaries between church leadership and one's own family life.

The Pastor-Parent Paradox

The pastor-parent lives within a paradoxical role. In one sense, the core values inherent to being a Christian family should be no different than those for any other family. At the same time, however, the family culture inherent to the clergy family is unique. The pastor-parent must help their family embrace the core values of the Christian faith, while doing so through the lens of our distinct family system. In so doing, they may help establish the powerful truth that within one's nuclear family one possesses the potential to teach core values sooner, and with greater clarity, than any government institution, school setting, or even local church possibly could (Stafford 23).

Just as building codes in America govern basic construction standards for physical homes, core values represent spiritual standards for the Christian home. Stafford has identified fourteen core values that he believes every Christian family should strive to embrace. Renfro, Shields and Strother, conversely, articulates six. Meanwhile, the half-dozen ministry leaders with whom I am in covenant partnership have identified from four to twelve core values for their own families. Thus, it is clear that finding agreement regarding the core values of the Christian faith can be difficult. The key, according to discipleship coaches, Bill Allison and Dave Garda, is to clearly identify one's own family core Christian values in order to provide a biblically solid, yet unique foundation upon which to construct my family's faith (13).

Allison and Garda assert that all families should seek to articulate their own core Christian values through what they would have us call our personal "Description of a

Discipled Person" or, more simply, "DDP" (15) Our family DDP has been drawn from

the Great Commission, the Great Commandment (which includes the *Shema*), and an

Acts 2 model of discipleship. The specifics of my family's personal DDP (which shall be

used for developing research and interview questions) includes a deep love and full trust

in God, unselfish love for others in community (John 13:34-35 and Heb. 10:24-25), a

commitment to being a lifelong learner and teacher of God's Word, a missional attitude

towards the spiritually lost and physically needy, the development of one's God-given

character to its fullest potential (Prov. 22:6), a strong sense of self-discipline in the

pursuit of God's will (Heb. 10:36 and 1 Cor. 9-24-25), respect for self and others (Eph.

6:1-6), a life of prayer as communication with the Almighty, a constant striving to

understand and embrace worship, a spirit of generosity in a culture of entitlement, and

attending to the ordnances of God.

In an era of "church growth" models and strategies, it is common for

congregations to develop details "programing" for effective discipleship. As this driving

force behind these systems of congregational development, it is far too easy for the

pastor-parent to also project such rigidity within their home-based discipleship efforts.

Thus, Garland's emphasis upon the necessity for both flexibility and consistency in

home-based disciple-making is especially critical within the ministry family (*Family*

Ministry, 235-9). Viewing the family from a hierarchical standpoint often leads to the

pastor-parent to label themselves as the resident expert whose primary responsibility

becomes disseminating information. In these settings, the spiritual mentoring relationship

becomes one of "distance, direction, and control" instead of give-and-take practice of

communal learning that has proven to be most effective in terms of internalized faith

development (McGrath 119). Too many pastor-parents fall into the trap of attempting to coerce faith in their children, doing so either as the result of frustrations experienced in an unresponsive congregation or as a mirror to their authoritative role in a strongly pastor-driven church.

In contrast to a rigid program for home-based discipleship, Joiner again offers helpful insight, declaring that in the midst the constant distractions inherent with trying to balance ministry and family life, a well-developed "rhythm" within the home provides the most potential for family members to stay focused on God (65). Joiner invites ministry families to again look at the wisdom of Moses in the *Shema*. While discipleship was Moses' goal, utilizing certain patterns of daily living marked his proposed means of helping families get there. In offering the Israelites a strategy for teaching the commandments of God to their children, Moses instructed the parents to talk about them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. In essence, Moses told the people to take advantage of the times already built into their daily routine because these moments already encourage family interaction (Joiner 67).

Thus, quantity and quality of time are essential to helping one's children grow in faith, but a rigidity of practices is not. Joiner invites all families to take the role of teacher at mealtimes for formal discussion that helps establish Christian values. Walking along the road has now been replaced by drive time for most families, but both give parents opportunities to befriend their children through informal dialogue that helps children interpret life. Bed time represents the parents' best opportunity to meet their children on their turf and in their safest sanctuary. Bed time provides opportunities for more intimate

conversation as the parent takes on the role of counselor, building up trust and intimacy within the family and with God. Morning time then presents the family with a clean slate and opportunities for instilling purpose within the family as the parent embraces the role of coach using words of encouragement and conviction (68).

Few parents are able to be physically present for all of their children's activities, but Joiner's insistence upon intentionality and prioritization are both noteworthy and applicable to any family environment. While attending ballgames and concerts communicates a sense of worth to one's children, being present within the daily routine of life with one's PKs can helps communicate God's presence and worth in all things. Joiner's "rhythm of life" model also embraces the importance of selectively choosing and investing in each child individually. In a similar manner, Gouge lifts up an organic approach to the discipleship of children that is marked by affirmation, showing transparency towards, and praying with one's children in ways that are most natural to their personal character (Gouge 434-438).

Joiner's insights with regard to home-based discipleship and framing of the church-parent partnership offer much to be appreciated. At the same time, Joiner's exclusive focus on disciple-making principles offers insufficient benchmarks to determine faithfulness within the disciple-making task. Incorporating intentional practices within the framework of the *Shema's* vision for disciple-making is critical within the spiritual formation process. Stafford's emphasis on developing a specific methodology for one's family devotions, bedtime rituals, church attendance, and teaching on Christian practices such as tithing are noteworthy (36-45). Monitoring television viewing and recreational reading, along with making a commitment to watch/read and

process such intake as a family also needs to be a part of the disciple-making process in one's home.

Just as Jesus included his disciples in ministry, the pastor-parent should be encouraged to include their children in ministry opportunities. The pastor-parent must be careful to do this without overburdening their children with church work that masks itself as disciple-making (Gouge 436). Offering PKs opportunities to freely share when they believe that they, or their pastor-parent, are being unfairly manipulated by the church will be critical to both family unity and their spiritual maturation. In homes with multiple children, helping older children to learn to mentor their younger siblings through such activities, while also giving these younger children significant roles to play, will also be important to one's efforts to help inspire ownership, leadership, and unity within the faith-building process.

As important as the parent-pastor role within my children's faith development may be, no parent is designed to mentor their own children in a vacuum. While some would argue that leading the church well will enable to the church to minister to the pastor's own family, this is both an unrealistic expectation of the church and unfaithful fulfillment the pastor-parent's role as spiritual shepherd for their own family. Moreover, asking the church to serve as the primary spiritual guide for the pastor's family runs contrary to the desired leadership role we want all parents to take in their children's spiritual upbringing. The pastor must not only invest heavily in his own children's spiritual development for their own sake, but for the sake of serving as a congregational role model. Thus, a sound vision for partnership between pastor-parent and congregation can be part of a blessed cycle of disciple-making for the pastor's family and all others

within a local church. The failure to adopt such a healthy partnership, however, leads to a degenerative cycle where *all* parties suffer from a poor church and family environment for children's disciple-making.

Especially as children grow older, a key element of pastor-parent leadership will be to help them to experience a growing sense of Christian community and an expanding circle of role models. From the time youth reach middle school, they begin a process of "moving away from home." The further they progress on this natural journey, the more important it becomes for them to have additional voices speaking messages of God's love into their ears. Langford notes that this is especially important in the pastor's family, as preacher's children typically feel unable to embrace their pastor-parent as a spiritual caregiver in the same way other members of the congregation can (Langford 43).

The *most* important reason for the pastor-parent to embrace ownership of their own children's spiritual development is their own children's spiritual development. At the same time, the home of the pastor-parent necessarily serves as a model for others within the congregation and community. Therefore, in their congregational pastor role, the pastor-parent must zealously work to pursue a parent-church partnership mentality throughout their ministries to families. The Barna Research group reports that "ministries having the greatest success at seeing young people emerge into mature Christians, rather than contented churchgoers, are those that facilitate a parent-church partnership" (Renfro et al. 143). Ministries to youth and families that move beyond an isolated silo program where parents entrust their children to the church's leadership need to be modelled by the ministry leaders themselves. Once spiritual growth, over and against happiness and

success, has been established as a top priority within leaders' families, other parents may be equipped to pursue this goal within their own homes.

In truth, these goals and aspirations must be held and pursued by all who are in positions of influence over today's PKs. Pastor-parents must demonstrate clear boundaries to make ministry to their own children a priority. Local congregations must endeavor to offer their congregational pastors this freedom concerning time and energy, while also determining how they might best serve the needs of the pastor's kids both relationally and organizationally. Finally, leadership and resourcing must be offered at the denominational level with an eye towards helping to holistically nurture the spiritual health of the children entrusted to its organization.

Gap Analysis in Literature Regarding the Spiritual Upbringing of Pastor's Kids

The purpose of this project is to discern if best practices can be identified with regard to the spiritual upbringing of pastor's kids. A great deal of literature exists speaking to modern theories regarding youth culture, youth ministry, and best practices for helping today's teens grow into spirituality mature Christians. This evidence does little, if anything, to articulate the unique realities facing pastor's kids.

While some research into the lives of PKs does exist, most comes solely from a biographical perspective. The biographical pieces studied offered personal insights, but were written either from the pastor-parent perspective or by PKs whose parents were known at a national level. None of these authors faced the reality of regular moves, and the fish bowl identities that they spoke of differed significantly from the realities facing most small town pastor's kids. None of this research sought to identify best practices that went beyond the level of the author's personal opinion.

Moreover, little research has been done to capture the unique realities present within an appointment-based system that is characteristic of the United Methodist Church. The project specifically sought to offer insight into the priorities, practices and postures of home, local churches, and structures of denominational leadership that work together to influence the spiritual health of pastor's kids. Among other things, this project seeks to discern potential correlations and contrasts between PK experiences in smaller churches versus larger congregations; small, rural communities versus larger, urban communities; involvement in large youth group versus no having no or very small youth groups; the presence of mentors or outside groups versus not having a non-pastor-parent mentor or faith connection points beyond local church; and the general impact of itinerant moves (and the ages when these moves occurred) on faith development of participants. By bridging the gaps of research that appear to only address one, or at best two, of these influencing realities, this project sought to help pastor-parents, local congregations, and denominational leaders partner with one another in the pursuit of making disciples of Jesus Christ from among the pastor's own children.

Research Design

Various biblical, theological and historical references have been offered, each pointing towards the importance of nurturing the faith of children. Historical and contemporary viewpoints regarding "best practices" for the faith-development of children and teens have also been considered. Literature related to the unique realities facing ministry families and preacher's kids has also been reviewed.

The purpose of this research project is to utilize a qualitative process that examines how the priorities, practices and postures of pastor-parents, local churches, and

denominational influences *collectively* impact the unique experiences that inevitably affect the spiritual health of PKs within the United Methodist Church. Jack Mezirow's article, "Learning to Think Like an Adult," cited dilemma identification, critical reflection, engaging discourse and action taking as the four steps towards effective research (81). This project offers participants the opportunity to examine the dilemmas their upbringing as PKs presented, before providing an opportunity for critical written reflection.

I chose only the young adult PKs whose parents had served within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church for inclusion within the project. I developed a thirty-question survey, asking young adults who had grown up as "IGRC PKs" to assess their current spiritual health and relationship with the local church. The survey also asked participants to consider the factors that led to these determinations. The survey included questions related to pastor-parent, local congregation, and denominational influence.

From among the twenty-nine responders to this initial survey, the project also included follow-up, semi-structured, interviews conducted to delve deeper into the stories beyond the participant's responses. Fifteen of these discussions were conducted as one-on-one interviews, while an additional six participants were part of three-member focus group conversations. The interviews, like the initial surveys began with what Tim Sensing describes as "Grand Tour" and "Background or Demographic Questions" designed to facilitate a level of comfort between the interviewer and interviewees. Utilizing a semi-structured protocol, the interviews transitioned towards "Feeling Questions" designed to ascertain how the key spiritual development influencers of their

childhood (pastor-parent, local church and denominational leaders) affected the interviewees emotionally. Participants, as Sensing suggests, were asked to share how they experienced the realities of their childhood (87-88). I presented participants a set of interview questions (Appendix E) in advance of the interview, but the semi-structured nature of the interviews led to a probing for depth and relevance through follow-up questions not offered in this initial list. Sensing notes that such a process facilitates the goal generating relevant data to the purpose of the study (107). The open discourse that this process encouraged ultimately provided invaluable insight into the "meanings of the signs" that the participants described (Sensing 195). This, in turn, helped give voice to potential action steps with regard articulating "best practices" for the spiritual upbringing of PKs.

Summary of Literature

Painting the picture of a mature, passionate Christian before declaring that said picture will define one's success or failure as a pastor-parent is daunting. The core values of "Description of a Discipled Person" can seem overwhelming and unrealistic to a parent raising children in a modern American culture. The same lofty standards will often prove frustrating to children, especially if and when they see friends who are not required to live by such standards of faithfulness. There will be times that the pastor-parent feels like they cannot measure up to such a high standard of mentoring leadership. There will be times where they feel too broken, too worldly, or too exhausted to put in the effort needed to help their children grow spiritually in an intentional manner.

Stafford reminds us that God is very familiar with the struggles our families will experience. God has been dealing with troubled families for a very long time (29). God

will receive whatever meager efforts we can offer, and will always gently invite us to give more. Along the way, it will be God's presence and strength that brings successes to the pastor-parent families' faith journey. We can only hope to be faithful within the partnership role God has entrusted to us, watering the soil of our children's souls, and modeling this practice for other parents to embrace within their own homes. The calling upon the pastor-parent does not require teaching our preacher's kids a new story so much as it invites us to help them remember the story that they are already a part of as God's beloved children.

At the end of the day, the existing literature affirms that the pastor-parent must seek to let God's word and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit form their vision and motivation for becoming the best parents they can be. Wonderful theories abound for offering spiritual mentoring within the home, and literature specific to discipleship within the ministry family has affirmed many of these sound ideas. Yet no pastor-parent should allow themselves to fall into the trap of pursuing the image of the perfect parent that the church, or anyone else, tries to impose upon them.

Authenticity and faith will always be of the utmost importance. The PK hears about practices including home based devotions from the church, but he or she has to *see* it. The PK hears about the importance of short term mission trips, but he or she has to personally experience their significance (preferably as part of the family). The PK hears about the servant attitude of Christ and putting others first, but he or she has to encounter this at home (Powell and Clark 44).

For these reasons, the following quote from a PK who went on to become a pastor himself bears great significance for every pastor-parent, and for the research component of this project:

> "The best way to teach your children to love the church and its ministry is to love Jesus Christ, the Head of the church; to love the church, which is the body of Christ; and to love with a Christlike love the family that the Lord has given you. Ultimately, the stability and security of a pastor's child are found in a home and a family in which the father says, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord' (Joshua 24:15). Only when Christ is on the throne can everything else be well-ordered" (Croft and Croft 150).

The intent of the research seeks to determine how well pastor-parents, local congregations and conference leaders within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church have been doing in a collaborative pursuit of this critically important goal. Success stories are lifted up and best practices identified to give hope and resourcing for the next wave of ministerial pastor-parents. Identification of clergy family struggles are also named, in the hope of providing answers to better equip pastors, their congregations, and the denomination as a whole for this task of investing in the spiritually maturity and emotional well-being of this most treasured gift: The preacher's kid.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The mission of the United Methodist Church is "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." The men and women ordained as pastors within the United Methodist Church have answered the call to dedicate their vocational lives towards the pursuit of this goal. These pastors, along with the churches they serve, are to commit themselves to reaching out to connect people to a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ, while also helping the connected grow in faith.

Many of these pastor-parents also recognize the spiritual nurturing of their own children as a top priority within their lives and ministry. Many local churches, recognizing the unique opportunities and challenges facing their congregational pastor's kids, have likewise discerned a responsibility for helping nurture the faith of these children. Unfortunately, other pastor-parents and congregations have been found to neglect, and even manipulate, pastors' children for the sake of the larger church's ministerial success. The purpose of this project was to identify best practices for the nurture and development of growth towards spiritual maturity of children within ministry families in the context of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The intent of the research that follows helps determine how well pastor-parents within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church have been doing in pursuit of this critically important goal. The chapter lifts up success stories and works to identify priorities, practices and postures that will give hope and resourcing for

the next wave of ministerial pastor-parents. The chapter also offers identification of clergy family struggles, in the hope of providing answers to better equip pastors, their congregations, and the denomination as a whole for this task of investing in the spiritual maturity and emotional well-being of this most treasured gift: The preacher's kid.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

This project began with an exploration into the current state of ministry to children and teenagers within American culture concerning best practices for raising children towards the goal of genuine faith and Christian spiritual maturity. Looking beyond these cultural realities, this project sought to specifically identity both best practices and potential pitfalls for pastor-parents in their efforts to raise their own children towards the goal of genuine faith and Christian spiritual maturity. The project also endeavored to specifically identity both best practices and potential pitfalls for local congregations in their efforts to partner with pastor-parents within the process of raising PKs under their influence towards the goal of genuine faith and Christian spiritual maturity.

To pursue this goal, the project strove to determine the actual and perceived experiences of young adult preacher's kids. The project specifically targeted young adult PKs whose parents served in full-time congregational ministry within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference (IGRC) of the United Methodist Church (UMC) during the PK's childhood. The goal of the research was to discern the faith-influencing experiences with their own pastor parents and the congregations where they grew up. The project also determined how these influences impacted their own faith in God and their connection with the local church in these PKs as they reach adulthood.

Research Questions

This project's stated goal was the identification of best practices for helping pastor's children develop lives "marked by a love of God, God's Church and all of God's people." To explore potentially effective (and ineffective) practices, three research questions were identified.

Research Question #1

What is the role of the pastor-parent in the spiritual development of his/her own children?

The project's literature review identified the important role that all parents are called to assume concerning the spiritual upbringing of their children. Both positive and negative examples of historical and contemporary pastor-parents were examined with an eye toward discerning best practices. All of the participants in this project's research grew up as PKs whose parents served as local church pastors for all or part of the PK's childhood. Questions eight to twelve of the project survey specifically pertain to PK's perception of their pastor parents' influence upon their spiritual journey. The influence of workplace (church) stress, the handling of unexpected moves, the modeling and practice of spiritual disciplines, and discernment between pastor parent's emphasis on faith development versus "good behavior" and grace versus truth were considered. Post survey interviews enabled participants to expand upon the thoughts they offered within the project survey.

Research Question #2

How does the local church, through its formalized and less established ministries, play a role in the spiritual development of a pastor's kids?

The project's literature review also identified the important role that one's faith community has upon the spiritual nurturing of children. At the same time, the literature review also noted several common challenges and stereotypes about congregational treatment of pastor's kids. Having grown up as local church PKs, project participants were asked to consider the influence of these congregations on their spiritual development. Questions four to seven and fifteen of the survey specifically applied to the PK's perception of their experiences with the ministries of the local congregations in which they grew up. Questions looked to address the PK's experience related to the congregation's care for their spiritual development, expectations about PK behavior, and treatment of the PK as a valued person versus a valuable resource.

Research Question #3

How does the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church, and the larger system of a PK's community, play a role in the spiritual development of a pastor's kids?

This project hoped to fill in some of the gaps that previous studies of PK spiritual development left unexplored. In particular, this project looked to identify the unique challenges and opportunities facing PKs within an itinerant, or appoint-based, system like that which exists within the United Methodist Church. All participants of the project grew up with parents who served local congregations within the UMC. Questions three and thirteen to twenty-nine sought to address the PK's perception of this unique reality within

their faith development. Questions related both to the appointment-making system itself and outside factors (that could be identified as considerations for appointment-making when families with younger children are involved) were offered both in the survey and during follow-up interviews.

Ministry Context for Observing the Phenomenon

The Illinois Great Rivers Conference is composed of 844 local congregations. The conference enjoys the leadership of its own, dedicated resident bishop and is divided into ten districts. These congregations are served by 292 clergy who have been ordained as "elders in full connection" and several hundred full-time and part-time local pastors. I was commissioned as a probationary elder within the IGRC and appointed to a local congregation within the conference in 2002. I was ordained and received into full membership of the IGRC in 2005. I have served my entire full-time appointed ministry within this conference.

In 1996, the former Central Illinois and Southern Illinois conferences formally merged. Today, the IGRC borders include the entire state of Illinois located south of U.S. Interstate 80. While one of the nation's largest metropolitan areas, and its suburbs, lies within the Northern Illinois Conference, the IGRC is considerably less populated. Most local IGRC congregations are located within rural settings. However, the eastern suburbs of St. Louis, MO, as well as the Springfield (metropolitan population: 201,000), Peoria (374,000), Bloomington/Normal (130,000), Champaign/Urbana (232,000), and Rock Island/Moline (380,000) metropolitan areas are included within the Conference boundaries.

While Northern Illinois represents the state's most theologically and socially liberal area, the state grows more conservative the farther south one travels. Thus, the 1996 merger brought together the state's moderate central conference and more conservative southern conference. This subsequently resulted in movement among pastors across these once clear theological/cultural boundary lines. The 1996 merger resulted more from declining church membership than a commonality of vision and unity of purpose. Thus, many pastors serving during the time of the merger were slow to embrace the changes of the overall conference leadership and itinerancy possibilities that the merger brought about.

The common reality that all project participants shared is their identification as young adults whose parent(s) had served as a local church pastor within the IGRC (or the former Central or Southern Illinois Conferences) for at least part of their childhood. Many of the participants within this project were children in the years immediately after the 1996 merger. Many of the project participants are the children of near peers and slightly older mentors from within the conference.

Participants to be Sampled About the Phenomenon

Much like the state of Illinois itself, the local churches and the clergy whom serve these congregations vary significantly. The Illinois Great Rivers Conference is a blend of conservative, moderate and liberal congregations. Some trace their roots directly to Illinois' earliest circuit riders while others have been birthed within the last decade in response to population migration. Its ordained clergy are similarly divergent inage and theological leanings. Each year the leadership of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference embraces the task of matching these congregations and clergy with the presumed goal of

serving the best interests of both parties within the Church's collective effort to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This project sought to identify the perspective of a unique subset of these potential, widely divergent, disciples: its preacher's kids.

Criteria for Selection

I made the decision to limit the candidate pool of project participants to PKs who had grown up within the IGRC ministerial connection for several logistical and control-based reasons. I was confident, given the number of ordained elders within the IGRC, that there was a sufficient pool of potential survey candidates to consider. My membership within the annual conference also provides access to conference leadership, district offices, and local pastors that would not have been available outside the connection. The access to clergy through email and floor access during annual conference sessions proved invaluable.

More importantly, this project sought to discern the unique considerations of growing up as a PK within an itinerant system such as is found within the United Methodist Church. While others have written about general challenges facing PKs, none have addressed the unique realities present within an appointment system where pastors are asked to move without notice. While UMC clergy understand the realities of the itineracy, the project worked to discover the extent to which PKs feel like valued participants within the appointment-making system. Recognizing that each annual conference of the UMC may operate with its own distinctive practices for appointment-making, particularly when children are involved and isolating the research to PKs from the IGRC helped to ensure a commonality of experience among participants.

The project celebrated the success stories that led to many participant PKs being able to identify the strength and depth of their own faith, and rejoices in the fact that four participants are now seeking ordination within the UMC. The project, however, wanted to do more than merely identify success stories. The project hoped to offer insight into best practices for the spiritual nurture of PKs within an itinerant system. For that reason, isolating the project participant pool to PKs from the IGRC offered the best means for providing practical suggestions within the application of the project findings. Investigation into conference staff/pastor/local church communications about "raising PKs in a healthy church environment" was also intentional. Thus, limiting the scope of the project facilitated an environment where dialogue can lead to the specific, implementable action responses consistent with findings. The hope of this project was that other annual conferences within the UMC might glean from this project's findings, applying its findings to their own setting.

Finally, the decision was made to use young adult PKs within the research portion of the project. Selecting PKs who were between the ages of eighteen and forty helped ensure the candidate pool represented individuals who are at least a few years removed from their PK childhood environment. Having reached the age of eighteen, this candidate pool was of an age where they no longer feel intimately connected to the local congregation served by their parent(s), and decisions regarding congregational connection/membership and the practice of spiritual disciplines are of their own choosing. I also targeted these young adults because I believed that they would have attained a level of a maturity that will allow them to objectively process their childhood

PK experiences, without having grown too old to have forgotten (or marginalized or idealized) their childhood.

Only young adult PKs whose pastor-parents served a local congregation(s) during the majority of the PKs upbringing were considered for the project. While many ordained clergy within the UMC serve in extension ministries (conference staff, campus ministry, and agency chaplaincy) the purpose of the project was to discern realities inherent to having a parent who also serves as the pastor of their childhood church home. Based on findings in my literature review, and personal experience, I believe that both the pastor-parents and local congregations would place a different set of expectations upon PKs if those children were not the sons and daughters of the congregation's (paid) pastor.

To give voice to the PKs themselves, the project targeted the IGRC young adult PKs and not the pastor-parents. As was revealed within the literature review, PKs often feel like silent pawns within the ministry families serving today's local churches. The project endeavored to discern what these individuals, not their parents, perceived as best and worst practices within the life of the Church.

Description of Participants

Twenty-nine individuals responded to the research project survey. Participants included thirteen men and sixteen women. Ages of the survey responders ranged from eighteen to thirty-nine years of age. Five participants were in their teens; fourteen were in their twenties and ten were in the thirties. There was no consideration of limiting the participant pool to members of a specific ethnicity. The present vocation or present membership status within the IGRC/a local faith community were also not considered when soliciting participants.

Of the twenty-nine responses, seventeen identified as growing or strong in the Christian faith, while twelve identified themselves as questioning their Christian faith, practicing a different faith or as atheists. Thirteen indicated that they were serving in leadership or otherwise "very active" within a local church. Five indicated that they were somewhat connected to a local congregation, and eleven specified that they are inactive in a local Christian church. Four responders are presently serving as pastors within the United Methodist Church.

Ethical Considerations

I took numerous steps to both ensure the confidentiality and respect the input of individual participants. I informed each potential candidate of the survey opportunity and interview process through a personal email sent through (a) the IGRC's district offices and (b) their pastor-parents. I assured potential participants that their input would remain confidential, and that only I, as the principal researcher, would have access to their specific responses. I did not request social security numbers, medical records, pictures, and other personal information for participants. I did not ask the survey and interview participants were not asked to identify their parents' names, nor were they asked to identify the churches or communities in which their pastor-parents had served.

Participants had the right to not answer specific questions on the survey. Skipping individual questions, did not preclude their participation in the overall study. I gave survey participants the opportunity to express their willingness to participate in a follow-up interviews and assured them that their survey input would be considered within the project's findings regardless of their willingness to be a part of a follow-up interview. Before I scheduled interviews, I told the interview participants that I would record the

conversation on a passcode protected device and assured them that the conversations would remain confidential. All participants signed a written informed consent form. This informed consent form can be found in Appendix A.

I assigned alphanumeric codes to each survey responder. And the same code was used to match survey participants and interviews. Only I, as the principal investigator for the project had access to survey results and interview results. I kept the surveys, interview transcriptions in a locked security drawer when I was not using them. I saved electronically received responses on a password protected computer. I assured participants that all personal responses would be destroyed within two months of the project's completion.

I told all participants that their input would be included within the project's final publication. I also assured participants that pseudonyms would be used within all work presented within findings and/or future publications. I anticipate sharing the study results, also through the use of pseudonyms, in future publications and presentations to the leadership of the IGRC and UMC as a whole. I assured participants that no information linking individual responses to membership or leadership of the IGRC would be provided.

I recognize that my status as a clergy member of the IGRC may have created the perception of a power dynamic influence among some potential survey responders. I am part of the system that has helped bless some, but hurt other PKs. I included my personal contact information with the informed consent form, along with an invitation to contact me for conversation before filling out the survey. The email sent to potential PKs through their pastor parents also emphasized these points. Several potential responders contacted

me to share their concern that I would not be open to hearing their "negative feelings"

regarding their own childhood experiences. Following these conversations, most, but not

all, individuals decided to complete the survey.

<div align="center">**Instrumentation**</div>

This project's research utilized both a written survey and personal interviews.

Conversations with PKs in a pilot test conducted at the 2015 IGRC annual conference led

to the formulation of the project's three-fold emphasis on the postures, practices and

priorities of pastor-parents, local congregations and conference leadership. Drafting the

research questions for both the survey and interview instruments resulted from matching

the concerns raised in the conversations held during the pilot test with the issues

addressed within the literature review.

Pilot Test

In the summer of 2015, I spent part of the IGRC annual conference observing the

childcare area for conference attendees' dependents. A majority of the children were PKs

(others were the children of lay delegates to the annual conference session). Several

young adult PKs who had grown up within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference were

serving as volunteer staff in the childcare area. Conversations with these individuals

centered upon their own spiritual identity as PKs and the known experiences of faith-

development of many non-present peers. These conversations led to the decision to

examine the priorities, practices, and postures of the PKs pastor-parents, the local

churches in which they had grown up, and their experiences with the connectional

system's leadership. These conversations and information gleaned from the literature

review strongly influenced the survey and interview questions utilized in the data collection stage of the project.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

While the questions used within the original participant survey provided a snapshot of the individual PKs' experiences, the interviews utilized a semi-structured format. "Specified themes, issues, and questions" from the survey helped initiate plans for follow-up interviews. This led to the identification of interview questions marked by "the freedom to pursue matters as the situation dictated" (Sensing 107). The semi-structured interview process used in data collection afforded me the opportunity to validate, or receive correction regarding, perceptions gleaned from initial survey responses. The interview process sought to guarantee the confidentiality of participants, while also offering these individuals safe space to share wounds experienced during their childhood. This helped foster a reliable data rich environment for the project.

Most interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis. A focus group setting, where I found myself in dialogue with three participants, characterizes two interview sessions. In these group interviews, the participants each knew one another. These group sessions helped stimulate opportunities for each participate to validate, expand upon or refute one another's comments, often with personal stories.

Sensing notes that, regarding reliability, "the question is not whether the findings will be found again, but whether the results are consistent with the data" (219). To determine the reliability of interview results, I sought to differentiate between the perceived experiences of my participants and their genuine experiential realities. Noting that most of my survey and interview questions were subjective (grand tour and feeling

oriented), interviewees could offer their feelings with regard to their personal experiences as PKs within the IGRC system. My questioning, while honoring their feelings, sought to go beyond their emotional sensitivities to ascertain where participants really stood concerning their faith and local church connections, while seeking to discern fact-based stimuli that led to such determinations. The "commonality of related themes that presented themselves" within the survey and interview results, realized through the "retrospective interview process" utilized within the project, (Cranton and Hoggan 532) offered further evidence of the findings' validity.

Data Collection

This project employed a qualitative, information rich, case study towards its goal of identifying best practices for the spiritual development of PKs who grew up within the itinerant system of the UMC. Patton describes "information rich" case studies as those where "purposeful sampling leads to the discovery of issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (Patton 169). While all participants shared the common IGRC PK identity, the project wanted a broad range of perspectives from within this group, recognizing that diversity among participants represents an important contribution towards both increased inclusivity and reliability within the project (Sensing 84).

I began working with the conference leadership of the IGRC in the summer of 2015 with a goal of identifying ways to connect with the PKs of conference pastors. These conversations, with the conference's director of congregational development and my district superintendent, also paved the way for agreement with regard to survey questions. The questions for the project survey (Appendix B) were approved by the IGRC episcopal office in August 2015 (Appendix C), and, subsequently, by the Asbury

Theological Seminary Institutional Review Board (IRB). The project's informed consent letter and project guidelines were also approved by the Asbury IRB.

The administrative assistant of my district office contacted the other district offices in October 2015. I sent my informed consent letter and survey, along with a letter introducing the project's goals to each district office within the IGRC, with the intention of having each district office forward the email to all pastors within the conference. This process was repeated in May 2016. When only seven responses were received as a result of these requests, I received permission to solicit participation during the clergy session that opened the IGRC annual conference in June 2016. Working with the chair of the IGRC's Board of Ordained Ministry and Executive Assistant to the Bishop, I received permission to have an invitational recruiting statement read to begin the clergy session. A copy of the statement is provided (Appendix D). During the 2016 annual conference, I made copies of the project survey and informed consent letter available to clergy with PKs that fit my criteria. I also solicited email addresses that afforded me the opportunity to directly email the survey and Informed Consent Letter to potential participants. After annual conference, I sent personal emails to IGRC clergy known to have PKs that fit the project description criteria.

As a result of these efforts, I received a total of twenty-nine survey responses. The potential participants sent most of the responses electronically, but several returned their responses by mail. I had hoped for a larger sampling, but determined that the data received was sufficient for my project goals. Patton notes, "in-depth information from a small number of people can be very valuable, especially if the cases are information rich" (184).

After reviewing the completed surveys, I scheduled follow-up interviews with willing participants. Twenty-one of the survey responders indicated their willingness to participate in one-on-one interviews. These interviews were completed between November 2016 and May 2017.

I developed a list of semi-structured interview questions with the intent of moving towards greater clarity towards answering the project's stated research questions. I asked interviewees to expand upon the written answers following a "grand tour" questioning process designed to allow participants to describe their personal experiences on the own terms. "Grand tour questions," offering participants the opportunity to describe their experiences as a PK within the IGRC on their own terms, were supplemented with "feeling questions" that required sensitive listening to discern the subtle differences between opinions and feelings that resulted from the participants' experiences (Sensing 86). These questions went beyond the positive/negative responses of the survey. The interview questions searched for correlations between church size, community size, youth group vitality, mentoring relationships and the age/frequency of family moves on the spiritual development of the participants.

Some interviews were conducted in a face-to-face manner at agreed upon locations, while others were conducted utilizing Facetime, Skype or other virtual means. Travel costs (gas, mileage, parking) incurred by the interviewee were the responsibility of the interviewee. Food and drinks were offered to each interviewee at my expense expense. Costs associated with virtual interviews (i.e. data usage) were also born by interviewees. All interviews were recorded using a passcode protected voice-recording

device to facilitate subsequent transcription. Pseudonyms were given to each participant, matching their survey responses and interviews.

Data Analysis

The first order of analysis regarding information received from participant surveys was to identify common themes that would help to categorically classify participants (Creswell 244-245). For this project, I recorded the gender and age of each participant. The participants were classified regarding their self-identification about their personal faith, the connection to a local Christian congregation, and the perception of their overall PK experience with regard to its impact on their spiritual development.

Participants' responses were largely subjective in nature. Realizing this, my second level coding of the survey responses required looking for common contributory factors offered in questions thirteen to twenty-nine of the survey. These questions were designed to provide launch points for the open-ended questions of the follow-up interviews.

Handwritten notes were taken during follow-up interviews. Interviews were also recorded on a passcode protected recording device. Both the handwritten notes and voice recordings were transcribed into electronic files. While each participant shared the common identifying factor of being a young adult PK with connections to the IGRC, their individual experiences were unique.

Examining these interview transcriptions provided insight into "shared core experiences from among the divergent individuals being studied, the result of which would provide greater significance" concerning project goals (Stringer 44). Commonalities, related to positive and negative experiences and outcomes, were color

coded in my effort to discern practices and postures that the PK participants perceived as contributors to their present spiritual maturity and local church connection. This process helped provide data analysis for the participating preachers' kids' understanding of their own experiences as well as data for the project's overall goal of identifying best practices for the spiritual care of future PKs growing up within the IGRC.

Review of the Chapter

Chapter 1 helped introduced the importance of attending to the spiritual needs of PKs, while casting a vision for the identification of the best practices in this regard. Chapter 2's review of relevant literature established a number of biblical, theological, and historical considerations for our emphasis on the roles of pastor parent and local congregation in the spiritual upbringing of PKs. Chapter 3 presented the research methodology used to survey and interview young adult preachers' kids from the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church for the project. The chapter offered a description of the ministry context used to select this project's participants, as well as the criteria used for participant selection. The chapter also offered a description of actual project participants and delineation of the procedures for both collecting and analyzing evidence.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

While the United Methodist Church often seeks to keep the evangelistic spirit of its early days alive, much has changed since our clergy rode horseback through the various faith groups within their assigned charges. The example of Methodism's founder and demands of "circuit riding," often forced Methodism's earliest pastors to leave their families for months at a time. While these pastors worked to spread revival throughout America, the presence of their ministerial zeal was too often missing within the lives of their children.

The purpose of this project was to discern best practices for the spiritual upbringing of the Preacher's Kids (PKs). The review of literature for the project detailed the biblical and historical mandate to help instill faith in children, but also noted the twenty-first century challenges facing the church with regard to its ministries to the iY Generation born after 1990. The literature review also noted the unique realities facing preacher's kids and the inherent difficulties facing pastor-parents, local churches and denominational leadership for balancing the needs of the church and the needs of the PK.

The bull's eye in the center of this project's target was the identification of postures, priorities and practices that best promote the spiritual development of preacher's kids whose adult lives are marked by a love for God, God's Church, and all of God's people. Recognizing that the attainment of this goal should not be left to chance, the project sought to discern best practices and identify potential pitfalls to their attainment. In an effort to recognize influential priorities, practices and postures, this

project desired direct input from young adults who had grown up as PKs within the ministerial context of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference (IGRC) of the United Methodist Church. Answers to this project's research questions were found by surveying, and subsequently interviewing, individuals who self-identified as young adult PKs who had grown up within the IGRC. The desired outcome was to understand how these young adults, now removed from the congregations their pastor-parents served, discern their current faith and connectedness with respect to the local church, while also delving into the modeled priorities, practices and postures they perceive have contributed towards their faith development.

Participants

I decided to limit this project's scope to young adult PKs who grew up with parents serving local churches within the IGRC. Having made this decision, I began working with the IGRC staff towards the goal of identifying potential project participants. The Bishop's Assistant and chair of the IGRC Board of Ordained Ministry afforded me the opportunity to speak at the clergy session of annual conference in June 2016. I presented the project's goal and scope to my clergy peers. The announcement specified that I was seeking the names and contact information for the eighteen to thirty-nine year old PKs from among our conference clergy families. I also approached clergy throughout the weekend conference asking them directly if they had young adult PKs who might consider participating in the project. Once identified, I sent a copy of the project's informed consent letter and initial survey questionnaire via email and/or mail to potential participants. Of the more than fifty questionnaires sent out, twenty-nine were returned. I contacted those who indicated they would be willing to participate in a follow-

up interview for in-person or Facetime/Skype interviews and sent the individuals a copy

of the Interview Questions (Appendix E) that they could expect to be asked. Twenty-one

survey responders participated in follow-up interviews. I conducted fifteen of these

interviews in a one-on-one format. I conducted two additional focus group interviews

with three participants in each focus group.

Among my survey responders, there were sixteen females and thirteen males.

Five participants were under the age of twenty. Fourteen were in their twenties and an

additional ten were between thirty to thirty-nine years old. Eight participants self-

identified as bring strong, mature Christians; nine self-identified as growing Christians;

six identified themselves as questioning their Christian faith; five stated that they are

practicing/believing a different faith; and one self-identified as agnostic or atheist. Eight

stated that they are serving in local church leadership while an additional five marked that

they are very active/highly committed to a local church. Five participants marked that

they are somewhat active/marginally connected to a local church, while the final eleven

participants indicated that they are inactive and indifferent towards the local church.

Regarding their self-assessment of the PK experience they had while growing up within

the IGRC's itinerant system, three indicated that they had a significantly positive

experience. Nine indicated that they felt their experience was slightly positive. Nine felt

that their personal experience as a PK had a neutral effect on their faith development,

while eight participants marked that their experiences negatively impacted their faith

development as Christians, either slightly or significantly.

Survey participants made an average of 3.5 geographic moves during their

childhood years. Four participants moved only once between birth and their eighteenth

birthday. Four moved five times. The average worship attendance (at the largest church served by participants' parents during their childhood years) ranged from seventy-five to twelve hundred. Seven participants indicated that they spent the majority of their childhood years in a rural setting; six indicated that they grew up predominantly in suburban settings; four indicated that they grew up in an urban community; and the remaining participants indicated that they moved between urban, suburban and/or rural communities during their childhood.

Four participants noted that both of their parents were pastors. One participant shared that their parents were second generation pastors. One participant's pastor-parent spent several years as a military chaplain before serving fulltime in the IGRC. All but one participant became a PK before the age of nine. Among the project's survey participants, PKs 1-21 also participated in follow-up interviews. PKs 4-8, and PKs 13-21, participated in one-on-one interviews. PKs 1-3 participated in a group interview as did PKs 10-12. Table 4.1 provides a brief snapshot of the project participants.

Table 4.1

Participant Demographics and Initial Classification

	Gender	Age	Self-Description of Faith	Local Church Connection	Description of PK Experience
PK1	Male	39	Strong/Mature Christian	Serving in the Local Church	Significantly Positive
PK2	Female	37	Strong/Mature Christian	Serving in the Local Church	Slightly Positive
PK3	Female	31	Questioning Christian Faith	Inactive/Indifferent towards Church	Neutral
PK4	Male	19	Growing Christian	Somewhat Active/ Marginal Connected	Slightly Positive
PK5	Male	28	Strong/Mature Christian	Serving in the Local Church	Slightly Positive
PK6	Male	28	Strong/Mature Christian	Serving in the Local Church	Slightly Positive
PK7	Female	27	Strong/Mature Christian	Inactive/Indifferent towards local church	Neutral

Table 4.1 (continued)

Participant Demographics and Initial Classification

	Gender	Age	Self-Description of Faith	Local Church Connection	Description of PK Experience
PK8	Female	27	Growing Christian	Very Active in the Local Church	Slightly Positive
PK9	Female	19	Growing Christian	Very Active in the Local Church	Neutral
PK10	Female	18	Growing Christian	Somewhat Active/Marginal Connection	Slightly Positive
PK11	Female	19	Growing Christian	Somewhat Active/Marginal Connection	Significantly Negative
PK12	Female	34	Practices Different Faith	Inactive/Indifferent towards Church	Slightly Negative
PK13	Female	27	Agnostic/Atheist	Inactive/Indifferent towards Church	Significantly Negative
PK14	Male	24	Practices Different Faith	Inactive/Indifferent towards Church	Neutral
PK15	Male	39	Questioning Christian Faith	Inactive/Indifferent towards Church	Neutral
PK16	Male	19	Growing Christian	Somewhat Active/Marginal Connection	Slightly Positive
PK17	Female	29	Practices Different Faith	Inactive/Indifferent towards Church	Significantly Negative
PK18	Male	31	Questioning Christian Faith	Serving in the Local Church	Slightly Negative
PK19	Female	31	Strong/Mature Christian	Serving in the Local Church	Neutral
PK20	Male	25	Questioning Christian Faith	Inactive/Indifferent towards Church	Slightly Negative
PK21	Male	39	Strong/Mature Christian	Serving in the Local Church	Significantly Positive
PK22	Female	20	Questioning Christian Faith	Somewhat Active/Marginal Connected	Neutral
PK23	Female	33	Growing Christian	Very Active in the Local Church	Neutral
PK24	Male	28	Practices Different Faith	Inactive/Indifferent towards local church	Slightly Negative
PK25	Female	35	Questioning Christian Faith	Somewhat Active/Marginal Connected	Neutral
PK26	Female	27	Practices Different Faith	Inactive/Indifferent towards local church	Slightly Negative
PK27	Female	24	Strong/Mature Christian	Serving in the Local Church	Slightly Positive
PK28	Male	31	Growing Christian	Very Active in the Local Church	Significantly Positive
PK29	Male	27	Growing Christian	Inactive/Indifferent towards local church	Slightly Positive

Research Question Findings

The purpose of this project was to discern best practices for the spiritual upbringing of the Preacher's Kids (PKs), while considering the distinctive roles played by pastor-parents, local congregations and denominational leadership in this regard. My hypothesis was that while all PKs are uniquely wired, and gifted with true free will to both make a decision for Jesus Christ as Savior and grow as Christian disciples, each of the three aforementioned entities has the potential to significantly influence such decisions for better or for worse through their demonstrated priorities, practices and postures.

Pastor-parents must find ways to balance the needs of fulfilling their calling to serve the local church with their biblical/historical mandate to nurture their own children towards Christian maturity. Local churches must balance a desire to utilize, or even manipulate, PKs for the sake of congregational health and growth with the need to recognize these same PKs as gifts whom the Lord has called the church to lovingly nurture in Christian discipleship. Likewise, the leadership of a connectional denomination, such as exists within the United Methodist Church, must discern its role in modeling care for the spiritual well-being of its PKs while also offering guidance to both its pastors and local congregations.

Three research questions were identified to help discern the observed priorities, practices and postures of pastor-parents, local congregations (and communities) and denominational leadership. By connecting with a pool of young adult PKs from the IGRC, insight into these influences was uncovered. The project participants had each reached an age where they are free to take genuine ownership of their faith and church

connection. These PKs, each of whom are in college or living on their own, indicated that they now feel free from mandatory church involvement and denominational influence. These individuals also expressed that they are free to live without their daily activities being noticed by the membership of the local congregations where their parents serve. As such, their reflective input helped articulate numerous effective (and ineffective) priorities, postures and practices for today's pastor-parents, local churches and denominational leaders.

Research Question #1

The project's first research question considered the impact pastor-parents have on the faith-development of their children. Survey questions eight to twelve specifically targeted the preacher's kids' thoughts regarding the priorities, practices and postures of their own pastor-parents. Participants were also asked to expand upon the faith development influence of their pastor-parents within follow-up interviews.

Differentiation Between the Pastor and Parent Roles for the Pastor-Parent

Pastoring a local congregation is demanding work with uncertain hours and constant commitments. Parenting also brings a full-time commitment and identity. Question 8 from the survey asked participants to assess how well their pastor-parents were able to distinguish between these two distinct roles. Table 4.2 notes participants' responses concerning their pastor-parent's ability to distinguish between these two distinct roles.

Table 4.2

Pastor-Parent Role Differentiation

Effectively distinguished between pastor and parent roles	11
Sometimes exhibited difficulty distinguishing between roles	12
Consistently exhibited difficulty distinguishing between roles	6

Among the PKs who indicated that their pastor-parent consistently exhibited difficulty distinguishing between roles, five of six also expressed a measure of resentment towards their parents, the local church, and ultimately God. PK12 shared that the communities in which she grew up never let her pastor-parent escape the role of the "perfect Christian role-model." Her pastor-parent ultimately internalized this mindset and further imposed it upon family members. The pastor-parent became obsessed their "standing," not only within the church, but also the community. Everything PK12 did, then, was held to "an impossibly high standard." Teachers, store clerks, coaches and peers were all "on the lookout" for the slightest infraction that they could report back to the pastor-parent. Growing up in smaller, rural communities where she could not escape being known for who her father was ultimately suffocated her faith and made her grow resentful towards the church. While the community placed much of this pressure to "behave like the pastor's daughter" on her, PK12 recognized that, ultimately, stronger role differentiation by her pastor-parent could have alleviated much of this tension.

Conversely, several participants noted their appreciation for pastor-parents who let them be "seekers" and who "let them make mistakes" as any normal teenager would. None of the PKs surveyed recognized their pastor-parents as being perfect in this regard,

but most appreciated the effort made by their pastor-parent to "leave the pastor role at the church" as often as possible. PK8 noted that the key in her family was the pastor-parent's well-communicated recognition that the actions of his children would not be allowed to become markers of his pastoral giftedness (or failure) within the life of the church. Among those who indicated that their pastor-parent "sometimes" exhibited difficulty distinguishing between roles was PK11. PK11 asserted that it was typically when her pastor-parent grew frustrated with a lack of "responsiveness" among church members that the pastor-parent demonstrated a tendency to impress "pastoral leadership" upon family members.

Several participants succinctly stated, "Let your PKs be normal kids." PK9 noted that this was especially true in seasons where they are adjusting to new moves. At times when everything else (church, school, community and people) are new and unfamiliar, these PKs asserted that the parent role of the pastor-parent was needed more than ever because it may be the one visible reality that offered a reminder of Christ's constancy.

Ownership of Faith Development

Survey question nine asked participants to describe the role their pastor-parent took concerning ownership of the PK's faith development. While speaking with several staff pastors from Kwang-Lim Methodist Church in South Korea in 2015, it was clear that many of those pastors felt the local church was to assume primary responsibility for the spiritual development of the pastor's children. The pastor's role was to grow the church, and help establish ministries that would promote both numerical and spiritual growth. In the image of Wesley, ministry was a genuinely "full time calling," demanding commitments to the local church that often exceeded seventy hours per week. At the

same time, these ministries were expected to help nurture the spiritual life of the PK in the pastor-parent's absence. As noted in table 4.3, this project sought to discern if a similar mindset existed among the pastor families participating in my project.

Table 4.3

Ownership of PK's Faith Development Responsibility

Pastor-Parent took primary responsibility for PK faith development	8
Pastor-Parent shared responsibility with local congregation	14
Pastor-Parent sought to lead the church in such a way that church could nurture PK	6
Pastor-Parent sought an intentional mentor to assume PK faith development responsibility	1

Six participants indicated that their pastor-parent sought to lead the church's ministries in such a way that the church would then assume responsibility for shaping the spiritual development of the PK. Of these six, four (PK13, PK17, PK 24 and PK 26) indicated that they are now practicing different faiths. A fourth, PK11, wrote in her response to the survey that while her church family included members who tried to encourage her spiritual development, most did not show that they were living out their faith through their own actions. Subsequently, she learned to "rely on herself and my family to fully develop spiritually," indicating that her pastor-parent did play an active role in her being able to now identify as a growing Christian (who is only marginally connected to a local church but is also very active in a faith community through her Christian university).

The sole PK to indicate that her pastor-parent sought an intentional mentor to assume exclusive responsibility for shaping her faith development (PK7) self-identified as a strong Christian who is serving as a camping ministry intern for the United Methodist denomination. In her follow-up interview, PK7 shared that her pastor-parent *did* have a strong personal role in her faith development, but that her survey answer was meant to communicate that her parents were quite intentional about finding mentors for her. Several of these mentors came in the form of summer camp counselors, one of whom she was interning with at the time of her survey response.

The two PKs whose parents served the largest congregations among those participating in the study both indicated that their parents took primary, near exclusive, responsibility for their children's faith development. PK16 indicated that his pastor-parent simply would not trust the spiritual nurture of his own children to anyone but himself. PK10 added that while their church had a large staff, including several paid staff members on the congregational youth ministry team. There was, however, insufficient evidence that the congregational youth ministry was fostering an environment that promoted ample spiritual depth for her pastor-parent to entrust his child to its discipleship care. PK10 also indicated that her pastor-parent did not have any relationships within the church that he trusted to assume this role.

PK6 was among the participants who also indicated that his pastor-parent assumed primary, almost exclusive, responsibility for his faith development. This provided a "sound structural influence" throughout the PK's youth, but when this teenager went to college, it brought the realization that "I have no other role models to compare what living out my faith should look like in the real world." This PK, much like

PK 23, had difficulty knowing whom to turn to for advice when making "tough but normal college life decisions," and expressed a desire to have more shared responsibility for faith development as an early teenager.

Other project participants who noted that their pastor-parents took an active, albeit shared, role in their spiritual development stressed the positive aspects of this reality. Several observed that the Christians who belonged to their local churches did not always "act accordingly." The presence of such negative influences greatly impacted those PKs without non-family spiritual mentors. Those PKs who did enjoy having intentional, loving mentors, however, were able to recognize "difficult people" as part of the church's mission field while also being able to experience greater influence from positive, Christ-like role models.

Perception of Priority Concerning Heart and Behavior

Participants were also asked to consider the posture of their pastor-parents' faith development priorities. Survey question ten asked PKs to describe whether their pastor-parent was perceived to have been more focused on the condition of their heart and relationship with Jesus, the PKs outward behavior, or a combination of the two. Participants' responses to this question are recorded in table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Perception of Pastor-Parent's Priorities Concerning Faith Development

Clear focus on heart/relationship with Jesus	9
Primary focus on heart/behavioral expectations communicated as marker of faith	10
Primary focus on heart/behavior communicated as an expectation of being part of "pastor's family"	6
Primary focus on behavior	2
Singular focus on behavior	2

Of the ten participants who indicated that their pastor-parent was either singularly focused on behavior or where behavior "as part of the pastor's family" was a dominant theme, five indicated that they either self-identify as Atheist or as currently practicing a faith other than Christianity (nearly twenty percent of the project's such respondents). Conversely, among those indicating that their "heart condition" was the clear or primary focus of their pastor-parent, only seven percent described themselves as a disconnected Christian or as practicing a different faith.

PK8 gave her pastor-parent credit for not only treating her as a "normal kid" at home, but also for communicating this reality to the local churches he served. Her pastor-parent established a clear line of demarcation between his service to the church and what that meant for "behavioral expectations" for family members. Few PKs within the project were able to share that their parents led with such grace and boldness, but PK8 clearly appreciated the freedom this afforded her to "be herself."

As noted earlier, however, other PKs felt that their pastor-parents were far too concerned with the family's standing within the church and community. The PKs of these

pastor-parents indicated that their home environment was marked by fear. PK13 specifically noted, that she was constantly afraid of doing anything that could "jeopardize our family's standing" in the church or community.

PK13 was one of only two respondents to indicate that her pastor-parent was solely concerned with her outward behavior. This was the same PK participant who indicated that her pastor-parent assumed no personal responsibility for her faith development, instead affording her the opportunity to explore Christianity alongside other religions on her own and under the guidance of other mentors. PK13 now practices a different faith, but has considered rejoining a local church because she wants her own children to experience "the sense of community and moral upbringing" she enjoyed as a child.

Perception of Consistency Concerning Grace and Judgment

This project's literature review noted the importance of authenticity in the faith development of youth and children. I, as the researcher, hypothesized that such authenticity is of critical importance to the PK who not only observes their pastor-parent's church leadership on a regular basis, but who also observes the ways their pastor-parent's faith is expressed in the privacy of home. As such, survey question eleven sought to discern the consistency with which the participants' pastor-parents balanced "grace" and "judgment" both at church and at home. Table 4.5 notes participants' responses to this question.

Table 4.5

Perception of Pastor-Parent's Consistency When Modeling Grace and Judgment

Preached grace at church/modeled judgment at home	5
Preached and practiced grace	6
Preached and practiced a balance of grace and judgment	17
Preached judgment at church/practiced grace at home	0
Preached and practiced judgment	1

Each of the five PKs who indicated that grace was preached at church, while judgment was modeled at home also indicated that their behavior was judged by a higher standard because of their place in the pastor's family. Of these individuals, however, two (PK6 and PK27) identify themselves as a strong, mature Christians while PKs 13, 24 and 26 self-identified as practicing different faiths/atheist. Among the six participants who previously indicated that they felt behavior as part of the pastor's family was a dominant emphasis, five (PKs 5, 12, 15, 23 and 28) responded that they felt both church and home were marked by a balance of grace and judgment.

Communicating Stress as a Posture of Pastor-Parent Leadership

Survey question twelve sought to identify how participating PKs assessed their pastor-parent's ability to communicate the stresses of serving the local church to the family. The project's literature review noted that many children will assess the level of satisfaction their parents feel within their chosen career based upon the amount of stress the job brings to the home environment. Many children will be drawn to, or repelled from, the careers of their parents based upon the perception of the career's stressfulness. I

hypothesized that workplace stress among pastor-parents had the potential to influence

not only their PK's career choices (especially regarding a potential response to a call to

ministry) but also the likelihood of connecting and serving with the local church in

adulthood. Table 4.6 presents the participants' responses to the survey question twelve's

inquiry into the pastor-parent's communicative habits regarding workplace stresses.

Table 4.6

Perception of Pastor-Parent's Communication of Work Stress

Pastor-Parent shielded PK from church stresses	3
Pastor-Parent exhibited stress, but never communicated specifics. Communicated that only Jesus' vision for the Church is perfect.	6
Pastor-Parent communicated specific stresses but shared the purpose of his/her calling and leadership as a response to stress	11
Pastor-Parent communicated specific stresses in a manner that created tension at home	5
Pastor-Parent communicated specific stresses that created resentment towards the church	4

Several PKs who felt that their pastor-parent effectively communicated workplace

stress indicated that their parents were able to articulate the leadership needed within the

particular church appointment, and/or even the specific season facing a congregation. For

these PKs, the pastor-parent's ability to share that "this church really needs me to be their

chaplain and that is going to necessitate a season where there are lots of meetings," or

"this congregation is in a season where the really need my leadership to challenge them

in a way that brings some negative push-back" helped make stressful moves and seasons

of ministry more manageable.

Several of the project participants shared that stress was clearly evident within their pastor-parent's ministry. PK17 shared that her childhood experiences were marked by such dysfunction within the churches her pastor-parent served that the family could not help but own the stress it caused. Her pastor-parent took responsibility for every church problem and the church, in turn, ascribed blame to the pastor-parent (and family) for every problem within the life of the congregation. The weight of these impossible demands, real or self-imposed, led her away from Christ and the Church.

In the midst of a stress-filled appointment, however, PK6 was able to tell his pastor-parent, "I know that it's not your church and you are not responsible for keeping it alive. You're just here to serve Jesus, by serving the church, as best you can." This acknowledgment helped ease tension that the church realities threatened to interject into the home and helped all members of this family maintain a love for the Church, even when they had issues with the local congregation. This ministry family made a pact to work towards avoiding naming specific "negative influences" within the congregation, while consciously celebrating "positive influencers" from within the church on a regular basis.

All but one of the PKs included in this project noted that they have found or are looking for a god to serve. Each also described in concrete terms the significance of their pastor-parent role models in this pursuit. As PK18 put it, "I [have become] who I am, a Christian serving in the local church, because of the heartfelt sincerity of [my pastor-parent's] faith." While by no means guaranteeing spiritual maturity, the demonstrated priorities, practices and postures of the pastor-parent, as perceived by the participating PKs, had a significant impact on the faith-development of the pastor's children.

Research Question #2

This project also sought to discern how the priorities, postures and practices of the local church serve as an influence on the spiritual development of the PK. Research Question #2 considered both the formalized ministries and informal attitudes within the congregations and communities served by participant's pastor-parents. Survey questions four to seventeen, fifteen to eighteen and twenty-eight specifically targeted the preacher's kids' thoughts regarding the priorities, postures and practices of the local churches that were most influential on their spiritual development. I asked participants to expand upon the faith development influence of these local churches and communities during follow-up interviews.

Nurturing Posture of the Local Church

Table 4.7 presents the participant's responses to survey question four. This question sought to discern the PK's perception of the local church's attitude towards assuming a nurturing posture for the PK. This project recognized that all children need nurturing if their faith is to grow into maturity. While the role of the pastor-parent has already been examined, this question sought to uncover whether or not the local church naturally assumed a nurturing mindset with regard to its PKs.

Table 4.7

The PK's Perception of the Nurturing Posture of the Local Church

PK was a cherished resource to be nurtured by the local church	5
Local church nurturing of PK was similar to what other kids experienced	10
Church demonstrated indifference to nurture of the PK	4
Local church assumed that PK was being nurtured by pastor-parent(s)	6
Local church assumed that PK "had everything figured out" spiritually	4

Fifteen of the twenty-nine project participants indicated that the local churches

they were a part of were clear in their efforts to posture themselves as a nurturing

influence upon the PK's faith. Among these fifteen individuals, eleven listed "being part

of the church" among the entities that had the most significant positive influence on their

faith development. PK4 noted that just believing his childhood church embraced

"knowing me, loving me, and demonstrating pride in me" was enough for him to

understand that they recognized the importance of their nurturing posture. PK2 indicated

that it was the willingness of adults within the local church to "be caught acting like

Christians" that represented the strongest model of their informal, yet significant,

nurturing presence.

PK12, who identifies herself as a non-Christian, noted that within the past year

she has considered reconnecting with a local church because she misses the shared

experiences of a faith community. When asked if she was open to such a connection

opening the door to the Christian faith, PK12 said she was open to this possibility, but she was far more interested in "just being part of a nurturing community once again."

There was, however, little correlation between the absence of a nurturing posture and the PK's self-articulation of Christian faith. Among the fourteen participants who indicated that the church did not have a nurturing posture in their spiritual upbringing, nine self-identify as being a strong or growing Christian while only five identified themselves as questioning the Christian faith or non-Christians. Only four of these fourteen "not nurtured spiritually by the local church" individuals, however, are presently active within the life of a local Christian church. In other words, while church was an integral part of these PK's childhoods, five (fifty percent) indicated that they are still Christians, but no longer attend church. PK10 spoke to this reality, noting that, "I found too many superficial Christians in the church, and did not really feel that it was helping me grow spiritually. I now go to a Christian college where I have a group of friends who really take their faith seriously. We are helping each other grow spiritually. We pray. We study the Bible. We do missions work. I don't really feel like I need the church right now." PK7 added that, "The church seemed more preoccupied with bureaucracy than my spiritual health, so I have little use for the local church anymore."

Nurturing Practices of the Local Church

Seeking to discern the PKs experiences with regard to the nurturing practices of the local church, survey question five asked participants to assess the influence of formal age-specific ministries like "Sunday Bible studies" and "youth group" on their faith development (see table 4.8). Participants were then invited to offer specific examples of both positive and negative church practices, as well as practices supported but not

directly led by the local church (including summer camp and mission trips), in survey questions 15 and 16.

Table 4.8

PK's Perception of the Nurturing Practices within the Local Church

The local church's ministries had a strong, positive influence on my faith development	11
Somewhat positive influence	8
No perceivable or marked influence	4
Somewhat negative influence	3
Significant, negative influence	3

Despite experiencing distinctive circumstances, varying geographic locations and different congregational membership sizes, the local church had a predominantly positive affect on virtually all PKs who participated in the project. Of the ten participants who indicated that the formal ministry practices of the local church had no or a negative influence on their spiritual maturity, six indicated that they are mature or growing Christians. Five of these individuals (PKs 7, 10, 23, 28 and 29) also indicated that their pastor-parent had assumed almost exclusionary leadership in their faith development.

PK10 indicated that a move before she started high school brought the family into a setting where the pastor-parent did not know, or adequately trust, the youth ministry leadership of the congregation enough to allow activities like attending the church's youth group to become PK10's primary spiritual formational practices. PK10's pastor-parent had hand selected and groomed the youth ministry leaders at their previous church, so he knew their vision (and the realities of their own walk with Jesus). PK10 affirmed

that the leadership of church activities were not "up to the standards" that either she or her parents had set for themselves. PK7 also found the activities provided by the local church to be too shallow to meet her standard of discipleship formation, and determined that "personal devotions" with family support were far more influential than church activities. PK7 identifies herself as a strong Christian who is inactive/indifferent towards the local church.

In survey question sixteen, participants were invited to list the most influential practices of spiritual development in their lives. Worship, prayer and youth group were most commonly listed, and all participants who listed these activities noted that they experienced these practices within the context of the local church. Ten participants indicated that they also participated in Christian connection groups outside their local church (Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Youth for Christ, attending another church's youth group). Two of these ten PKs indicated that they found these other groups to be "too superficial," and noted that they had no significant positive influence on their faith. Five of other eight respondents indicated that these "outside the walls of my pastor-parent's church" connections were intentionally chosen as an alternative or supplement context where the focus was "deeper" or more "intentional" than in the local church's ministries. These PKs indicated that the involvement in these outside the church activities for their significantly positive for their spiritual development. All ten of these individuals lived in urban or suburban settings, which they indicated made finding such connections more readily available than may have been possible in more rural settings. PK19 recalled that she went to a large, community-based youth group where eight PKs regularly attended. This provided an arena for her to regularly connect with other teens "who

understood what her life was like." Several participants noted that their teen years were spent in rural communities where such opportunities were not readily available.

None of the participants specifically indicated that they sought weekly or monthly faith connections outside-the-church with a specific goal of finding a setting where their pastor-parent was not the primary organizational leader. Seventeen participants, however, noted that summer camp filled this need. PK4 noted that, "Church camp was the one place I could talk freely about my faith and ask questions without the stigma of PK expectations…or without fear that the leader was going to report back to my parents." PK5, PK9, PK10 mentioned going to regional and even national youth gatherings, where they were able to connect with large numbers of other PKs. PKs 7 and 21 both noted that the PK friends they made as young children attending the "daycare" at annual conference later became their "every summer camp friends." PK7 stated that these relational connections were of "critical importance in my faith journey, especially after moves when I felt like I was losing all of my other friends." Fifteen of the twenty-nine participants indicated that attending summer camp, which most recognized as an extension ministry of the local church, was the single most positive influence on their spiritual development.

Nurturing Priorities of the Local Church

Survey question six sought to ascertain the nurturing priorities of the local churches in which the participating PKs grew up. I asked the PKs to consider whether the felt the local church leaders were more concerned with their heart condition or their outward behavior. Without offering specifics to consider, this question invited participants to recall church encounters that would reveal underlying priorities. Table 4.9

introduces the responses to this survey question. Survey questions thirteen and fourteen, and follow-up interviews, then gave participants an opportunity to offer specifics regarding the factors that led them to articulate their answer to question six.

Table 4.9

The PKs Perception of the Nurturing Priorities within the Local Church

The condition of the PK's heart was perceived as nurturing priority of the local church	5
Heart condition was primary focus; behavior also considered a priority of the local church	9
Neither heart nor behavior was a priority for the local church	2
Behavior was primary focus; emphasis that behavior should be influenced by heart was also a priority of the local church	6
The PK's behavior was perceived as nurturing priority of the local church	7

Responses to this survey question were evenly split. PK2 indicated that, "Having an opportunity to watch adults in the church who were an example of personal faith and who invested in my heart, encouraging me to live with Jesus," represented the single most significant positive influence on her own faith. PK2 is now a pastor in the United Methodist Church. PK18 also perceived that the condition of his heart and relationship with Christ were his church's top priority. He experienced this most clearly when his parents divorced and multiple members of the congregation stepped into caring, non-judgmental roles that greatly supported PK18 and his siblings. PK18 also serves in ministry leadership of a local congregation.

Seven participants indicated that they felt their behavior was the sole nurturing priority of the local church. Six of these individuals are no longer connected to a local

church. PK5, the only such respondent still actively connected to a local congregation noted that he was able to handle this scrutiny because, "I am pretty thick skinned, and was predisposed to fit into a 'good kid' stereotype. My younger siblings, however, resented this scrutiny and don't really want to be a part of a church anymore now that they're adults."

Several project participants noted that first impressions represented very significant indicators of the local church's nurturing priorities. PK11 commented that, "During our last move, our entire family was asked to come to the introduction with the church leaders. I remember having just received what I felt was devastating news: we would be moving before my senior year, and what a terrible car ride it was. When we arrived at the new church, my parents went into a room to meet the leaders, while my siblings and I sat in the lobby for more than an hour. I never felt less welcomed in my entire life."

While several participating PKs referenced childhood "take in" meetings, where they often "sat in a lobby for an hour while the adults talked," as among their worst life experiences, PK21 recalled the tremendous positive experience from a childhood take in experience. He remembers being invited into the "big people meeting" where he was greeted with small gifts (that church members no doubt scrambled to find as soon as they saw children approaching the building) and personal stories about the new church's children's ministries. Weeks later, as the reality of a move set in, PK21 still felt enthusiastic about the big move and found himself looking forward to the next time he would see his new adult friends.

PK7 observed that their local church orchestrated numerous gatherings for members to meet her pastor-parent and mother, but planned nothing to help the PKs connect with others in the church or community. "I felt like they only planned things to meet with my parents, because they only cared about what they had to offer to the church." PK7 did not feel like her heart or spiritual needs were a priority to these new church members.

Conversely, PK11 noted that before a previous move, members of the new church took time to ask intentional questions about the PK's hobbies and interests. Youth with similar interests began writing letters to the PK11's family and several activities were planned solely for relationship building soon after their move day. This gave her a clear presumption of the church's nurturing priorities even before they moved to the new community. PK8 also shared having experienced a church move where lots of activities were planned and what a significant difference that made to her. "Those activities made us feel incredibly special. I knew right away that how I felt was going to be important to these church members." Several participants noted the positive significance of something as simple as having what would become their bedroom in the church parsonage painted their chosen color before their arrival.

PK6 said that his church's commitment to honor the pastor-parent's need for sabbath demonstrated their focus on having the right priorities. This was especially true in the first weeks of a new appointment. PK6 went on to note that it would have been easy for his pastor-parent to over schedule meetings in an effort to "get off to a good start," but added that those first few weeks in a new community were when PK6 needed his pastor-parent's presence the most. The leaders of the new church recognized this and

intentionally encouraged his pastor-parent to put family first. This carried over into the life of the appointment and PK6 was able to handle both interruptions to family events and "behavioral demands" because he also knew that the members were most concerned about the family and the heart condition of its members.

Little things also made strong impressions on the participating PKs. Several PKs identified concerns with time boundaries as a "little thing" that negatively influenced their nurturing priorities. PK19 noted that most church members seemed to acknowledge the pastor's need for "boundaries" but too many members also acted in a contrary manner, "believing that they were just the exception" when they approached the pastor with a "special but not critical need" at an inconvenient time. These exceptions too often became the norm.

Likewise, when the church she was moving to communicated an expectation that she should "probably wear a dress to church," PK10 received this suggestion as a sign that their nurturing priorities would focus on "little behavior things" and not her heart. "I had to go buy dresses because that was what this church expected of the pastor's daughter…but I had never been a part of a 'you wear a dress to church kind of church' before," she lamented. Of course, PK10 later observed that the church's "you should wear a dress" expectation had apparently not been expressed to the other teenage girls in the congregation. This small expectation, and the discrepancy between the apparent expectations for her as the pastor's daughter and all other girls, further enforced her immediate presumption that the church's priority was going to focus more on her behavior than her faith. PK3 added, "I still love Jesus, but I saw too many hateful people

in the church, people only seemed concerned with nitpicking every little thing I did, to want to be a part of (a local church) anymore."

Behavioral Expectations Placed on PKs by the Local Church

This project's literature review included several references to the "fishbowl" syndrome ministry families are allegedly subjected to. Many authors noted a tendency to hold members of the ministry family to higher standards of behavior than other "normal" Christians. Survey question seven asked if participating PKs felt that expectations regarding their behavior were held to a higher standard than others within the church (see table 4.10). Survey question twenty-eight also invited participants to share how their PK identity affected their community peers' treatment of them.

Table 4.10

Perception of the Behavioral Expectations Placed on PK by the Local Church

PK was treated like a "normal kid"	9
PK's behavior was expected to serve as an example that other kids should also strive for	8
PK's behavior was held to a higher standard than other kids	12

Less than half of the participants indicated that they actually felt their behavior was held to a higher standard than their peers. Among the twelve PKs who did share this belief, however, the impact was significantly negative. PK13 identified "people who only did 'good deeds' hoping to earn their way to heaven while also only judging me based solely on my actions" as the single greatest factor leading her become an Atheist.

Moving to new churches had a significant impact on PK perceptions. PK10 expressed that she felt like a "normal kid" until the family moved. She considered

members of the church that helped nurture her from birth through fifth grade to be her aunts, uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers. These members always treated her like part of their family. The church she moved to before high school ascribed a set of "expectations" on her that made her feel like an outsider and a resource that needed to conform to the image of the church. It was not a case of the new church filled with more judgmental people. Rather, members of the old church who had known the PK her entire life knew her as a real person and were familiar with her unique quirks and personalities. The new church "welcomed her" with a set of general expectations without really taking time to get to know her.

Others, like PK11 and PK20 noted that classmates often made fun of them and/or simply would not act "normal" around them simply because of their "pastor's kid" status. "Other kids," PK11 said, went out of their way to "push her buttons" to see if they could offend her or cause her to respond in an "un-Christian way." PK5 also said that finding real friends was difficult, especially for years after moves, because everyone labeled him as a "goody PK" while trying to get him to act badly. PK4 also indicated that, for him, the most difficult part of being a PK was having peers define his behavior based upon his place in a pastor's family. This made him want to rebel, just to prove them wrong. PK12 indicated that the PK label was so strong teachers expected her to get straight A's in school, just because "pastor's kids are supposed to be near perfect." PK8 says that every time she moved peers kept her at arms' length, fearing that "the PK is going to judge us just like all the other Christians."

PK6, conversely, wrote that his peers prejudged him as a "trouble-maker" because of their PK biases. It took him years to overcome these prejudices with a personal

determination to act the roll of the "goody-2-shoe." PK17 was "constantly told that all

PKs are wild…and that she would "probably have 900 tattoos and piercings before she

was out of high school." Some peers greeted her with the opposite stereotype: "a paragon

of virtue," but no one ever believed that she could just be a normal kid. Several other PKs

noted that after a move to a new church it took years to overcome these prejudices. Five

participating PKs indicated that prejudice from community and church members or being

held to a higher standard than others were at the top of their list of negative influences on

their faith development. PK13 noted that was particularly true for her as she was

simultaneously witnessing "cruelty, mean-spiritedness, or otherwise un-Christ-like

behavior" among peers and adults within the congregation.

In addition to having their conduct held to a higher standard, several PKs shared

that they were expected to be Bible scholars at early ages. "I was expected to articulate

my faith better than others, even adults in my church," wrote PK5. PK10 also shared that

"I was always supposed to know all the Bible answers." PK 22 shared that one of her

siblings had a terrific gift for memorizing Bible facts. This was great during youth group

Bible studies, until the family's younger siblings were also expected to demonstrate this

amazingly strong Bible knowledge and were judged negatively when they "didn't meet

expectations."

PK1, whose parents were both pastors, observed that some of the churches his

parents were appointed to had not received younger kids as part of the ministry family for

decades. These churches often had no idea how to treat him and there was no one to ask

questions about family life in the church or community. PK1 was grateful that having

pastor-parents serving different congregations afforded him the opportunity to "pick-and-

choose" which congregations he wanted to most strongly connect with. This determination was based, according to PK1, upon which congregation he thought was most likely to treat him as a normal kid.

PKs are "part of the package" when a pastor moves to a new local church. The PKs in this project all became integral parts of the congregational ministries where their pastor-parent served and each articulated strong feelings about the impact the churches of their childhood had on their faith. Twenty-eight of the twenty-nine participants articulated both positive and negative influences from their local church and community experiences. Some of these influences came through involvement in formal practices or activities. Others were more influenced by attitudinal postures and priorities.

Research Question #3

This project also strove to discern how the priorities, postures and practices of denominational leadership might serve as an influence on the spiritual development of the PK. Research Question #3 offered participants the opportunity to both reflect on past experiences and offer suggestions related to the impact of appointment-making on the PK's spiritual development. For this project, the cabinet leadership of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference represented this denominational leadership body because of its dual roles of "shepherd" and "appointment-maker" for the United Methodist pastor-parents whose children participated in the research. Survey questions three and twenty to twenty-two specifically targeted the preacher's kids' thoughts regarding their perception of the priorities, postures and practices of annual conference leadership that had the potential to impact the spiritual development of PKs. Participants were also asked to expand upon the

faith development influence of conference leadership and the United Methodist Church's

itinerant system within follow-up interviews.

The United Methodist Itinerant System and its Perceived Effect on PKs

The survey asked participants to indicate their perception of the United Methodist

Church's itinerant/appointment-based system on their overall spiritual development.

Table 4.11 presents the participants' responses to this question.

Table 4.11

**General Perception of the United Methodist Church Connectional/Itinerant
System's Effect on Spiritual Development**

Significantly Positive	1
Slightly Positive	10
Neutral	9
Slightly Negative	6
Significantly Negative	3

Perceived Positives of our Itinerant/Connectional System for PKs

PK8 and PK9 both noted that their local churches and nearby retreat centers often

hosted missionaries or guest speakers. Both shared that their "status" within the host

church's pastor's family afforded them significantly greater contact with these

individuals than a "normal kid" would enjoy. PK8 mentioned the positive affect that

having missionaries stay in her home had on her faith and world-view.

PK8 felt that by being a pastor's kid within the United Methodist connection

helped make her significantly more aware of things like the Wesley Foundation on her

college campus. She remembered other high school friends struggling to make a faith

connection in college, but she already knew the campus ministry director on her campus

from conference gatherings and was able to quickly plug into this faith community very shortly after moving away from home for the first time. PK5, PK9 and PK11 each attended national youth gatherings, two sharing that they received financial assistance from the annual conference, and recognized that they may not have even heard about these opportunities had they not been part of a pastor's family. PK7 credits her connections with friends of her pastor-parent with helping her get a summer internship where she serves as part of the conference camping team. PK5 also felt that his frequent moves helped him grow more adaptable and forced him to look for new opportunities with each new church, school and community. This, he felt, was a very good thing. PKs 11, 16 and 21 believe that their PK status likely contributed to their receipt of college scholarships through the United Methodist Church.

Perceived Negatives of our Itinerant/Connectional System for PKs

Twenty-seven of the twenty-nine PK participants in this project intentionally shared that moving was a perceived negative of the United Methodist Church's itinerant system. Their negative responses were communicated differently, but several common themes were identified. Moving to "dissimilar communities," the communication of moves, and moving during teenage years represented the three most common frustrations among participants.

Dissimilarity of Communities

Several PKs articulated the perception that reappointment moves often brought the feeling that the conference leadership failed to understand that they were appointing whole families to new churches. "It never seemed like our gifts or interest or

church/community involvement was being taken into consideration," according to PK7,
"The bishop was nothing more than a boogie man, or woman, to me."

Several PKs noted specifics that instilled frustration, inhibiting their ability to
love "the system." PK10 and PK16 were the only participants who indicated they had
attended private Christian school growing up. Both experienced high school moves to
communities that did not have a viable Christian school options. Each ended up going to
public high schools. Both shared that this was a disappointing aspect of their moves; one
that inhibited their faith development. PK11 had to give up cello lessons because the
school she moved to in middle school did not have an orchestra, or anyone to offer
private lessons within an hour radius.

PK12 shared that her just-before-high-school move was to a much larger church
than she was used to. She was initially quite excited about this move, and the larger youth
group and bigger community that would accompany it, but it was "immediately clear"
that she would not be a "good fit" in any of these settings. She stated that even a one-day
visit to the church or school before the move was determined would have revealed this
fact. PK9 on the other hand, moved to a much smaller community while in high school
and said that the new community immediately communicated a bias against "big city
folk." PK9 never felt at home in this new move, and was grateful when she was able to
leave home to attend college back in another larger community.

Interviews with the participant PKs revealed a distinction between smaller
communities and more urban areas. PK13 recalled that before the first semester in a new
suburban church had ended, two "even newer" students had joined her class. Conversely,
PK4 remembers his small town soccer coach telling his players, "These are the boys you

will be playing alongside for the rest of your life. Hopefully, you will love the game and will all be playing together in high school and most of you will one day have kids playing on this team, too." PK4, at the age of 8, remembers realizing that this would not be true for him. Every one of the boys on his team still lived in the same town until PK4's family moved just before he started high school. The move was to a community that did not have a school soccer team.

Communication of Moves

Seven participating PKs specifically mentioned their wish that there was a way to facilitate more dialogue between conference leadership and the entire ministry family. PK7 noted that the district superintendent would meet with her pastor-parent once or twice a year and remembered that her parents attended a few pastor's gatherings, but she never met the district superintendent unless they were "greeting me" as part of a new move. PK9 did recall having such a connection, noting as a strong positive that her district superintendent came to dinner at her family's house while she was a high school junior, personally assuring her that she would try not to move this PK before she graduated from high school. This, however, was the only PK to specifically mention having met her district superintendent outside of a moving situation. Within the same focus group interview, PK11 noted that her pastor-parent had also been told by their district superintendent that they would not even consider moving the family before her senior year of high school. Less than three months later the family received news that they would be moving. PK11 mentioned that she actually wrote her conference bishop to express her disappointment with the appointment-making process and the decision that would necessitate her family moving before her senior year. In response, the bishop sent

her a photocopy of the Book of Discipline and wrote, "Your parents should have explained the itineracy to you better."

PK10 remembers the day her pastor-parent was mysteriously summoned to the conference offices in Springfield. She immediately suspected that it might be related to a move, but her parents assured that she had "nothing to worry about." Two weeks later her parents shared the news, saying that they had to promise not to share their knowledge of the move before it "became official" for fear of having the news leak before a proper announcement was made. PK12 also found out that her family was moving the day before it was announced to the congregation in worship. She had no time to process this huge change. Both of these PKs expressed feelings of resentment towards their families and the conference leadership regarding this communication policy.

Moving During One's Teenage Years

Nearly all participants mentioned their frustration with moves that occurred during their high school years. In fact, every participant who did move as a teenager mentioned this fact as one of the top "negative influences on their faith development." PK12 went so far as to suggest that only pastor's with really young children or no kids at home should even be considered for moves if the pastor-parent and current church are not looking for a change. PK9, however, spoke to this point when she noted that, "This is part of what our parents signed up for. My parents took the effort to teach me about the history of the United Methodist Church and why it has a system for moving pastors like it does. This did not make it much easier when I was getting news of our moves, but it did help me understand things better."

Returning to the "dissimilar kinds of community" discussion, PK4 stated, "The early teen years are immensely formational; you become who you are going to be while in middle school. Moving to a new community for high school where that identity may not fit can be disastrous." PK4 mused that moving from a suburban to suburban, urban to urban, or rural to rural community might help, but moving between divergent contexts was very difficult. PK10, however, felt that even moving between settings that appeared quite similar left her feeling like she was in a different world.

PK1, PK2 and PK5 all felt called to ministry before turning eighteen years old. All three "ran from this calling," sighting their history with the itinerancy and an "aversion to frequent moving" as major factors in their reluctance to follow in their pastor-parent's footsteps. Once they determined to answer the call, two sought "deacons' orders" within the United Methodist Church in an effort to avoid itinerating and the third began exploring ministry options in other, non-appointment-based denominations. It took several years of prayer, but all three are now serving as UMC elders.

Ultimately, while all but two of the twenty-nine project participants shared some level of frustration with the United Methodist itinerant system, noting that to at least some degree it had a negative effect on their spiritual development, these young adults now enjoy a statistically solid connection to the denomination. A total of four of the twenty-nine project participants are presently serving as clergy within the United Methodist Church (PK21 experienced his calling while in college). One other participant is serving as a fulltime staff member for a United Methodist congregation. Six additional participants specifically stated that their local church affiliation is with a United Methodist Church and three are college-aged students who have chosen to attend

Christian universities that are grounded in a Wesleyan tradition. Many of these individuals noted that their upbringing as PKs helped them understand the complexity of life within the church, and thus prepared them to better serve the local church as adults, whether as clergy/staff or lay members.

Despite the frustrations and heartaches these individuals each voiced, the influence of the United Methodist Church has been sufficiently positive to have them presently connected to the faith tradition of their roots. That said, the observations and recommendations of this participant pool are noteworthy. Moreover, the "loss" of the other fifteen (more than half) of my project participants must be considered troublesome and even heartbreaking.

Summary of Major Findings

Analyzing the data received through participant surveys and interviews clearly reveals that pastor-parents, local church membership and conference leadership each represent significant influencers on the faith development of today's PKs. The project findings also clearly show that none of these key influencers operate independently from one another. Intentionality and sound communication among the three are instrumental as part of a properly ordered system of priorities, practices and postures intended to help foster a love of God, love of neighbor, and love of the local church set forth as this project's goal. To that end, the project's research uncovered the following five major findings that warrant further exploration.

1.   Pastor-parents represent the most constant ambassador for Christ in the lives of their PKs. Amidst constant changes, and difficult faith journey experiences, the postures, practices and priorities of the pastor-parent are significantly influential on the

PK's spiritual development. The pastor-parent's ability to assume the *parenting role* within this dynamic is especially critical.

2.   Both PKs and the local churches experience life in a fishbowl. Too often, the waters of these two fishbowls fail to mix. From their first interaction with a local congregation, the PK has a perspective that allows them to observe the postures, practices and priorities of the local church in far greater depth than most members. Many PKs felt judged by their local church membership. These same PKs also judged the local church, and by extension the Church universal, based upon their fishbowl observations of the congregations in which their families served. Care of the ministry family was especially influential upon the PK's perceptions and subsequent spiritual development.

3.   Conference leadership, except within its role as the appointment-making body of the United Methodist Church, is the most unnoticed of the three major faith influencers studied within this project's research. At the same time, PKs clearly and powerfully articulated their *perception* of the leadership postures, practices and priorities of conference leadership, and the resulting impact conference decision-making had upon their spiritual development.

4.   A relational model of collaboration and education between pastor-parents, local congregations and denominational leaders can help offer the presence of postures, practices and priorities best suited for spiritual nurture in the Christian faith for PKs. Working together, these three entities can facilitate an environment that stimulates Christian formation. At the same time, overwhelming negative experiences from any of these entities can dramatically inhibit faith development.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Exploring the postures, practices, and priorities that best facilitate an environment conducive to helping Pastor's Kids (PKs), especially those living within an itinerant system, grow towards mature Christian spiritual maturity represented this project's desired goal. Such postures, practices, and priorities have been ascertained through surveying and interviewing twenty-nine young adult PKs who grew up within the itinerant system of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference (IGRC) of the United Methodist Church. The *Shema* from Deuteronomy 6 offered our scriptural reminder of the importance of impressing God's story upon the hearts of children and youth. The literature review also documented many of the historical and contemporary challenges that threaten to impede such efforts.

Today's United Methodist clergy still serve within an itinerant system that brings the reality of unplanned moves to local congregations throughout one's chosen annual conference circuit. Although the days of riding horseback from church to church are a distant memory, many of today's clergy still ride between multiple congregations within multi-point charges and multi-campus ministries. Housing provided for pastors within the context of their ministerial service represents a daily landing spot for virtually all clergy. Pastors are expected to provide care and leadership to their own families as the model of Christian parenting and the pastor's family is typically expected to become an active presence within the local church to which the pastor-parent is appointed. Most local churches understand their need to assume a measure of responsibility for the spiritual

care of the pastor's family, even as they also formulate expectations of the pastor's

family. The annual conference within which a pastor serves is charged with considering

the unique needs and stages of life of the ministerial family within the training it provides

and its work of discerning clergy appointments. The project's goal is to understand what

postures, practices, and priorities demonstrated by these three influencers most

significantly affected the spiritual development of the project's participants. There are

four major findings from this research project.

Major Findings

The Parenting Role of Pastor-Parents is Critically Important to PK's Faith Development

Pastor-parents represent the most consistent, and arguably most critical, influence

upon the spiritual development of PKs. All twenty-nine of the project's participants

articulated the clear impact of the pastor-parent's influence on their spiritual

development. For many, the pastor-parent had a significantly positive influence on the

PK's spiritual development; for others, the influence negatively impacted the PK's

Christian faith. Participants within the project recognized that their pastor-parents could

never fully step out of their pastor role, but communicated a clear need for their pastor-

parent to lead out of their parent identity within the home environment. Recognizing that

PKs' lives are often marked by frequent change and regular disappointment, the pastor-

parent represents the primary role model available to help nurture PKs towards an

authentic picture of Christ.

The *Shema* speaks of impressing faith upon one's children. The Shema also offers

these words of direction, "Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk

along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them to your foreheads." The *Shema* does not say, "Tie God's commandment to *your children's* hands and bind them to *their* foreheads." The *Shema* paints a picture of the spiritual leader "sitting at home" and "walking along the road with their children." The *Shema* speaks to the importance of speaking words of faith in the morning and evening…in the presence of one's children.

The participants in this study who indicated that their pastor-parents had a strong positive influence on their Christian faith said that their parents did so by modelling faith, often through difficult ministry experiences. PKs recognized that their pastor-parents needed to model Christian faith within their ministerial settings, but it was the offered presence of the pastor-parent's example within the home that most significantly influenced the faith development of their PKs.

Among the characteristics noted among the pastor-parents who were identified as positive faith influencers by their PKs were open dialogue and the practice of organic spiritual disciplines. Only one of the project participants who self-identified as a strong or growing Christian who is actively involved within a local church indicated that having 'a heavy dose of additional family devotions, prayer vigils, and mission trips had a significant positive influence on their faith. It was not a matter of other families not doing these activities, but, rather, that these spiritual disciplines were less influential than the pastor-parent's modeling of a Christian lifestyle. Bible study, prayer, and looking for opportunities to share what God was doing within their lives and the life of their community were definitely present, but, in the spirit of the *Shema*, the "effective" pastor-parents found ways to make this a natural part of doing life together.

PK8 articulated this point by noting,

> "I was already the most involved kid at church. I went to every Bible study and Sunday school class. I was almost always at youth group and I was involved in lots of church activities. Seeing and processing what I was learning at church being lived out at home was more influential than the 'additional' devotionals, etcetera. we did as a family. They weren't bad…I just didn't need them because I was an active participant in a good church."

PK9 also indicated that the "consistency" of Christian practice, especially in the face of leadership challenges, was perhaps the single greatest positive influence on her faith development.

In Chapter 2, I wrote about the parental failings of biblical leaders such as King David and Eli. I noted the recognition these men received for their faith influence upon the culture of their day, but also recognized that they failed to help impress the tenets of authentic faith and righteous living upon their own children. Chapter 2 also noted the parental short-comings of more contemporary Christian leaders like John Wesley and John Whitefield. For Wesley the pastor-parent postures, practices and priorities of his two parents stood in sharp contrast from one another. Wesley's father, Samuel, was both a sound pastor and largely absent father. Fortunately, for the sake of John Wesley's own soul, his mother, Susannah, assumed a strong spiritual care role for her children. During one of Samuel's prolonged absences from the family, Susannah wrote,

> "And though the superior charge of the souls contained in (our large family) lies upon you,…as the head of the family, and as their minister, yet in your absence I

cannot but look upon every soul you leave under my care as a talent committed to

me under a trust by the great Lord of all families of heaven and earth; and if I am

unfaithful to him in neglecting to improve these talents, how shall I answer unto

him when he shall command me to render an account of my stewardship?" (Seely

13).

Wesley biographer, Anthony Headley notes that while John and Charles Wesley

thrived spiritually under their mother's influence, their sisters were particularly

traumatized by their father's "perceived deficiencies" as a spiritual and parental influence

to a degree that their own faith was "hindered" (56-57). We must also note that while

John's Wesley's faith flourished under the guidance of his mother and the Holy Spirit, he

would later replicate his father's example of the absentee pastor-parent. Wesley and his

wife divorced after nine years of marriage, and there is no record of his efforts to

spiritually nurture his three step-children before, or after, the marriage ended.

Conversely, John's brother, Charles, married in 1749. Charles' wife was a near-

constant travelling companion of Charles for four years after their marriage, but settled in

Bristol, England in 1753. Three years later, Charles also made the determination to settle

in Bristol, travelling "only so far as London" with any regularity. From Bristol, Charles

continued to preach and raise his three children, while also writing a significant number

of his 6000 hymns. While one child, Samuel, later made the "dismal" decision to convert

to Roman Catholicism, all three children employed their extensive musical gifts in

service to God and the local church throughout their adult years (Headley 45-46). Charles

Wesley thus modelled the ability to attain "success" in ministry and success at home.

Throughout this project, I have noted both positive and problematic examples of pastor-parents. During ministry immersion experiences with Asbury Theological Seminary, I was able to ask the senior pastors of two of the ten largest United Methodist Churches in the United States to describe the impact their ministry has had on their families. One noted that his young adult children resent the church, but also stated that he willingly, albeit regretfully, accepted their resentment of the sacrifices he made to ministry as an "unfortunate by-product of his efforts to win souls for Christ." He hopes they soon understand how difficult ministry has been for him, and learn to embrace God's love for themselves. In the meantime, he "finds solace" in the thousands who have come to faith because of his leadership. The other senior pastor spoke of telling his children that becoming a mega-church pastor would necessitate significant sacrifices among everyone in the family because of the demands it would place on the pastor-parent. When I pressed this pastor to explain why the church's nearly 100-member staff could not help him experience healthy work-family balance, this same pastor simply stated, "It's not that easy."

Conversely, Bishop Sundo Kim helped grow the largest congregation in Korean Methodist history before his election to bishop within the Korean Methodist Church. In his lecture to Asbury Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry students on October 23, 2015, Bishop Kim addressed his "10 Principles for Church Growth." Within this lecture, Bishop Kim noted many of his professional successes (highlighting church membership growth, several building campaigns, and work towards reconciling tensions between North and South Korea) but declared that, "My greatest accomplishment…is raising children who are strong in their faith and serving as leaders within the church." Bishop

Kim further declared that, "All success is fleeting if you do not pass on your faith to your family. And how do you do this? You don't teach…you show."

Bishop Kim's youngest son, Rev. Dr. Chungsuk Kim, presently serves as the senior pastor of the 70,000 member Kwanglim Methodist Church. When asked about his father's spiritual influence on his own faith, Chungsuk Kim affirmed that his pastor-parent made his presence with family a core value, even during the most stress-filled seasons of ministry at Kwanglim Methodist Church.[6]

Much like the historical figures of John and Charles Wesley, today's "successful" mega-church pastors represent the models for many pastors serving in ministry. Yet this project sought to define ministerial success in terms of the influence pastor-parents exerted upon their PKs. Whereas John Wesley helped birth a great spiritual revival by taking the Gospel to the people, this study's PKs expressed gratitude that their pastor-parents also followed the model of Jesus, Charles Wesley, and contemporary leaders such as Bishop Kim. Christ faced tremendous demands upon his time and energy as he ministered to great crowds, but also withdrew frequently to "do life" with twelve disciples. Within that group, scripture also portrays three of these disciples as among those within his true "inner circle." The PKs who attributed their own strong personal faith to the positive influence of their pastor-parents expressed great appreciation that they were chosen from among the large crowd of congregational parishioners to be included within the most inner circle of the pastor-parent's hands-on disciple-making efforts.

[6] Interestingly, interviews with two associate pastors at Kwanglim Methodist Church revealed that their 70-80 hour work weeks afforded little if any time to be present in meaningful ways with their spouses and children. These pastor-parents both expressed their hope that the congregational ministries of Kwanglim would help their children grow in faith, as they sought to establish themselves within the ministerial culture of the Korean Methodist Church.

Moreover, the PKs whose parents served the two largest congregations included within the study (both over 1000 in weekly worship attendance), represented two of the most adamant voices to affirm the personal commitments of presence and priority that their pastor-parents placed upon their children's spiritual well-being. These PKs pastor-parents demonstrated that growing a large, healthy church *and* investing in the spiritual nurture of one's own family are not mutually exclusive possibilities. More importantly, each of the project participants articulated how critical it is for pastor-parents to establish the parenting dimension of this dual role for the spiritual health of their own children. Of the seven participants in the project who communicated that their pastor-parent failed to assume a parental faith nurturing role at home, instead abdicating this responsibility to the children's and youth the ministries of the local church, only one self-identified as a mature or growing Christian.

The Local Church Operates within a Fishbowl Concerning its PKs

No one is watching the disciple-making postures, practices, and priorities of the local church more closely than its resident PKs. Moreover, the formal and informal disciple-making ministries of the local church have tremendous potential to influence the spiritual development of PKs. As one participating PK put it, "We have an unequalled insider's view of the local church…who can be trusted, who cannot; what is genuine and what is fake." From every angle, PKs examine the life of the congregations in which they grow up. This examination can have a significant impact on a PK's ability to experience God's love and an eventual love for God's Church.

In 1 Peter 5:3, Peter commands the leaders of the local church to "be examples to the flock." The Apostle Paul similarly explains the importance of mentoring relationships

to the church leaders in Ephesus, declaring, "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you" (Acts 20:17). Peter and Paul, following the example of Christ, stressed that the mission of the church is to help the Holy Spirit grow fully devoted followers of God through mentoring relationships. If a Christian leader is negligent in the duty of mentoring, he or she is not living up to their calling. This is certainly true for the local church's relationship with PKs. When Susannah Wesley took ownership of her children's spiritual nurture, she was careful not to pursue this endeavor without the support of lay leadership within the family's congregation. Their "Lord's Day devotions" were marked by "free and affectionate discourse" on the "most awakening sermons we had" with the children and parents of thirty to forty parish families (Seeley 14-15). Such "affectionate discourse" is emblematic of the church-family relationship Joiner emphasized in Chapter 2's literature review. This project affirmed the essential nature of the local church's determination to posture itself in partnership with the pastor-parent as co-laborers for the souls of PKs.

From the moment a PK is introduced to a new church, the congregation's perceived priority with regard to this goal is under consideration. This "fishbowl" examination often begins during the take in meeting where the ministry family gets introduced to the church leaders where they will soon be serving. Participants shared stories similar to my own family's personal experience, noting that their parents often told them, "We are going on a road trip," only to be told the destination and purpose of the trip while actually headed to the new ministry location. This left PKs bewildered and emotionally unprepared to make a good first impression on the leaders of their soon-to-be new congregation(s). The natural response of most PKs was one of aversion…the shock

of being told that a move was imminent was too much for them to process during a short road trip. Participants shared that congregational leaders likewise seemed universally unprepared to welcome the children of the new ministry family.[7] As such, the fishbowl image presented by the church and the ministry family is inherently tipped towards creating less than ideal first impressions.

From there, the weeks leading up to and immediately following a move place both the ministry family and local congregation in a fishbowl of scrutiny. Painting what will become the PK's bedroom their favorite color or a bathroom to match their shower curtain represents one way to foster a good first impression. Likewise, initiating connections with potential peers from the church and/or community, preparing community welcome packets that might include gift cards to local restaurants or entertainment centers, and scheduling activities that will help the PK share their personality and meet new friends exemplify the practices of a church that has intentionally sought to welcome new PKs into the life of the community. Each serves to help the local church make a sound first impression as a loving, caring faith community. Conversely, failure to welcome the PK often creates an impression of a cold, uncaring church even when such an impression does not fully match reality.

Beyond the introductory stage, the local church's ability to model a mentoring attitude towards the PK was also identified as being critically important to both the PK's overall impression of the church and, ultimately, their spiritual development. The relative size of the churches PKs grew up in and scope of formal offerings of congregational

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[7] In fairness to these local congregations, it should be understood that the local church often does not know who will be showing up to be introduced as the church's next pastor in the midst of United Methodist Church appointment-making. Moreover, the teams assigned to be present for these take in meetings, are typically not told if children will be present. This reality is addressed within Major Finding #4.

youth group ministries seemed to have little direct impact on their adult spirituality or their perception of the church. However, the presence, or absence, of mentoring practices had significant implications for PK faith development. Several contributing factors led participants to determine that their local churches failed to embrace an adequate mentoring posture towards the PK. Communicating an assumption that the PK had figured out life in general and faith in particular; demonstrating a stronger focus on behavior than matters of the heart; presenting rules *from* adults without in an invitation to relationships *with* adults; and practices that created an environment where church commitments were perceived as always taking precedence over family commitments represent just a few of the commonly mentioned perceptions.

One of the focus group PKs recalled a time when the children's ministry team developed a "Bible Buddy" partnership within their church, whereby each child was to be paired with an adult "buddy." It took several months before each child had a buddy, but shortly thereafter a new family began attending the church. Realizing the need for a new "Bible Buddy," one congregational member suggested reassigning the PK's buddy…since the pastor's family probably did not need any "outside help." The then elementary aged PK immediately felt that she was of lesser value to church members than other kids, even though she felt like more was also expected from her than her peers. One of the other participants in this focus group then noted that she was also the last member of her confirmation class to receive a confirmation mentor, likely for the same reason. The third member of this focus group noted that while the church her family served during her high school years liked to take notice of any behavioral flaws she demonstrated, there was never an invitation from any church members to provide the

kind of nurturing relationship one might expect to have. As such, most congregation members failed to get to know her unique personality. Thus, the kind of relationship-rich culture that would give the church license to address instances where her behavior "did not meet their standards" never developed.

Among those PKs now serving actively within the United Methodist Church, however, each could identify, by name, at least one meaningful spiritual mentor from within their childhood churches. These "positively influenced" PKs communicated that they grew up within settings where members made the intentional tending to the spiritual condition of their hearts a priority. This, in turn, encouraged PKs to discern their own spiritual gifts and passions (that is, they placed the PKs in roles where their gifts could be used and nurtured, as opposed to simply utilizing the PK as a resource from the ministry family who could be expected to help fill any unmet needs within the congregation). Ultimately, the PKs now serving in professional ministry found that the invitational nurturing of their gifts helped them embrace God's call upon their lives with confidence and clarity. PK6 is presently serving on the technology/media staff at one of the largest churches in the United Methodist denomination. PK6 specifically noted that while his talents and experience could land him a profitable job just about anywhere, the nurturing posture of his childhood congregations instead helped him answer God's call to continue using these same gifts in service to the local church.

While our literature review helped us embrace a spirit of quick judgment against the "wayward" sons of Eli and King David, perhaps the influence of their spiritual family contributed to their rebellion. Perhaps they, like the "negatively influenced" PKs of this project judged the local community, and by extension the universal nature of their faith,

based upon their "fishbowl observations" of the spiritual community in which their fathers, Eli and King David, served. Perhaps Samuel, who was also raised under Eli's care, rose to embrace a mature spiritual faith because the community offered him a more nurturing environment than was offered to Hophni and Phinehas. Perhaps, David's son, Solomon, was found to be more fit for the throne than his brothers because of the spiritual influence offered by the religious leadership of his community.

Among the twenty-nine PKs participating in the project, sixteen indicated that the local churches they grew up in offered *something* to help nurture their faith, doing so in a manner that was largely consistent with the nurture offered to non-PK peers. Many of the PKs expressed that they were sometimes held to a higher knowledge or behavior standard than other kids, but even as they noted their churches' shortcomings, twelve of the self-identified strong or maturing Christians listed the ministries of their local childhood churches as a "most significant positive influence on their faith development." Among the participating PKs who are actively involved in a local church today, their love for the church was born largely out of the genuine love they experienced from the local church as PKs.

The ministry family has a unique view of the local church fishbowl. PKs are exposed to the best of the church's postures, practices, and priorities and its worst. PKs are able to recognize church members who exude genuine love and concern. These PKs are also able to identify the the congregation's "wolves in sheep's clothing." PKs who survive their childhood years with an intact faith, bring a wealth of leadership potential as well as hearts for nurturing and care ministries desperately needed within today's

congregations. The care offered by local churches to today's PKs, thus has tremendous potential to help maintain the vitality of the church of tomorrow.

Conference Leadership is Often Unseen but its Presence is Always Felt

The realities of the United Methodist Church's connectional system, including its practice of appointment-based clergy moves, strongly influences the spiritual upbringing of the PKs whose pastor-parents serve within the denomination. Participants within the study likened the leadership of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church to the ubiquitous presence of God. This leadership presence was rarely seen, and its influence was sometimes difficult to detect, but the PKs grew up believing that the eyes of the conference were ever upon them (and their families).

Most of the PK's perceptions of conference leadership were based upon their experiences regarding the appointment-making process of the church. Only nine (less than 1/3) of the participating PKs initially indicated that the United Methodist Church's itinerant system had a slightly negative or strongly negative impact on their overall spiritual development. When asked to describe their experiences with the appointment-making system, however, twenty-seven of twenty-nine participants voiced at least one specific concern, or negative experience, with an appointment-based move. Frustrations with the itinerant system of the UMC were wide-ranging but centered upon the PK's perception that they were, for the most part, after-thoughts within the appointment-making process. The timing of moves (often during participants' high school years); dissimilarity of communities experienced when moving from one church/community to another; a lack of consideration of the PK's unique gifts, interests, passions, and schooling preferences within moves; and feelings of underappreciation when PKs

realized they were not part of a communication process between conference, church and pastor each represented major sources of near-universal frustration for participating PKs.

PK12 stated that she was predisposed to dislike the most recent congregation her pastor-parent moved to, simply because it was the church associated with the conference's decision to move her family while she was in high school. Facilitating more dialogue between conference leadership and all members of the clergy family represented the top priority for a majority of these PKs. While some acknowledged their understanding of the complicated nature of clergy appointment-making, virtually all participants saw the realities of this system as a negative influence on them. Those who shared the positives of their moves also acknowledged their frustrations, but communicated how dealing with such difficult situations ultimately made them "better," more adaptable young adults.

The United Methodist Church's *Book of Discipline* (BOD) articulates the reasoning behind, and methodology within, the denomination's itinerant system. The BOD defines the process of consultation as "the process whereby the bishop and/or district superintendent confer with the pastor and the pastor-parish relations committee, taking into consideration 1) the unique needs of a charge, the community context, and also the gifts and evidence of God's grace of a particular pastor, 2) an annual pastor and church assessment, and 3) the mission of the whole Church" (Milford and Sigmon, par. 425). The BOD includes "family situation" as the last listed criteria to for consideration within the appointment-making process, and it is the only "criteria" without explanation or elaboration (Milford and Sigmon, par. 427e). The BOD's apparent prioritization

concerning "taking into consideration the unique needs and desires of the clergy children" was not lost on the project's participants.

Moreover, the IGRC's own *Understanding Pastoral Change* handbook only serves to reaffirm the PK's *perception* that their wants and needs are not a high priority within the appointment-making practices of the annual conference. Within the handbook (which was last updated in 2004), we read that,

> Discernment begins as the Bishop and superintendents prayerfully explore possible missional matches between open churches and pastors. This exploration includes: 1. Nominations for open churches. 2. "Challenging off" those who do not fit the church profile or who are missionally needed in their present appointment. 3. Detailed discussion about the missional appropriateness of those remaining on the list. 4. Prayer and consensus-building among all 12 district superintendents. 5. Recommendation of the name to the Bishop and Bishop's discernment. 6. Appointment by the Bishop (2).

While the needs of the ministerial family are implicitly included within the language of "missional appropriateness," failing to expressly note "family considerations" within the discernment process is indicative of the PKs' understanding of the conference's posture towards them.

While the itinerant system offers challenges to the PK, conference leadership within the IGRC endeavors to provide significant ministerial support to the entire ministerial family, including its PKs. The IGRC *Understanding Pastoral Change* handbook also notes that the conference's presence is to be most clearly recognized and relationally experienced through "superintendents who are in regular communication

with both churches and pastors about the missional fit of the church and pastor" (1).

Additionally, the IGRC offers free counseling services to "to assist pastors and their

families as they cope and adjust to the realities of ministry" as they experience anxiety,

depression, difficulties dealing with work-life balance stress management through the

Clergy Assistance Program (CAP). These services could be especially beneficial to PKs,

especially as they face the reality of moves and the inherent stresses that come with

trying to adjust to new communities and churches.

None of the participating PKs, however, had ever heard of, much less used, the

free counseling services offered to IGRC clergy families through the CAP. Additionally,

while the scope of the district superintendent's responsibilities facilitates natural

relationship building among clergy, there is little opportunity for the PKs to enjoy such a

relational connection with conference leadership. Indeed, only one of the project

participants noted that they had a personal relationship with their district superintendent.

Communicating the presence of these services, while also offering intentional

opportunities for PKs moving to a new church to connect with other PKs of the same age

in the district, would provide additional bridges for the conference leadership to emerge

as a positive influencer of the PKs' spiritual care.

The project also operated under the presumption that growing up as a PK within

the United Methodist's connectional system would provide unique blessing to PKs. The

majority of participating PKs, unfortunately, failed to offer any recognition of the

conference's leadership role in other areas of spiritual influence. Several participants

indicated that summer camping experiences and school-year retreats provided "very

significant" positive influences on their faith, but only six (including a current camping

ministry intern within the conference and three PKs who attended national youth

gatherings with financial support from the IGRC) offered acknowledgment that these

experiences fell under the leadership of the annual conference. Similarly, meeting

missionaries and Christian leaders from around the world, enjoying relationships with

campus ministry directors and pastors throughout the state of Illinois, understanding the

global nature of the United Methodist Church, and having unique access to service

opportunities around the state, nation and world were all listed as positive faith-

developing experiences among the participating PKs. These same participants, however,

failed to express any recognition of the Conference's leadership role in providing these

opportunities.

At the heart of the project's third major finding was the observation that PKs

typically only recognize the leadership influence of their annual conference as it relates to

the appointment-making process. In this regard, participants perceived that the

conference's leadership posture was negligent concerning its prioritization of PKs' needs

and desires. Here, personal opinions rather than identifiable facts marked the PKs

assessment of conference leadership. Yet it is still noteworthy that these personal

opinions articulate that PKs did not feel like a priority within, or relationally connected

to, the overall process of appointment-making (which typically includes input from the

PKs' pastor-parents, local congregation leadership *and* conference cabinet members).

The findings further revealed that with some simple acts of intentional communication,

the positive, nurturing influence of the annual conference and the United Methodist

Church's connectional system might become significantly more recognizable. Such

practices could significantly improve the overall opinion of the United Methodist Church among today's current generation of PKs.

Partnership between Pastor-Parents, Local Churches and Denominational Leadership Concerning PKs' Spiritual Development is Crucial

Ecclesiastes 4:11 reminds us that, "A cord of three strands is not easily broken" (*New International Version*). When the spiritual nurture of today's United Methodist PKs becomes a shared priority among pastor-parents, local congregations and conference leadership, a three-stranded cord of influence provides the greatest opportunity for affecting the desired goal of raising PKs into Christ-loving, spiritually mature, church-connected adults. Shortcomings related to posture, practice, and priority from any of these three main influencers often had a significant impact on a PK's faith, love of the local church and long-term connection with the United Methodist denomination. These three influencers working in healthy collaboration, however, can both equip and compensate for one another as vessels God's uses to positively influence the PK. Figure 5.1 demonstrates a principle of a relational partnership between pastor-parent, local congregation and conference leadership as partner-influencers upon the spiritual development of PKs.
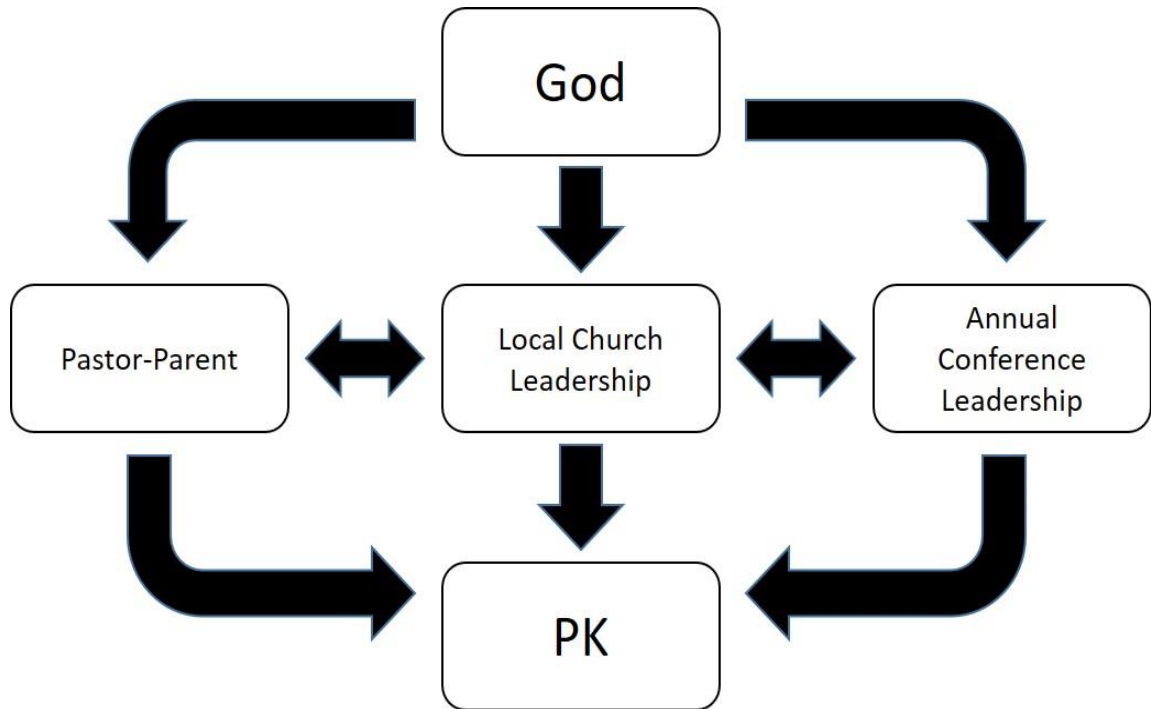
Figure 5.1. Relational model of pastor-parent, local church leadership and annual conference leadership partnership.

The relational partnership model realizes its potential as the three key influencers work together to foster peer and mentor relationships, discern missional matches for PK needs and wants within appointment-making practice, offering transitional care when PKs experience geographical/relational moves and prioritize a posture of intentional spiritual nurture for PKs throughout the connection.

Foster peer and mentor relationships. Within their respective works, both Kinnaman and Elmore noted that teens who are only marginally connected to a local church (attending a church's youth group activities but enjoying no other programmatic or relational connections) are likely to disconnect from the Church as young adults. Conversely, both Kinnaman and Elmore proposed that where there is a church connection

marked by multi-generational relationships, the prospect of teens remaining connected to the local church as adults increases markedly (Kinnaman 23-25, Elmore 5). The PKs of this project affirmed this assertion. The young adult PKs from this study who indicated that their service/connection to the local church remains strong (including all of those presently serving as pastors or as paid staff of a local church) each noted that their mentoring relationships remained intact throughout the high school years. Among those who had mentoring relationships severed during their high school years, either through a move or other factors, only two are presently "strongly connected" within a local church. For the others, new mentoring relationships were not realized before the PK moved from home to attend college, and this reality seems to have had a notable impact on their church connection as young adults.

PK5 noted that his parents often consider their college and high school classmates "among their closest friends in the world." These relationships have continued to grow in connection and depth long after their initial shared experience. PK5 questioned why PKs are discouraged from remaining connected to longstanding mentors in the churches they "were formed in" as children and youth. While PK5 understood the need for the pastor-parent to "move on," he felt that it was unfair to maintain such expectations for the rest of the ministry family. Given the ease of connecting via modern technology, PK5 felt that disconnecting from mentoring relationships was especially unnecessary. PK10 and PK12 both noted that maintaining relationships with peers and mentors from their previous church families was the most significant coping mechanism during the adjustment period following moves while they were in high school/middle school.

If it is expected that PKs will need to sever themselves from mentoring relationships when the PK's family makes a ministerial move, the pastor-parent and conference leadership should find ways to build intentional mentoring relationships outside of the local church. Clergy within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference are expected to form covenantal relationships with other clergy from within their districts and the conference in general. Our PKs also recognize that their pastor-parents enjoy additional "outlets" to connect with fellow pastors, including lunch meetings, conference gatherings, and even organizational meetings. These meetings provided a sense of like-minded community that several of the participating PKs do not enjoy. A similar expectation of covenantal connection should be promoted for the clergy families, most especially PKs.

At 2015 Annual Conference of the IGRC, I quickly observed that many of the young children in attendance knew each other well. Some of these children enjoyed personal relationships because their pastor-parents regularly got together during the year. Several other children, however, were close relationally even though they knew each other only through their once-a-year time together at this four-day conference. I also learned that most of the young adult volunteers where PKs who had spent many of their childhood years building relationships with other PKs within this very setting. Discussions with these young adult PKs led to many statements such as, "These are the only friends I have who truly understand what it's like to be a pastor's child." Communicating the relational benefit of the annual conference childcare/day camp should become a priority throughout the conference, and consideration should be given to reducing the fees for ministry families to take advantage of this resource.

Several PKs also noted that summer camping experiences represented hugely significant spiritual formation experiences from their childhood, especially when these camps helped form relationships with other PKs. Several participants noted, however, how cost prohibitive these camping experiences have become. Once again, providing financial assistance to pastor's kids to attend summer camp experiences, or even developing camps whose declared purpose is to help PKs build peer relationship with other children and youth who "understand" what PK life is really like, could prove to offer tremendous long-term benefits for not only conference PKs but also the life of our local congregations.

Include PKs in the "missional match" discussions of appointment-making. Several participants noted their desire to see conference leadership, local churches and pastors working more collaboratively to discern the viability of ministry moves. From the PK's perspective, the "bigger picture" of family gifts/interests and how/where they might fit, warranted stronger consideration in appointment-making. PK13 expressed the feelings of several participating PKs in declaring,

> Pastors should be told about churches that they are *being considered for*, not made to move to. This would allow for greater dialogue about every facet of a move and how it might affect the pastor's family. What are the schools like in this new community? Do support the art and/or sports activities that the pastor's kids are involved in? If conference leadership is to argue that this would be 'unrealistic' or 'too much work' than how can they say that the health and well-being of the pastor's family is really important to them at all?

As a pastor-parent and this project's facilitator, I must acknowledge that moves to churches and communities the pastor's family knows little about, often with no opportunity to test the waters to discover if a ministry setting will be conducive to spiritual growth for individual family members, create a heightened level of fear and anxiousness among many PKs. At the same time, I observed that the participating PKs ascribed all blame for appointment-based moves to conference leadership. None recognized the possibility that their pastor-parents may have requested moves or that moves to new appointments were in the family's long-term best interests.

Never-the-less, the project's research revealed several potential best practices concerning appointment-making and the PK. PK11 was one of several participants whose pastor-parent's first appointment was to a large church that enjoyed a strong, vital youth group. The summer before she would have been old enough to participate in the church's formal youth group, however, the family moved to a church with no existing youth ministry. The new congregation projected an expectation for PK11 (and her family) to get a youth ministry started. PK11 indicated that she never really "got over what she missed out on." The IGRC tends to appoint newly commissioned, often younger pastors with little children, as associate pastors to larger churches. Then as children get old enough to join these (staffed) youth ministries, where there will be mentors other than their own parents, these ministry families move to much smaller congregations. Amidst these moves, the pastor-parent is asked to replicate the DNA of the larger church. This puts the pastor-parent in charge of youth ministry mentoring at precisely the age where the PK needs an outside influence. Perhaps, the conference should consider making associate pastor appointments to larger churches a next step move which families could

encounter during their PK's teen years. To ensure that the voice of PKs receive adequate consideration in the appointment-making process, the conference cabinet could intentionally include more pastors who still have children living at home among its members.

Provide transitional care. This project's research helped reveal that the most difficult stage of PK spiritual development often occurs while transitioning from one congregation/community to another. Intentional efforts to provide "transitional care" to PKs in these seasons would be tremendously beneficial. The conference should work to promulgate best practices to help ensure both pastor-parents and local congregations are properly equipped to recognize stresses PKs are experiencing and posture themselves as care-givers throughout the transitional process.

The conference might also consider targeting, training and equipping pastors within each district to serve as shepherds for PKs. These district ambassadors could serve to help welcome new ministry children, perhaps even being present during pastor take-in sessions where children are present. These ambassadors, with children of their own, could also be charged with planning child-centric activities designed to help foster connections among district PKs.

Intentionally partner for effective spiritual nurture. The desired goal of this project was to identify postures, practices, and priorities best suited to helping foster the spiritual upbringing of preacher's kids within an itinerant system such as exists within the United Methodist Church. The goal was not to create an environment that would produce happy or content PKs, although that is certainly a desirable goal. The goal of the project was to help pastor-parents, local congregations, and denominational leadership

understand how they might partner with one another to help PKs grow in their Christian faith.

PK4, a 19-year old growing Christian who is active in the local church while attending a Christian college, says,

> I am who I am because all I ever knew or heard came to me from a Christian context. I went to school, but always had my pastor-parents and local church connection speaking words of Christian formation to me. I always knew that I was part of a denomination where every member is supposed to be 'connected.' There may be a danger in not having been exposed to any dissenting conversations or dialogue before going to college, but I have been loved at every step of my journey and those who love me have pointed me to Christ. That can't be all bad.

Indeed, a three-stranded cord of loving, Christ-centered influences represents the coordinated life-line today's PKs need to be able to take hold of amidst a world that seems increasingly determined to lure them away from a God-centered and a church-connected life.

Ultimately, each key influencer must allow God to speak through them as they seek to nurture the PKs under their care. God spoke through King David as the pastor-parent of his son, Solomon, but Solomon also grew up under the influence of the priests and other connectional leaders in the faith community. God spoke through Eli as he assumed the role of spiritual mentor to Samuel, but his biological parents and the larger community also affirmed and nurtured Samuel's walk with the Lord. God spoke through Paul, an ambassador of the connectional system, to commission Timothy into ministry,

but Timothy's parents and local community were also foundational voices in his faith journey. Just as God spoke through multiple voices to Solomon, Samuel and Timothy, God will speak through the pastor-parents, local church membership, and connectional leadership of today's Church to raise up a new generation of fully devoted disciples of Jesus Christ from among the ranks of today's PKs.

Ministry Implications

The findings of this project are based upon the personal opinions of a select few young adult PKs who grew up within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church. While the finding of the project largely affirmed the expectations created from the literature review of biblical, historical and contemporary voices related to nurturing the faith of children and the realities facing PKs within the North American Church, the study only represents a starting point towards implementing best practices related to PK spiritual care. My hope would be that others within the IGRC, and other annual conferences of the UMC, would utilize this project's findings to further delve into potential action steps related to raising a new generation of church leaders from within today's PK ranks.

Moreover, while this project's participants reflected their side of the story regarding their experiences under the care of pastor-parents, within the fish bowl of the local church and in relation to appointment-based moves during their childhood, theirs is still only one collective voice among the four named entities. As this research finds an ear within the denominational system, focus groups of local pastor-parents and denominational leadership will need to join in conversation to add their collective

considerations towards helping realize the common goal of raising spiritually healthy PKs.

Limitations of the Study

Among the PKs that participated in this project, nearly all had something positive to say about their personal experiences with their pastor-parents, the local churches they grew up in, and the United Methodist Church as a whole. These same participants, however, mentioned on several occasions that they had siblings who perception of their PK experiences was much different from their own. Among these siblings with significantly negative experiences, very few were willing to participate in the project. I actually received two email responses to my survey requests from young adult PKs indicating their reluctance to complete the survey. One declared, "You probably only want positive feedback, so you would not want to hear what I have to say." Both of these individuals ultimately participated, but I suspect that many other potential participants shared their initial perception and chose not to respond. The fact that communication of the invitation to this project came through pastor-parents and conference leadership, along with the fact that I was both the project facilitator and one of them in the eyes of these potential participants, likely influenced participation.

I now believe that it would have been more effective to track down the young adult PKs who grew up within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church through personal networking. I endeavored to find these PKs through conference district offices and emails to the pastors of my annual conference and did not receive as many survey participants responses as I had wanted. This may have been the result of these pastor-parents not forwarding the email requests to the young adult

children, or these children may have chosen not to participate knowing that their parents might subsequently inquire about their answers to questions that could potentially rekindle memories of hurt and conflict. I found that many of the interviewed PKs had sufficient personal relationships with other PKs. Had a full year been dedicated to project research collection, it likely would have resulted in the inclusion of additional participants through personal networking.

Two project participants shared that several (usually between six and ten) of the young adult PKs of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference serve as summer camp interns and/or childcare coordinators during the annual conference session held each June. This project did not engage the young adult PKs participants in a larger group setting (the most interviewed at one time was three). Engaging this group of young adult PKs during annual conference, after considering the initial findings provided by individual surveys and interviews, would have provided for a rich, interactive discussion.

Unexpected Observations

I expected the participating PKs to identify the influence of the pastor-parents as a major contributor (on inhibitor) of their personal faith development. Within this vein, I anticipated that those influenced positively by their pastor-parents would articulate their appreciation for their parents' ability to take time out of leading the church to practice spiritual leadership at home. The study affirmed this expectation, but I also anticipated more frequent mention of the inclusion of home-based discipleship *practices* among these positively-influenced PKs. Several of the authors considered within the project's literature review emphasized the critical importance of home-based discipleship practices

such as family Bible study, group prayer, and service projects and mission trips where the entire family serves together within a church and home discipleship partnership.

Only one participant mentioned the presence of home-based discipleship practices as having had a significant, positive influence on their faith development. Participating PKs indicated that they were immersed in the discipleship practice of Bible study at church and did not need additional studies at home. Several, however, indicated that the *modelling* of an authentic faith by pastor-parents was among their most influential factors of their own faith development. Several PKs noted that they learned to read the Bible on their own simply by observing this priority in the lives of their pastor-parents. Other PKs noted the modelling of Christian attitudes in the midst of working with "difficult church people" was a major faith-influencer. Pastor-parents' encouragement to participate in missions/service activities and camping ministries also represented significant blessings offered by the modelling pastor-parent.

My pilot test findings also led me to expect many participating PKs to recognize their relationships with other PKs as a major influencer on their own spiritual development. Several PKs listed having authentic relationships, particularly with mentors, as a significant faith-influencer. When questioned were asked about peer relationships, however, only two participants mentioned other PKs among their key relationships. Even those who noted that summer camp relationships were significantly influential upon their faith development indicated that these relationships were often found with non-PKs. The study revealed that PKs definitely want to be understood, but the project's results also point to having friends within the local church and/or

community as being at least as important to positive spiritual development as relationships with other PKs.

I was also surprised at how few participating PKs seemed to articulate an understanding of the United Methodist Church's itinerant system, and the voluntary nature of their pastor-parent's inclusion within said system. Only one participant specifically noted that their pastor-parent had educated them on the history and purpose of the denomination's itineracy. While virtually all participating PKs articulated some measure of frustration with appointment-based moves during their childhood, none of the participants had experienced more than four appointment-based moves before turning eighteen. None of the participants recognized that this represented fewer moves than ministry families in many other, non-itinerant-based, denominations. None recognized the blessing that their parents never experienced a season of forced unemployment during their years of ministry within the United Methodist Church.

Recommendations

This project has documented the three-fold influence of pastor-parents, local congregations, and conference leadership upon the faith of PKs. Those who earnestly want to commit themselves to helping raise PKs towards spiritual maturity marked by a love of God and love of Christ's Church should consider the following:

Prioritize the PK

PKs are neither predisposed towards growing into strong, mature Christians who serve as adult leaders within the local church or towards an adult life marked by a disconnection with the local church and faith in Jesus. When the pastor-parents presume that leading his or her church well will create an environment where the PK will be well

nurtured, the PK will not feel that their faith is a priority within the home. When the local

church presumes that the ministry family is self-sufficient for PK disciple-making, the

PK may easily grow spiritually, emotionally, and physically detached from the Church as

soon as they reach adulthood. When the United Methodist Church fails to intentionally

nurture the PKs under its care, it risks losing both the souls of these perspective disciples

and the rich leadership resource these individuals could provide to the denomination.

While pastor-parents, local congregations, and conference leaders within the UMC each

bears the weight of nearly impossible demands of time and energy, the spiritual care of

our PKs needs to be prioritized, or this much-needed care will simply cease to be well

practiced.

Plan with the End in Mind

The *Shema* reminds us that the pastor-parents most important mission field is their

own home. Jesus reminds us that the goal of Christian disciples is to partner with God to

make more disciples. One of the greatest blessings of the UMC is its connectional nature.

Working collaboratively, the denomination, local church, and pastor-parent can foster

communication at both the macro and micro level whereby the connectional nature of the

denomination is equipping local churches to partner with their pastor-parents to make

disciples within the ministry family, enabling the pastor-parent to become a model of

godly parenting and not just a church-based program manager.

When each of these key influencers embraces what a fully devoted follower of

Jesus looks like before making the intentional, cooperative effort to discern the unique

passions and gifts of the individual PK, it begins a process whereby the PK may realize

the blessing of a unified nurturing presence. This educational foundation within the

process should begin within the pastor's candidacy for ordination. Planning for the care of PKs should also represent a regular topic of discussion between conference staff and local congregations, and as a local congregation prepares to receive a ministry family that includes children still living at home.

Invest Individually

Every PK is unique. This project has sought to discern best practices for the spiritual nurture of PKs in a general sense, but the manner or style in which these practices need to be carried out must be as unique as the PKs whom the practices will influence. Even siblings of project participants, growing up in the same home, as members of the same local churches, having experienced the same reality of conference influence, often reacted quite differently than their brothers and sisters. Some PKs are introverts; others are extroverts. Some will yearn to demonstrate their love of God through constant involvement in church activities and participation in formal discipleship ministries; others are predisposed to practice a quieter faith. Some PKs will be best nurtured by their own pastor-parents; others will need a stronger influence from congregational or conference leaders (often in the form of a non-parent pastor or camping ministry leader).

Crowds often surrounded Jesus. Yet, the Church that has been changing the world for God's glory for nearly 2000 years as built through Jesus' intentional investment in a few disciples. As the United Methodist Church begins to ask where the denominational leaders of the second half of the twenty-first century will come from, it should realize that no one is better positioned to assume this role than its current PKs. Investing individually

in the PKs of our conference will promote a tremendous opportunity for God-sized

multiplication as today's PKs become church leaders in their own right.

Recognize and Care for Woundedness

Ministry, like much of life, is hard. It brings wounds. The PKs who participated in

this study communicated their woundedness with vulnerability and strength. Many other

potential contributors felt too wounded to participate. Perhaps the greatest ministry

implication of this study would be the recognition of the woundedness the church too

often inflicts upon its PKs. Pastor-parents need to confess their inclination to too often

elevate parish ministry above the needs of family-based ministry. The local church needs

to ask forgiveness of PKs who have been treated as resources and not as precious gifts to

be nurtured and cared for. Conference leadership would be wise to acknowledge wounds

inflicted through the itineracy, even if these wounds were not inflicted intentionally.

Then, beyond healing, our pastor-parents, local congregations, and conference leadership

need to rededicate themselves to the hard work of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the

transformation of the world…one PK at a time.

PKs Really Do Have Free Will

Finally, this project's observations and recommendations do not offer a fail-proof

recipe for PK disciple-making success. PKs really do have free will. Even when pastor-

parents, local church members, and conference leadership actively commit to postures,

practices, and priorities that would create an environment where faith could flourish, the

PK may still choose to *not* follow Jesus as Savior and Lord. PK18 noted that American

Millennials, and the children of our up-and-coming iY generation, tend to be "all-or-

nothing oriented, whereby any spiritual adversity, even something as simple as finding a

Bible passage that is hard to deconstruct leads many to chuck everything. Any chink in

the armor becomes a death sentence."

This project has affirmed that God often chooses to work through the project's

identified influencers (today's David's, Eli's and Paul's) to impact the faith of PKs.

Ultimately, however, Christ and the Holy Spirit must speak directly to the hearts of all

who would receive God's saving, redeeming and sanctifying grace, a reality that Figure

5.2 helps denote. May we all pray for the Spirit to speak clearly and for the rest of us to

know when to get out of Jesus' way as He seeks to touch the lives of our children.
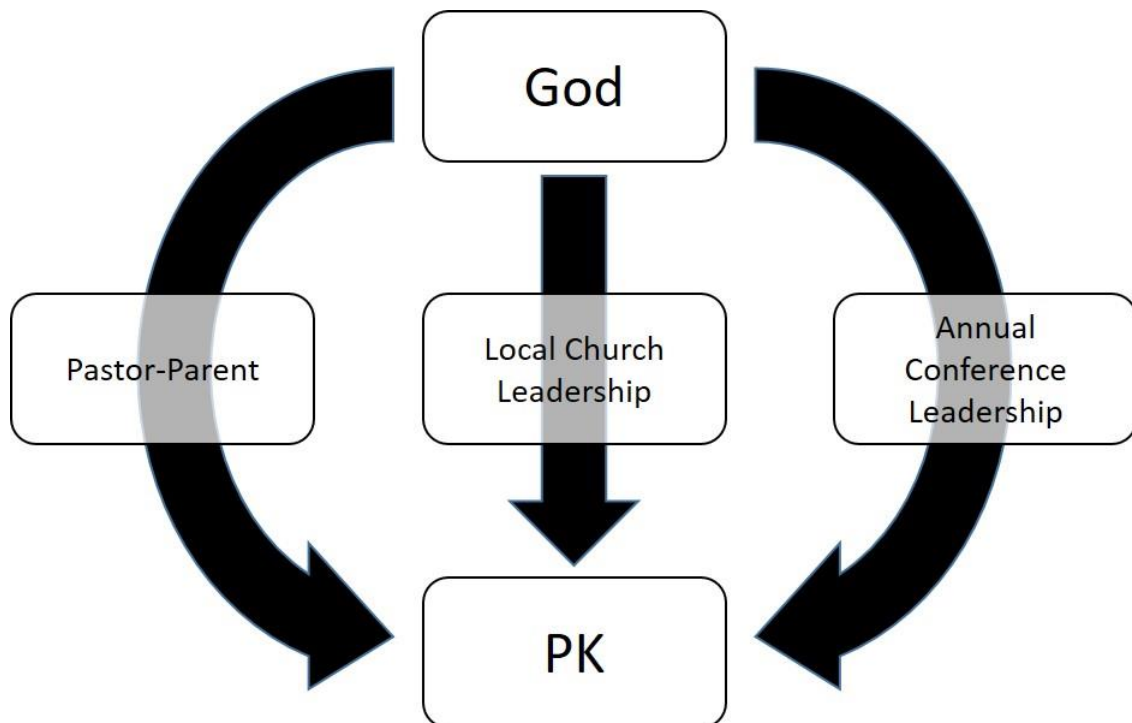

Figure 5.2. God as influencer through influencers model.

Postscript

God led me to begin this project more than four years ago. The stirring came at a time when my own four children's ages ranged from six to fifteen. At the time, I saw a wonderful opportunity to discern the postures, practices, and priorities that would help me realize the goal of becoming the pastor-parent, church leader, and connectional member within the UMC who could nurture them well as Christian disciples. There have been many moments, however, when I have felt the work this project demanded was keeping me from prioritizing the very goals I sought to champion. As the finish line of this project comes into view, I realize that opportunities to fill the void created when I am no longer pressing to complete the next interview or next chapter will come from many directions. My prayer is that God would use these findings, and those findings that we will continue to discover as we do life together, to spur me on towards greater "effectiveness" as the pastor-parent to Megan, Matt, Addi and Alex.

This project has also given me a heart for the PKs who participated in the project. Their stories have become part of my story, and the collective story of our connectional church. I further pray that they will find joy in seeing the best practices they communicated to me, and a measure of comfort in recognizing the frustrations they revealed to me, shared in such a way that we may move towards an even better future for the next generation of United Methodist PKs. I hope God continues to kindle within each of us a passion to continue serving as a voice for those growing up within the homes, churches, and connectional system of our United Methodist Church.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Preacher's Kids Have Free Will, Too:
Examining Best Practices for the Spiritual Development of Itinerant PKs

I am a Doctor of Ministry participant at Asbury Theological Seminary and I am conducting research on the topic of the Spiritual Development of Preacher's Kids (PKs). You are invited to help within the research component of this project because you have been identified as a "young adult" (18-40 year old) who spent at least part of your childhood with a parent who was/is also a pastor in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church. The project's goal is to discern "best practices" with regard to the spiritual nurture of PKs, particularly those who grew up within the appointment system of the United Methodist Church.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to complete a written survey providing information about your experiences as a "Preacher's Kid" (PK) and your opinion regarding the impact of that upbringing upon your own spiritual development. You may also be invited to participate in a follow-up interview (either in person or via Skype/Facetime) to further process your PK experience.

Your participation in this study will be kept confidential. Only I will have access to your personal responses. You will not be required to include your name or other personal information on the survey and all participants are free to not answer specific questions. Those who are willing to participate in a follow-up interview will be asked to provide contact information. These interviews may be recorded, but individual names will not be used. Said interviews will be conducted in locations designed to maintain confidentiality (absolute confidentiality for meetings in public locations and Sype/Facetime interviews cannot be guaranteed). The resulting analysis will be presented in the project's final research publication. All published work will include pseudonyms and/or "coded" survey identifiers. All material that connects individuals to their personal responses will be destroyed upon the project's completion.

Participation in this research process in entirely voluntary, but I appreciate your willingness to consider being part of the study. Feel free to call or write me at any time if you need any more information. My number is 309-360-3399 and my e-mail is pastorsteve.dunlap@gmail.com.

If you are willing to assist me in this study, please sign and date this letter below to indicate your voluntary participation. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Stephen Pichaske

I hereby grant to Stephen Pichaske, doctoral student of Asbury Theological Seminary, permission to use the contents of my survey answers and/or personal interview, whether tape recorded or otherwise, for scholarly research and educational purposes including literary publication.

_____   _____

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study   Date Signed

Please Print Your Name: _____

APPENDIX B

PROJECT SURVEY QUESTIONS

<u>**Research Questions**</u>

1. Which best describes your faith at this moment in life?

      Strong, mature Christian
      Growing Christian
      Disconnected Christian
      Questioning your Christian faith
      Practicing/believing a different faith (or integration of many spiritual beliefs)
      Agnostic/Atheist

2. Which best describes your relationship with the local church?

      Serving in leadership within a local church
      Very active, highly committed to a local church
      Somewhat active, marginally committed to a local church
      Inactive and indifferent towards the local church
      Hostile towards the local church

      2b. If you responded with answers C, D or E to question #2, are you active in a Christian ministry OUTSIDE of the local church?   Yes/No

      2c. If you responded with answers C, D or E to question #2, are you active in a secular service organization OUTSIDE of the local church?   Yes/No

3. Which of the following best describes your perception of the United Methodist itinerant system's effect on your personal faith development?

      Significant, positive
      Slight, positive
      Neutral
      Slight, negative
      Significant, negative

The following questions concern your perception of life as a Preacher's Kid within a local congregation:

4. Which of the following best describes your perception of your local church(es) attitude towards you during you "PK" years?

       Intentional nurture of my faith as a cherished resource
       Intentional nurture of my faith similar to what other kids experienced
       Indifference
       Assumption that my family (i.e. pastor-parent) was responsible for my faith
           development
       Assumption that I had everything figured out with regard to my faith

5. Which of the following best describes the effect of your local church(es) "age specific" ministries (including Sunday Bible studies, youth group and/or children's ministries) on your personal faith development?

       Strong, positive affect on my Christian faith development
       Somewhat positive affect on my Christian faith development
       No perceivable or marked affect on my Christian faith development
       Somewhat negative affect on my Christian faith development
       Significant, negative affect on my Christian faith development

6. Which of the following was perceived to be the most important to the leadership of your local church(es) during your PK years?

       The condition of my heart
       The condition of my heart and how it affected my behavior
       The church seemed indifferent to me
       Proper behavior that was influenced by my heart/faith
       Proper behavior

7. Which of the following would you perceive best describes the behavioral expectations placed upon you by your local church(es) during your PK years?

       I was treated like a "normal" kid with regard to my behavior
       My behavior was expected to serve as an example that other kids were
           supposed to also strive for.
       My behavior was held to a higher standard than other kids were held to

The following questions concern your perception of life as a Preacher's Kid in relationship to/with your "pastor-parent":

8. Which of the following best describes your perception of your pastor-parent's ability to distinguish between the roles of "pastor" and "parent"?

> Consistently demonstrated difficulty stepping out of pastoral role within family settings
> Sometimes exhibited difficulty stepping out of pastoral role within family settings
> Effectively distinguished between the roles of church pastor and family parent at the appropriate times
> Every parent should be their child's personal pastor...what is there to "distinguish"?

9. Which of the following best describes your perception of your pastor-parent's understanding of the responsibility for your faith development?

> My pastor-parent took primary responsibility for helping to shape my personal faith development
> My pastor-parent shared responsibility for helping to shape my personal faith development with the local congregation(s)
> My pastor-parent sought to lead the church's ministries in such a way that they could assume primary responsibility for helping to shape my personal faith development
> My pastor-parent sought out an intentional mentor(s) to help assume responsibility for shaping my personal faith development

10. Which of the following best describes your perception of your pastor-parent's priority with regard to your faith development?

> My pastor-parent was clearly most focused on the condition of my heart/relationship with Jesus
> My pastor-parent focused primarily on the condition of my heart but communicated clear expectations for my behavior as a marker of faith
> My pastor-parent focused primarily on the condition of my heart but communicated clear expectations for my behavior as "a member of the pastor's family"
> My pastor-parent focused more on my behavior than on the condition of my heart/relationship with Jesus
> My pastor-parent seemed singularly focused on my behavior

11. Many Christian pastors and churches use the both/and language of "grace and judgment."   Which of the following best describes your perception of your pastor-parent's ability to balance "judgment" (rules orientation, behavior expectations) and "grace" (forgiveness and mercy)?

> Preached grace to congregation(s) but practiced judgment within the home
> Preached grace to congregation(s) and practiced grace within the home
> Preached and practiced a healthy balance of judgment and grace in both
> > settings.
> Preached judgment to congregation(s) but practiced grace within the home
> Preached judgment to congregation(s) and practiced truth within the home

12. Which of the following best describes your pastor-parent's stance towards communicating work (church) related stresses within the family setting?

> My pastor-parent shielded me from work-place (church) stresses
> My pastor-parent exhibited work-place stress but never communicated
> > specifics. I consistently understood that only Jesus and his *vision* for
> > the church is perfect.
> My pastor-parent exhibited work-place stress and communicated specifics in
> > a manner that consistently helped me understand the importance of
> > his/her leadership and a Christian response to such stress
> My pastor-parent exhibited work-place stress and communicated specifics in
> > a manner that sometimes created uncomfortable tension within our
> > home
> My pastor-parent exhibited work-place stress and communicated specifics in
> > a manner that helped me experience resentment towards the local
> > church

<u>The following questions invite you to offer a brief response. Respond to all those that you feel comfortable answering. You may be asked to give more detail, as you feel comfortable, in a follow-up interview.</u>

13. What one thing had the most significant positive experience on your faith development?

14. What one thing had the most significant negative experience on your faith development?

15. How did your local church(es) impact your spiritual development growing up? (Feel free to include both positive and negative perceptions.)

16. What historical and contemporary practices of spiritual development (worship, prayer, service, the reading and study of scripture, youth group participation, camps, etc.) have had the most significant positive influence upon your faith and spiritual development?

    16b. In what setting did these "practices" most often take place (church, small group, parachurch, home)?

17. Have you enjoyed any participation in a "parachurch" (YoungLife, Youth for Christ, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, etc.) or youth group ministry outside of your own local church setting?

    17b. If, Yes, please briefly describe.

18. As a child, did you have an adult mentor outside of your pastor-parent and/or other church staff member, to help nurture your faith?

19. What specific, unique realities of growing up as a "PK" helped promote or inhibit your personal faith development?

20. What impact has the United Methodist appointment/itinerant system had on your faith development?

21. What is one piece of advice you would want to offer to appointment decision-makers in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the UMC?

22. What is one piece of advice you would want to offer to young PKs whose parents serve within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the UMC?

23. How old were you when you first became a "PK" (of a full-time church appointed pastor-parent)?

24. How many appointment-based moves did you make before your 18th birthday?

25. What is the largest congregation your pastor-parent served during the years you were living at home (average estimated worship attendance)?

26. Did you spend the majority of your living-at-home PK years in an urban, suburban, or rural setting?

27. What is your current age in years?

28. At what age did you become a "PK" (of a full-time pastor-parent)?

29. How many "appointment-based" moves did you make before you turned 18 years old?

30. Are you willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview?

      30b. If, Yes, please provide your preferred contact information:

            Phone number: _____

            Email address: _____

      Please return your completed survey to Rev. Steve Pichaske.

(Hardcopy)		(email attachment)
P.O. Box 98	OR	pastorsteve.dunlap@gmail.com
210 E. Ash St.		
Dunlap, IL 61525		

APPENDIX C

**SURVEY APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE ILLINOIS GREAT RIVERS
CONFERENCE (IGRC) OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

Illinois Great Rivers Conference
of The United Methodist Church

Vermilion River District
Rev. Leah R. Pogemiller, Superintendent

210 W. Water Street, Suite 2
Pontiac, IL 61764
Phone 815-844-3530 · Fax 815-844-6583
vermilionriver@igrc.org

August 4, 2015

Rev. Steve Pichaske
Dunlap Prospect UMC
P O Box 98
Dunlap, IL 61525-0098

Dear Steve,

You are hereby granted permission to begin your research for your Doctor of Ministry project through Asbury Seminary on the topic of "Preachers' Kids" of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference.

We will keep copies of the project description, consent form, and survey questions with your pastoral file.

In His Service and Love,

Rev. Leah Pogemiller
District Superintendent
Vermilion River District

Cc: Rev. Janice Griffith
    Executive Administrative Assistant to Bishop Jonathan D. Keaton

APPENDIX D

**RECRUITING STATEMENT READ AT THE 2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
CLERGY SESSION OF THE IGRC**

Steve Pichaske, pastor of Prospect United Methodist Church in Dunlap is working to complete his dissertation research this summer. Steve's project focus is centered upon discovering and developing best practices for the spiritual development of "Preachers Kids."

Many of our clergy here today grew up as PKs, and their positive experience with God, church and family helped them experience their call to ministry. At the same time, an article recently posted by our IGRC Pastoral Care Team suggested that as many as 85% of adult PKs in some denominations do not attend regularly church after leaving home.

We would like to see more of the former and less of the latter…

Steve would like to survey and interview your 18-40 year old children as part of his research. He has copies of his survey here today and will also have them throughout annual conference. He also has a sign up sheet where you can provide an email address to receive the survey electronically. If you have an 18-35 year old child, and you were serving in local church ministry for at least part of their childhood, please see Steve to grab a copy of this survey.

And let us pray that we can discern a means to help our pastor's kids enjoy the best possible opportunity to experience the love of God and love of His Church within the context of our Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church.

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PROJECT PARTICPANTS

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself?

2. How much of your childhood was spent as a "Preacher's Kid"?

3. Can you describe the churches and communities in which you spent time as a Preacher's Kid?

4. What are the dominant memories you have of your Preacher's Kid experience?

5. How did your parent(s) dual role of parent *and* pastor influence your faith/spiritual growth?

6. How did growing up in a local church where your parent was the pastor influence your faith/spiritual growth?

7. Who and/or what group, outside of your pastor-parent and the local church, had the most impact on your faith/spiritual growth during your Preacher's Kid years?

8. How did growing up in an "appointment-based system" like we have in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church influence your faith/spiritual growth?

9. What unique blessings/opportunities or stresses/strains presented themselves to you as a local church Preacher's Kid?

10. Can you think of any specific experiences that you feel are worth sharing with pastor-parents, local congregations, or appointment-making leadership where young children or teenagers are involved?

11. Can you identify any specific recommendations that you feel are worth

    sharing with pastor-parents, local congregations, or appointment-making

    leadership where young children or teenagers are involved?

12. How would you describe your faith and/or church involvement today?

13. How can I pray for you?

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