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ABSTRACT

This Doctor of Ministry thesis presents a project designed to meet a need of the Eden Community, an intentional Christian community, regarding the pathways it uses to shape regenerative Christian culture among college students in its apprenticeship program, ARC. In this thesis, I connect the pragmatic aims of the Eden Community to theological foundations regarding the importance of ecclesial diversity and creative contextualization, features that empower the church to embody a variety of life-giving “alternative stories” with the capacity to present the gospel as truly good news to the entire world.

In this project, a team of nine stakeholders met together virtually for a series of eight sessions, designed according to the principles of Appreciative Inquiry. The team refined the ARC Pathways so that they more fully reflect and transmit elements of the Eden Community’s own subculture, cultural components that manifest the community’s paradigm of regenerative Christian culture. At the conclusion of the project, these team members, as well as a focus group and two outside experts, supplied data that, along with the initial and refined ARC Pathways, I then analyzed to determine the degree to which the pathways reflect and successfully transmit the Eden Community’s subculture. The data indicated that some cultural components are strongly reflected in the ARC Pathways, while others need further strengthening for greater effectiveness. Areas for future growth notwithstanding, the team was successful at achieving its goal, and the process proved generative, joyous, and itself an effective form of cultural transmission.

Refining the Eden Community's Pathways for Shaping Regenerative Christian Culture
in the Apprenticeship for Regenerative Culture

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School of Theology

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

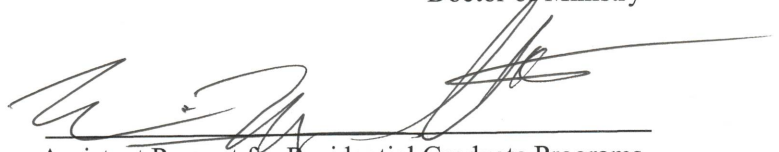
By

Laura Callarman

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This thesis, directed and approved by the committee for the thesis candidate Laura Callarman, has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Programs of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Ministry



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To the Eden Community, my vibrant family of Jesus. I am regularly astounded by the joy of sharing life with you. Your steadfast love enlivens and sustains me, and I cannot imagine life without you. It is my hope and prayer that all people might experience the blessings of community like those God has bestowed on me in you.

To my children, Asher Caleb, Evangeline Joy, and Genevieve Claire. I am so grateful to be your mama, your companion and guide on life's journey. I pray you believe fully in the value of chasing your God-given calling, wherever it may take you. And whether you choose to follow in my footsteps or to find exciting new ways of your own, may you joyfully follow the Spirit who will assuredly guide you to experience and embody good news.

To all you hope-filled dreamers, audacious innovators, and brave explorers who are willing to tread unconventional paths as you seek new ways forward for the future of the church. You have dedicated your lives fully to Jesus's call to discipleship in creatively contextualized, close-knit, transformative community. I see you. I commend you. I know this journey can be as arduous as it is exhilarating. Keep not quitting. Rest in the arms of the One who is Love. And do not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time you will reap a harvest if you do not give up.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis addresses the need to refine the Eden Community’s pathways for shaping regenerative Christian culture through the Apprenticeship for Regenerative Culture, an intensive experience of missional formation available to students at Abilene Christian University.¹ The context for this project was the Eden Community, an intentional Christian community in Abilene, Texas.² The primary goal of this project was to revise the processes that the Eden Community had previously set out to guide the formation of students through ARC. I led a team through this process, seeking to adapt these “ARC Pathways” so that they more thoroughly reflected the Eden Community’s understanding and expressions of regenerative Christian culture.³

1. Hereinafter, I will use abbreviations for the Apprenticeship for Regenerative Culture (ARC) and Abilene Christian University (ACU).

2. I will more deeply explore intentional Christian community and its connection to the wider church as I look at theological foundations for my project in chapter 2. For now, suffice it to say that, by my own definition, an intentional Christian community is a group of people who practice an uncommon level of sharing, of both life and resources, on the basis of shared vision and shared Christian commitments. In the Eden Community, this uncommon level of sharing entails participation in regular rhythms of connection to one another and to God, as well as commitment to certain foundational practices of governance and conflict resolution. Furthermore, the community regularly practices the sharing of life (time, work, resources, etc.) in ways that are not typical in its wider culture of origin. In addition to receiving mention in varying ways throughout this thesis, many of these characteristics of the community are outlined in the Eden Community’s communal covenant, which it calls its Statement of Grace. A copy of this document is available upon request.

3. In short—and sufficient enough until I elaborate further on the concept in my section below on definitions—a regenerative culture is one that brings thoroughgoing revitalization.

This chapter introduces the ministry context in which this project took place: the Eden Community and, more specifically, ARC. An examination of the context leads to problem and purpose statements that delineate the objective of this project, as well as to definitions, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations that undergird the project. Chapter 2 presents the guiding theological foundations for the project. It explores the importance of ecclesial diversity and creative contextualization, affirming the role that they play in the building up of the church and the spread of the gospel. Chapter 2 also examines the Eden Community’s role as a cultural incubator and one particular tool it uses for this work, the Regenerative Culture Portfolio. Chapter 3 lays out the theoretical constructs that give shape to the project: Appreciative Inquiry (hereinafter, AI), Cultural Theory, and the ecclesial subculture of the Eden Community as seen through these two lenses. Chapter 4 outlines the project’s methodology, giving an overview of the intervention before delving into details about the participants, the project’s sessions, and the procedures for data collection and analysis that this project utilized. Chapter 5 presents the findings and results of the project, exploring the degree to which elements of the Eden Community’s subculture are present in and transmitted through the ARC Pathways. Finally, Chapter 6 draws this thesis to a close by examining the project’s trustworthiness and implications, as well as some frames for further research and reflection.

A Brief Description of the Eden Community

The vision that galvanized three families to form the Eden Community in 2013 was a compelling desire “to see a vibrant family of Jesus—a joyful, interdependent, intergenerational community of God’s love and purpose—in close reach of everyone

worldwide.”⁴ As a community dedicated to doing its part in realizing this vision, the group’s two-fold mission is “to be a vibrant family of Jesus ourselves and to equip others to cultivate these regenerative ecosystems of God’s love in their own lives.”⁵ In the intervening years since the genesis of the Eden Community, its vision and mission found resonance with others, leading the Shelburne and McVey families to join the original Callarman, Kaczmarek, and Smith families. At the time of this project, the Eden Community consisted of eleven adults, three teenagers, and seven young children. While the core membership of the Eden Community is small, it is strongly committed and highly gifted for its communal calling.⁶

Eden Community members channel their talents and efforts toward endeavors that are expressions of the community’s central vision and mission. The community’s foremost task, the one of paramount consequence, is to embody regenerative Christian culture itself—to instantiate the kind life it believes characterizes vibrant families of Jesus. While the community’s continued survival is, of course, a prerequisite for its shared work of equipping others, this emphasis on first *being* a vibrant family of Jesus

4. This vision statement permeates the Eden Community’s written and oral communication, including through a prominent place in the Statement of Grace that I mentioned previously. For more about the Eden Community and its work, visit www.edencenter.org.

5. This mission statement can also be found throughout the Eden Community’s various artifacts, including the Statement of Grace. Regarding *vibrant families of Jesus* and *ecosystems of God’s love and purpose*, these phrases, sometimes used interchangeably in the Eden Community, denote its understanding of what the church is meant to be: a community of Christians who embody a thriving life together that is permeated by the loving presence and purposes of Jesus. I will delve into further definitions for these terms shortly.

6. The community’s potential is greater than its small size might indicate. Community members hold thirteen graduate degrees, most in theology and ministry. The group also has over two hundred years of collective experience in teaching, training, and forming students and professionals for lives of missional impact.

stems from more than just a desire to subsist. Rather, it reflects theologian Bryan Stone's argument about the nature of evangelism:

The most evangelistic thing the church can do today is to be the church—to be formed imaginatively by the Holy Spirit through core practices such as worship, forgiveness, hospitality, and economic sharing into a distinctive people in the world, a new social option, the body of Christ. It is the very shape and character of the church as the Spirit's "new creation" that is the witness to God's reign in the world and so both the source and aim of Christian evangelism.⁷

Said differently, in the commonly employed language of the Eden Community, it is through encountering vibrant families of Jesus that people will be drawn into them. If the Eden Community is to effectively equip others for regenerative ways of life as vibrant families of Jesus, then it must first attend to the nature and health of its own expression of Christian community.

From this foundation of shared life in deeply transformative Christian community, God then empowers the Eden Community for the second part of its mission. The community's various ministry endeavors have the common goal of equipping people to embody regenerative Christian culture more fully in their own contexts.⁸ Cloning the

7. Bryan Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 15.

8. One of the community's prominent pursuits, which it believes will serve particularly well as a "demonstration plot" of a different way of life, is the Eden Center, a community-run retreat and training center it intends to build on ninety-two acres of land the community owns outside of Abilene. (For a bit more on the idea of a "demonstration plot," see chapter 2, where I reflect on intentional Christian communities.) This retreat and training center will serve as an income-generating business to support the community and its members, but it will also provide the Eden Community an opportunity to pursue its calling further by leading retreats and training seminars. The retreat facilities will be adjacent to community members' homes, which the group intends to lay out as part of a permaculture-based ecovillage that demonstrates principles and practices of regenerative agriculture, construction, and living.

Aside from this, the community is also working toward a variety of other ministry pursuits. Members are expanding their knowledge about innovative, ecologically friendly building systems so that they might share their findings with others as well as use them for the community's own purposes. The community's training team (at the time of this project, made up of the same people who also serve as the ARC leadership team) is beginning to offer workshops and retreats for individuals, churches, and other organizations, offering the tools and resources at their disposal to guide people toward greater vitality in their individual, communal, and contextual expressions of kingdom life—especially as people feel the need for significant, imaginative, Spirit-led adaptive change in the midst of an emerging religious landscape that

Eden Community in all its particularities is not the goal. At the same time, the community's unconventional way of life together does provide one important instantiation of regenerative Christian culture that it can share about to help bless and renew the church and the world.⁹ Building from the wisdom that community members' education and experience have brought them, then, the Eden Community seeks to encourage and empower others toward Spirit-led innovations in their own lives and locations. It hopes to enliven people's imaginations and equip them to take further steps toward becoming the vibrant families of Jesus that God has uniquely designed and called them to be.

Apprenticeship for Regenerative Culture

One prominent way that the Eden Community has lived into its vocation of equipping others for thriving life in vibrant families of Jesus is through ARC. In ARC, Eden Community members guide students at ACU through multiple years of personal and communal spiritual formation, exploring concepts and practices that the community believes are integral to a life of regenerative culture. Through this immersion experience, students begin to comprehend the importance, power, and beauty of vibrant families of Jesus in ways that help them imagine and live into the possibilities for regenerative Christian culture in their own lives and work in the world.

looks rather different from the one they and their organizations developed in. All the Eden Community's business and ministry pursuits are, at their center, different ways of drawing out and building up vibrant families of Jesus, equipping others to instantiate the good news of God through contextually shaped lives of regenerative Christian culture.

9. I will explore this idea more thoroughly in chapter 2, as I look at the role that intentional Christian community can play in the continual renewal of the church, as well as at the work that the Eden Community does as a cultural incubator. In chapter 3, I will elaborate more on what the Eden Community's subculture entails (in other words, what our unique instantiation of regenerative Christian culture looks like).

ARC: A Brief History

Building upon what Eden Community members had learned through extensive prior endeavors in student spiritual formation, the community piloted ARC in the fall of 2016 with four students. Additional students joined in subsequent semesters, but some of these students were not able to give steady attention or commitment to ARC. Such vacillation prevented a cohesive group from emerging, which made it difficult to gain traction in building relationships or sharing much about the Eden Community and its values and practices. In the spring of 2018, however, a group of seven committed participants did coalesce, meeting together regularly with great relational and formative success.

Also in the spring semester of 2018, this first official cohort of students conceived of a weekly chapel gathering on ACU's campus as an entry-level experience of ARC they could invite their friends to. It proved fruitful in this regard, growing almost exponentially at first and attracting new participants fairly regularly in addition to retaining its steady core group. It became a significant gateway into ARC, a helpful venue in which Eden Community members could guide students in entry-level conversations and spiritual disciplines that reflect the community's subculture and commitments. In an action-interaction-reflection based format that students have found both challenging and refreshing, ARC engages foundational ideas and practices that equip students to connect deeply with themselves, one another, and God.¹⁰ Though

10. Among other things, this chapel has done the following: honed the ability students have to vulnerably express themselves in safe relationships; cultivated listening and attention-paying skills in relationships students have with themselves, others, and God; examined ways that practicing gratitude can impact our wellbeing and ability to engage joyfully; practiced methods of conflict transformation; and explored individual identity, personality, gifting, and vocation, as well as the connections those things have to communal life and mission. The chapel experience essentially serves as the primary context for

limited time and thin community circumscribe what ARC is able to accomplish in a chapel environment, the Eden Community's hope and experience has been that even just this taste of intentional spiritual formation and Christian community is beneficial to students and whets their appetites for more.

Some students have chosen to go deeper, participating in an additional weekly cohort-based gathering, which usually pairs a meal with several hours of connection, conversation, and mutual spiritual support. This larger and longer-term commitment for both students and mentor families comes with deeper relational connection and greater transformative capacity. In this context of heightened commitment and intimacy, ARC has been able to go far beyond basics and generalities with students, getting deep into the core of what purposefully shared faith, life, and mission can look like.¹¹ Students have been able to experience more profoundly what it means to be part of a vibrant family of Jesus—a joyful, interdependent, intergenerational community of God's love and purpose.

Students in ARC's initial cohort particularly flourished as they experienced and began to adopt aspects of regenerative culture. Beginning in 2019, this cohort launched its members into the next stage of their lives after graduating from ACU—a process that brought great sadness but also great joy and opportunity, for these students went forth

introductory Level 1 content included in the ARC Pathways, which can be found in Appendix E and Appendix G, in initial and refined forms, respectively.

11. Among other things that occur as need, desire, and the Spirit prompt, members of ARC cohort groups encourage, challenge, and intercede for one another; experiment with spiritual disciplines and the formation of a rule of life; practice decision-making and discernment together; and engage in spiritual direction and coaching when it is desired. Both a foundation and an outgrowth of all these things is the formation of long-term, sustained, intimate relationships of love and mutuality that the Eden Community believes are meant to characterize the church. This cohort experience has served as the primary venue for the Level 2 content of the ARC Pathways, as outlined in Appendix E and Appendix G, in initial and refined versions.

with increased personal health and a greater understanding of community. Also in 2019, several students from ARC's chapel gathering started their journey together as ARC's second cohort. Forming this cohort entailed recruiting and beginning to train a mentor family from outside the Eden Community for the first time. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic derailed the progress of this cohort, though a few of its members continued to engage ARC relationships and gatherings some.

The Eden Community has long envisioned a team mission stage of ARC that builds upon this foundation of community formation, but it has not yet been able to successfully launch that stage.¹² The intent is that through preparation at the chapel and cohort levels, students will be ready to form short-term teams that together choose a communal life, context, and ministry to engage during their latter years at ACU. This stage is meant as a mentor-guided, context-based instantiation of the life God is calling these students to as a vibrant family of Jesus in that moment. The community's hope has been that it will serve as both an experimental learning lab in which students may more concretely apply the things they are discovering in ARC as well as a potential launching pad for longer-term communal life and ministry after graduation. In 2020, the ARC leadership team was able to bring together an advisory team for several meetings to help us think through the design of this component of ARC.

12. This team mission stage largely correlates to Level 3 content in the ARC Pathways, as outlined in Appendix E and Appendix G. A group of four young men, including some from our initial ARC cohort, did choose to live together at one point, but there was not much purposeful structure or guidance for them in that pursuit. Another group of four young women attempted something comparable, but they had no strong affiliation with ARC or the Eden Community, and various factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, led to the dissolution of this group. Each of these groups was later represented on this project's Pathways Team.

While these overall goals and structure are still currently in place, in 2020 the Eden Community's imagination for ARC, particularly for the team mission stage, began to evolve some.¹³ While ARC continues to function generally as it has in the past, the Eden Community's training team has shifted much of its attention toward launching Eden Fellows, a ten-month immersion program that combines guided spiritual formation with communal living in context, strategic part-time work in local businesses and nonprofits, and master's level certification through ACU's Graduate School of Theology.¹⁴ The reasons for this shift are manifold. Prominent among them, however, are the difficulties of sustaining undergraduate students' attention and of ensuring commitment from all participants to the essential task of listening communally for the Spirit's guidance.¹⁵ It is the Eden Community's hope and belief that a successful fellowship program will serve the community's overall formational goals, meet needs that both students and trainers

13. In many ways, the work of ARC and the Eden Community will always remain emergent, with a tendency (or at least the potential) to shift rapidly and regularly. This development is one illustration of that reality.

14. For more on Eden Fellows, visit <https://www.edenfellows.com>.

15. It has always been challenging to capture and maintain long-term attention and investment from busy college students. Students who choose to commit deeply to ARC clearly experience its benefits and throw themselves wholeheartedly into ARC relationships and activities. But in years when many students invest more superficially, it has proven particularly difficult to sustain attention for running the program in its various overlapping stages, especially since the ARC leadership team is generally volunteering its time. After observing this for several years, the leadership team began to see that it might want to focus its attention primarily on the team mission stage of ARC, with students who have made a deep and long-term commitment, adapting all other components of ARC to lead toward that capstone experience. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly exacerbated this dilemma of attention, requiring ARC to shift for an extended time to virtual gatherings that, however well executed, simply could not rival face-to-face gatherings in relational and transformative power. The pandemic wearied us all—students and Eden Community members alike—of virtual meetings, also demanding that we shift our time and energy in various unanticipated and even unwelcome ways, leaving us little stamina for investing deeply in ARC. Implementing the Eden Community's plans for Eden Fellows will allow the community to capture greater student attention for its formative goals as well as secure funds that allow for more sustainable investments of time and energy from its training team.

have expressed, and provide a compelling capstone experience that other layers of ARC training can build toward.¹⁶

All told, then, the Eden Community has aspired through relational development and active training in these various iterations and layers of ARC to form, equip, and launch students for transformative communal kingdom life in the present and after leaving ACU. Its goal is to help cultivate regenerative ecosystems of God’s love and purpose among these students, nurturing in them the capacity to develop and live as vibrant families of Jesus, wherever they go, whatever they do.

ARC Pathways

The Eden Community has in place a set of pathways, which has gone through several iterations over the years, that it uses to help shape regenerative Christian culture among students. The very first version of these pathways was an extensive set of goals for student formation, organized around desired semester-by-semester outcomes for the four anticipated years of ARC. Additional engagement with students showed ways the ARC experience might need to evolve, however, and in 2020, the ARC leadership team adapted these initial pathways into a more detailed yet flexible framework that will guide students in exploring regenerative culture: the Regenerative Culture Portfolio, described in some detail in chapter 2.¹⁷ This framework is based upon community members’

16. It remains to be seen whether ARC will continue to develop to include the Level 3 and Level 4 content of the ARC Pathways, or if Eden Fellows will essentially become the primary vehicle for the team mission experience, the next step after an undergraduate ARC experience that focuses on Levels 1 and 2. Given some of the developments that occurred through and concurrently with this project, the latter scenario seems most likely. Whatever the case, though, the contents of the pathways will remain generally the same, with shifts occurring mainly regarding timeline and delivery methods. Thus, Eden Fellows can be seen as a natural companion to or extension of ARC.

17. The title “Regenerative Culture Portfolio” was not typically employed in conversations with the Pathways Team, as we adopted it after the outset of this project. During this project, we did talk some about the “Four Stories Portfolio,” mentioned occasionally in the notes for Session 7, which are included in

extensive experiences in Christian community and spiritual nurture. Unfortunately, the restrictions of the pandemic, as well as limited time and attention, have prevented ARC from fully implementing these updated pathways with students. Nonetheless, the Eden Community has found the framework immensely helpful in focusing its efforts to effectively shape regenerative culture among students and non-students alike.

Shaping culture is challenging, however, and sometimes the community's efforts fall short of what it desires for a variety of reasons. There is, of course, the challenge of retaining the attention of both busy college students and an unpaid training team. It is also true that, especially because the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, ARC has not yet had the opportunity to fully engage all its objectives for progressive stages of student formation. Moreover, the Eden Community is an organization that leans into innovation and experimentation enough that it may never fully standardize its rhythms and practices; thankfully, these pathways are flexible enough to allow for adaptation as the moment demands and the Spirit leads. Finally, one significant reason that ARC's efforts may have fallen short at times is that prior to this project, the ARC leadership team had never undertaken a purposeful revision of the ARC Pathways with the lived experience of students or the Eden Community's own unique expression of regenerative culture explicitly in mind. This project aimed to address that weakness.

ARC is noteworthy for the Eden Community in that it is one of its earliest attempts at long-term training in regenerative culture. The community hopes and

Appendix F. Though the terminology is different, these reference the same set of contents and processes, which are primarily described in this project and thesis as the "ARC Pathways." When I describe the Regenerative Culture Portfolio in further detail in chapter 2, I have chosen to use that terminology because it most accurately reflects the contents.

believes, however, that ARC will be but one early instantiation of many in the community's enduring vocation to train others for flourishing, transformative communal life and mission. Therefore, the community can engage it as a test case, an opportunity to continue learning more about how to effectively shape regenerative culture. Certainly for the sake of ARC itself, then, but also for the sake of enhancing future Eden Community ministry endeavors, I sought to help the community refine its pathways for shaping regenerative Christian culture through ARC.

Statement of the Problem

The problem I engaged in this project was unrefined pathways for shaping regenerative Christian culture among students at ACU through ARC. The ARC leadership team had a set of pathways already in place for ARC that had proven effective to a certain extent. However, the team had not undertaken any official evaluation of those pathways or solicited much corporate feedback or construction on them, including from the students for whom they were crafted. Furthermore, the ecclesial subculture of the Eden Community was tacitly assumed when the team initially fashioned these pathways. Therefore, the fit of these pathways for ARC's audience of ACU students was unknown, as were the ways they might best be improved upon to more fully reflect and transmit the Eden Community's understanding of regenerative Christian culture.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this project was to use the findings of my own prior research and the wisdom of community to refine the pathways that ARC uses to shape regenerative Christian culture among ACU students. I led a team of ARC stakeholders in the process of AI, imagining together how we could enhance the initial set of ARC Pathways to more

fully reflect and transmit the Eden Community’s understanding of regenerative Christian culture in the ACU context.

Definitions

Culture

In defining *culture*, I will follow the lead of Tanner, who says that culture “refers to the whole social practice of meaningful action, and more specifically to the meaning dimension of such action—the beliefs, values, and orienting symbols that suffuse a whole way of life.”¹⁸ Tanner claims that while everyone inherits a baseline version of already established culture, this is merely a starting point for future modifications, as culture is highly dynamic, continuously socially constructed through the active agency and material processes of all members of society.¹⁹ Notably, Tanner differentiates between culture and social practice, arguing that the meaning dimension of culture is “created and recreated in the ‘material’ social interactions of which it is an integral part.”²⁰ While the distinction is a reasonable one and helpful at times, for the purposes of this project, I will lean into Tanner’s own articulation of culture as the social practice of meaningful action, including both the meaning dimension (what she terms *culture*) and material dimension (what she terms *practices*) in my own usage of the term *culture*, as they are intricately related.

Subculture

Tanner argues convincingly that Christianity does not actually form its own distinct cultural identity, identifiable by its members’ disengagement from the broader

18. Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 70.

19. Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 50–52.

20. Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 50–51.

world, by sharp boundaries, or by unique and homogenous beliefs and actions. Rather, it is a *subculture*, “a hybrid that always shares cultural forms with its wider host culture and other religions,” while its members remain interspersed among and intricately woven into those cultures.²¹ Without existing as a separate society, then, Christianity is a voluntary association of people who gradually, in an *ad hoc* fashion, shape a whole way of life that makes totalizing claims intended to alter participants’ interactions outside the association.²² What unifies and identifies people as part of this particular subculture is the common task of discerning what Christian discipleship (or, as Tanner puts it, discipleship to the free Word) should look like.²³

Within the framework of this project, I have generally adhered to the implications of Tanner’s concept of Christianity as a subculture. In my writing, I have attempted when possible to utilize the word *subculture* when discussing derived expressions of culture (such as the Eden Community’s) for which it is the most accurate anthropological term. However, for the purposes of simplicity in my conversations with the Pathways Team, as well as with the later focus group and outside experts, I chose not to delve into the anthropological complexities of the term *subculture*, opting instead to simply use the term *culture* broadly, including in reference to ecclesial cultures and the Eden Community’s culture. For that reason, while I employ the word *subculture* throughout this thesis, the alternative phrasing remains in quoted materials and appendices that this project produced.

21. Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 114.

22. Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 103.

23. Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 155.

Ecclesial Subculture

Precisely because Christianity is a subculture, a hybrid in which both the material dimension and meaning dimension of culture intersect and interplay in unique ways with various host cultures, ecclesial expressions have been immensely diverse across time and space. People have found a staggering number of ways, often clearly influenced by their contexts, to answer the question of what Christian discipleship looks like.²⁴ For the purposes of this project, I often use the phrase *ecclesial subculture* as shorthand for the particular way Christian subculture takes shape in a specific context. By thinking and writing in terms of ecclesial subculture, it is my hope and intent to express the heart of who a church or Christian community is—things such as its most central theological commitments and values, its unique gifting or calling, its theologically driven rituals and routines, and its paramount practices of relationships among people and with God. The primary ecclesial subculture I have attended to in this project is that of the Eden Community.²⁵

Regenerative Culture

Regenerative refers to something that does more than just sustain, but instead goes so far as to rejuvenate, reintroducing life and vitality where their absence has caused

24. In chapter 2, when I discuss the theological foundations of this project, I will give significant attention to the ideas of creative contextualization and ecclesial diversity. The possibilities for how Christian subculture is expressed in context are innumerable! This is in part because, as theologian Mary Clark Moschella reminds us, “Just about any activity, if it is performed regularly and with a shared understanding of religious intent or meaning, can be considered a religious practice.” Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrims, 2008), 51.

25. I will elaborate further what the ecclesial subculture of the Eden Community entails in chapter 3, using the findings of my previous research, done through the lenses of Cultural Theory and AI. Chapter 5 also contains descriptions of elements of the Eden Community’s subculture that connected to the Pathways Team’s work in this project.

adverse effects. The term has a lengthy history in Christian theology, describing the work God does in a believer to bring about spiritual rebirth.²⁶ It has also gained prominence in recent decades in the realm of agriculture, where it was introduced by Robert Rodale in the 1980s as an approach that “not only maintains but improves,” a progression from simply *sustainable*.²⁷

Although there are clear connections between these meanings of the term and the Eden Community’s own definition of *regenerative culture*, they do not express the exact same ideas. The Eden Community’s usage is more far-reaching, with a focus on systems and all-inclusive cultural expressions that are broader than a single individual or field. Founding Eden Community member Kent Smith began exploring the term *regenerative* to refer to Christian life and culture in 2015, prior to its wider popularization in secular parlance. At the time, he defined *regenerative culture* as “a set of values and practices that consistently enhance ecological, social, and spiritual health.”²⁸

Since that time, the term *regenerative* has gained significant traction, with usage expanding into fields such as design and economics, a development that fits with the emphasis regenerative pursuits commonly have on a systems approach. The concept of a

26. See, for instance, Dallas Willard’s writing about the way that the regeneration of believers through spiritual formation is an outgrowth of salvation. Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Formation as a Natural Part of Salvation,” in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 49, 58.

27. Rodale Institute, “Regenerative Organic Agriculture,” 2022, <https://rodaleinstitute.org/why-organic/organic-basics/regenerative-organic-agriculture/>.

28. Kent Smith, personal notes from 2015, shared with the author via email. Smith also used the term in an article he presented at the 2015 Christian Scholars’ Conference, “Ecosystems of Grace: An Old Vision for the New Church,” *Missio Dei* 7 (Summer–Fall 2016), <http://missiodeijournal.com/issues/md-7/authors/md-7-smith>.

comprehensive *regenerative culture* has even begun to receive some attention.²⁹ Bloom Network offers the most systemically thorough framework for regenerative culture that I have yet seen, addressing issues of collective wisdom, global justice, community health, sustainable technology, creative arts, peer-to-peer economy, and earth stewardship. They state that regenerative cultures “create the conditions for more life, more diversity, more resilience and anti-fragility.”³⁰

According to my own definition, a *regenerative culture* is an all-encompassing way of life that reinvigorates the people and places who participate in and surround it, restoring or perhaps even building for the first time a compelling vibrancy. All regenerative cultures directly reflect the creative, redemptive nature of God. Regenerative *Christian* cultures will purposefully nurture this reflection, aiming to faithfully exhibit the revitalizing nature and characteristics of God in their own ways of life.

The Eden Community is a pioneer in using the phrase *regenerative culture* to address broad expressions of human culture from this specifically Christian framework. The community does connect its efforts to incubate regenerative culture to fields typically at the center of conversations about regenerativity—ecology, economics, design, etc. But it grounds all these things in a broader theological frame.

The Eden Community’s work of shaping regenerative culture is two-fold. It involves walking alongside others as they explore their own contexts and commitments, discerning with them how the Spirit is guiding them to instantiate regenerative culture. In

29. For example, in 2016, Daniel Christian Wahl wrote *Designing Regenerative Cultures* (Axminster, England: Triarchy, 2016), a resource that begins with but moves somewhat beyond ecological expressions of regenerative culture.

30. Bloom Network, “What is Regenerative Culture—Bloom Network’s Content Framework,” 17 January 2019, <https://bloomnetwork.org/content-framework/>.

addition, however, it also often entails inviting others to experience and reflect on the Eden Community's unique ecclesial subculture so that they may understand it and, better yet, experience its regenerative power in their own lives. This second approach takes on its fullest expression in the Eden Community's custom of inviting students into apprenticeship. Both approaches, though slightly different from each other, may be usefully combined in varying ways to help shape regenerative Christian culture. The presence of both in the Eden Community's practice is in keeping with Tanner's claim that what defines Christian identity is the shared task of discerning and even arguing about what discipleship to the free Word entails.³¹

Vibrant Family of Jesus

The concept of a *vibrant family of Jesus* is prominent in the Eden Community's ecclesiological paradigm and language, and it is central to my examination of the community's attempts to shape regenerative Christian culture through ARC. As I lay out the elements that define a vibrant family of Jesus, I will also draw connections to two other phrases the Eden Community often employs to convey its meaning: *joyful, interdependent, intergenerational communities of God's love and purpose* and *ecosystems of grace*.

A vibrant family of Jesus exists in the kind of close-knit, bonded community that characterizes healthy families. Now, as in biblical times, God's followers are

31. Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 155. The Regenerative Culture Portfolio that I introduce in chapter 2 is the primary tool that the Eden Community currently uses in its work of shaping regenerative culture. It can be used on its own as a framework for helping people examine their own cultural expressions, or it can be powerfully paired with opportunities to participate in and reflect on the Eden Community's expression of regenerative culture.

incorporated into a surrogate household or family of faith.³² This experience of kinship is “created (‘fictive’) rather than happening through normal biological processes.”³³

Believers’ new faith-based family is meant to serve as an identity marker and support system that supersedes, and when necessary even replaces, our other familial ties.

Extensive prior experience in spiritual formation, mission, and community nurture led members of the Eden Community to highlight several specific features its members believe tend to characterize such families of faith when they are at their best: joy, interdependence, and intergenerationality.³⁴ These elements do not provide an exhaustive depiction of what it means to follow Jesus in community, but they are crucial enough that the Eden Community includes them in its description. Their presence in a community empowers it to exist in the ways God intends our adopted family to. Joy provides a solid foundation for individuals and communities, enabling people to engage each other and all that life brings from a place of well-being.³⁵ Healthy interdependence, rather than pure

32. Smith elaborates on this point in “Ecosystems of Grace,” where he draws extensively on Ephesians, connecting the household (*oikos*) described there to the concept of ecosystem (*oikonomia*) that Ephesians also portrays. I have also explored the theme of household as it runs throughout Ephesians in my December 2011 paper, “A Divine *Oikos*: A Study of the Household in Ephesians,” which I completed for Dr. Curt Niccum’s “Advanced Introduction to the New Testament” course at ACU. A copy of this paper is available upon request.

33. Russ Meek, “Fictive Kinship: What It Is and How It Impacts Our Understanding of the Gospel,” 30 September 2020, <https://russmeek.com/2020/09/fictive-kinship-what-it-is-and-how-it-impacts-our-understanding-of-the-gospel/>. Meek highlights how “this creation of family ties happened through cutting a covenant with another person or group of people,” a topic I will explore briefly in chapter 2.

Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner also explores the concept of fictive kinship through the lens of adoption, claiming, “No model better suits the church than that of a healthy adopted family.” See Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner, “One Family, Under God, Indivisible,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 13.9 (2003), 59.

34. I will give further attention to many of these elements throughout this thesis, especially in chapter 2, as I explore my theological foundations, and in chapter 5, where many of them arise as components of the Eden Community’s ecclesial subculture that the Pathways Team engaged in this project.

35. John C. White, Toni M. Daniels, and Kent Smith explore the importance of joy for followers of Jesus in *Joy Fueled: Catalyzing a Revolution of Joyful Communities* (self-pub., LK10, 2020). The Eden Community centers joy in its telling of the Christian metanarrative, what it terms *The Story*, which I will mention in chapter 2. Furthermore, a connection certainly exists, both practically and linguistically,

self-reliance on the one hand or unbalanced codependence on the other hand, allows relationships to flourish. The presence of intergenerationality ensures that a community's members can share the blessings and challenges accompanying their varied ages and life stages, equipping them to support one another in ways that unigenerational community cannot. A joyful, interdependent, intergenerational community is set up for success, whatever its stance on the Christian faith.

To truly be a vibrant family *of Jesus*, however, this kind of fictive family must have one additional essential element. It must be thoroughly permeated by God's love and purpose. These families of Christ-followers are charged with embodying the dynamic, regenerative life and love of God. As they live out the gospel, they do so in Spirit-led ways that transform both them and their surroundings toward God's regenerative aims. They exist as *ecosystems of grace*, "extended family wherein each person has a vital role in giving, receiving, and displaying God's love and wisdom."³⁶ In this kind of ecosystem, the gifts of all community members are brought forth for the flourishing of the interdependent whole. This will inevitably (and rightly) take on varying expressions to fit diverse origins and contexts, as communities seek to incarnate the life

between joy and appreciation. Smith explores this also in "Ecosystems of Grace." The connection between joy and appreciation is particularly good to keep in mind in the context of this project, which I engaged using a highly appreciative framework.

36. Smith, "Ecosystems of Grace." Smith elaborates further about the *oikonomia* (ecosystem) of the heavenly household described in Ephesians, also drawing connections between the terms *gift* and *grace*, especially as highlighted in Ephesians 4.

of God within their larger culture.³⁷ But it will always be characterized by the nature and objectives of Jesus.³⁸

This sounds a great deal like what many people mean when they speak of the church. Is a vibrant family of Jesus the same thing as the church, then? Yes. And no. If what I have just described is essentially what one means by *church*, then there is no divergence between the terms, just as there is no distinction in the Eden Community's understanding between *vibrant family of Jesus* and the New Testament term *ekklesia*.³⁹ In terms of lived practice, however, there may be a difference between what the Eden Community envisions when it speaks of a vibrant family of Jesus and what people conceive of when they hear the word *church*.

All forms of church have the capacity to produce and nurture authentic Christian disciples pursuing life together as a vibrant family of Jesus. Thus, a vibrant family of Jesus *can* exist within virtually any form of ecclesial subculture. What defines and unifies us as God's church, after all, is not the uniformity of our ecclesial models or even our specific theological beliefs, but rather, *à la* Tanner, our shared commitment to the task of discerning what discipleship to Jesus looks like. That being the case, wherever vibrant families of Jesus emerge, we ought to recognize and celebrate them, even if they look nothing like our own ecclesial expressions.

37. I will revisit the themes of incarnation and creative contextualization in depth in chapter 2.

38. I will also say more about this in chapter 2, as I discuss how the value of ecclesial diversity intersects with fundamental commitments of the Christian faith.

39. For more on what *ekklesia* meant in the New Testament and to the earliest Christians, see Andrew Menzies and Dean Phelan, *Kingdom Communities: Shining the Light of Christ through Faith, Hope, and Love* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 69–72.

That being said, not every extant expression of church *does* correlate to a vibrant family of Jesus. Some fall far short, sadly, of what the New Testament envisions. For whatever reason—whether deliberately or, more likely, inadvertently—they lack the elements that characterize thriving communities of God’s love and purpose. Furthermore, the term *church* comes loaded with an incredible array of connotations and long-standing presuppositions that may not necessarily reflect the New Testament’s paradigms. Thus, particularly in contexts where ecclesial expressions have, even for centuries, looked very little like the *ekklesia* of the New Testament, employing the language of *vibrant family of Jesus* rather than *church* encourages people to reexamine their theological frameworks and assumptions.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is a form of learning-in-practice in which a novice, by coming alongside and being trained by a master (whether formally or informally), gradually comes to take on the knowledge, skills, and habitus that characterize a master of a certain trade or way of life.⁴⁰ It has been practiced in varying ways around the globe and across history, as anthropologist Jean Lave and computer scientist Etienne Wenger illustrate.⁴¹ However expressed, though, apprenticeship recognizes that “understanding and experience are in constant interaction—indeed, are mutually constitutive ... [and] thus

40. This definition is my own articulation of what apprenticeship is, but it is highly reflective of the framework articulated in Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

41. The book uses case studies to depict various forms of learning-in-practice. Chapter 3 is specifically devoted to analyzing five separate instances of apprenticeship, each having its own unique features: Yucatec midwives, Vai and Gola tailors, naval quartermasters, meat cutters, and nondrinking alcoholics. See Lave and Wenger, *Situated Learning*, 59–87.

dissolves dichotomies between cerebral and embodied activity, between contemplation and involvement, between abstraction and experience.”⁴²

As Lave and Wenger explore wide-ranging practices of learning and cultural transmission, they argue that learning is less a process of acquiring propositional knowledge and more a process of mastering knowledge and skills through embodied co-participation in a community of practitioners. “We emphasize the significance,” they affirm, “in shifting the analytical focus from the individual as learner to learning as participation in the social world, and from the concept of cognitive process to the more-encompassing view of social practice.”⁴³ They continue on, saying, “As an aspect of social practice, learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities—it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person.”⁴⁴

The central idea that Lave and Wenger are communicating is that of legitimate peripheral participation (hereinafter, LPP), an analytical viewpoint on learning that can be applied to diverse learning forms, of which apprenticeship is but one possibility—albeit an option that fits particularly well. Within the framework of LPP, a learner “participates in the actual practice of an expert, but only to a limited degree and with limited responsibility for the ultimate product as a whole.”⁴⁵ LPP moves novices through increasingly complex and autonomous engagement with a group—its members,

42. Lave and Wenger, *Situated Learning*, 51–52.

43. Lave and Wenger, *Situated Learning*, 40.

44. Lave and Wenger, *Situated Learning*, 53.

45. William F. Hanks, foreword to *Situated Learning* by Lave and Wenger, 13.

identities, practices, knowledge, and artifacts—toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of that community as a master. It is a co-learning process in which all participants and components are opened to transformation.

Many of the Eden Community’s practices—and indeed its very identity and core mission—strongly reflect the form of apprenticeship and the framework of LPP. We have found these stances an incredibly good fit for our work of equipping others for life and leadership within vibrant families of Jesus. This is unsurprising, given that apprenticeship and related practices like modeling, demonstration, and catechesis have been proven invaluable for the effective transmission of cultural values and competencies in both Christian and non-Christian settings.

For example, while historian Alan Kreider may not use the same terms as Lave and Wenger, he reaches similar conclusions when he examines the ways in which Christians throughout time engaged belief, belonging, and behavior in their different conversion practices. In the era of Christendom, he argues, conversion practices typically stressed the adoption of particular beliefs, with no major shift in a sense of belonging and little emphasis on changed behavior. Kreider concludes that this approach is insufficient for our own time and that the contrasting stance of the early Christians may be particularly valuable for the church as it enters the era of post-Christendom. While the early Christians did not shy away from the idea of right belief, they recognized “that insight into truth comes out of practical engagement, that learning is the product of action.”⁴⁶ They took on belonging- and behavior-based conversion practices that

46. Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 103.

“produced people whose approach to the addictions of their time was transformed, whereas programs of evangelistic teaching in our own time,” which have a primary emphasis on belief, “leave people ‘converted’ but unchanged.”⁴⁷

At least according to Kreider’s analysis of the early Christians, then, effective conversion (a form of transformative enculturation) happens when a person, by belonging to a group, learns to take on the behaviors of that group, thus also gradually coming to adopt the group’s beliefs.⁴⁸ To put it in terms more resonant with Tanner, because culture is the social practice of meaningful action, cultural acquisition entails adopting both meaning and material dimensions. Kreider describes the significance of this kind of community-based and experiential enculturation for shaping people for the demanding way of Christian discipleship: “To be a creative minority whose members, engaged in a difficult mission, know how to make peace and to engage with the other addictions of postmodern society—this requires catechetical formation that has moral substance as well as the experience of God’s grace, love, and power in appropriate ritual.”⁴⁹ This portrayal is incredibly close to the idea of regenerative Christian culture—creative, all-encompassing missional engagement with the needs and opportunities of a context, grounded in the experience of God’s presence.

47. Kreider, *Change of Conversion*, 103.

48. Time spent in a formative context is essential to effective conversion. This is similar to what missional theologian Graham Joseph Hill says about the importance of slowing down and immersing ourselves in the Christian faith in order to cultivate wisdom: “We need to talk more about discipleship and faith as immersion. Not skimming over the surface, bouncing from one thing to another, but *immersion*.” Graham Joseph Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City: Conformation—Ecclesiology for the Global Missional Community: Volume 2, Majority World Voices*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020), 308.

49. Kreider, *Change of Conversion*, 105.

In another context entirely, the Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV) initiative, an extensive undertaking that the Lilly Endowment richly funded, also demonstrated the social dynamics of formation. This eight-year project among eighty-eight religiously-affiliated universities supported programs that aimed for the successful formation of vocational identity among undergraduate college students, attempting “to strengthen an education that could sustain abundant lives for these emerging adults, an education in which intellectual and applied learning could converge with resources from moral and theological traditions.”⁵⁰ Notably, the study indicated that in educating students for vocation, three components were especially significant: mentoring, apprenticeship, and a community of practice. Regarding mentoring, Roels reports that “pro-vocational campus spaces become mentoring communities for undergraduates, places in which to nurture the whole people we need them to become.”⁵¹ Regarding the formative capacity of apprenticeship and learning-in-practice, she asserts, “Undergraduate education is also deepened when ideas are intertwined with experience. An education for vocation must be simultaneously taught and caught. We know that vocational initiatives have greater stickiness when concepts and practices are interconnected.”⁵² And with reference to the importance of a community of practice, she says that “vocational explorations are most effective when our students experience life

50. Shirley J. Roels, “An Education for Life Abundant,” *Liberal Education* 100.1 (Winter 2014): 6–13, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=a9h&AN=102670383&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=s8479690>. For a much more detailed account of the PTEV initiative, see Tim Clydesdale, *The Successful Graduate: Why Colleges Must Talk to Students About Vocation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 6.

51. Roels, “An Education,” 11.

52. Roels, “An Education,” 11.

together within educational communities that cultivate individual beliefs and contributions,” adding that in order to assist students in launching well into life post-college, it is important to anchor them by helping them “discover their place of being and doing.”⁵³

Lave and Wenger, Kreider, and the PTEV initiative, from widely divergent contexts and frameworks, all highlight the social dynamics of shaping people for competent skill or culture acquisition. Situated learning, LPP, conversion that happens primarily through belonging and behavior, and successful vocational formation—these are all central aims and practices of the Eden Community. As the community invites others to experience and build regenerative culture, then, it is not surprising to see such commitments and methods converge in the form of ARC.

Basic Assumptions

In this project, I made two primary assumptions regarding culture. First, culture is inescapable, and cultural transmission happens regularly, as humans are inherently bound up in culture and pass it on through their actions, both deliberately and in unplanned ways. Be that as it may, cultural transmission does not always happen in the ways we want or to the degree we want. As theologian Kathryn Tanner declares, “There is no escape from the social inheritance of culture; culture is an inevitability, a human universal. But no particular culture has a similar inevitability; any culture can conceivably be escaped—into some other.”⁵⁴ When a group is attempting deliberate cultural transmission, then, examining its cultural transmission practices can equip it for

53. Roels, “An Education,” 11.

54. Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 37.

greater effectiveness. In the context of Christian discipleship, and specifically in the context of the Eden Community's attempts to shape regenerative culture through ARC, this means we ought to purposefully and regularly reexamine the ends, means, and effectiveness of our formational practices.⁵⁵

Second, culture is continuously shifting, and the church must learn to adapt to its changing contexts if it is to thrive. Christians must be, like our God, a people of history, of story, and of tradition. At the same time, also like our God, we must be a people of newness, of creativity, and of incarnation. Without a doubt, the church must carry forward certain components of its past to maintain its identity. But it must also embrace the new and sometimes seemingly strange things that God is doing among the people and paradigms of its current time and place. If it is to thrive in context, the church must find appropriate, contextualized ways of being and discipling that maintain what is enduring about the old while also embracing what is good about the new.⁵⁶

55. For a helpful brief discussion of the varying forms of cultural transmission, see John W. Berry, "Acculturation," in *Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research*, ed. Joan E. Grusec and Paul D. Hastings (New York: Guilford, 2007), 543–60. According to Berry, *cultural transmission* is the larger category under which processes like enculturation, socialization, and acculturation happen. The work of the Eden Community in shaping regenerative culture by inviting people to participate in its own cultural expressions is probably best termed subcultural acculturation. It is a process entered into by fully formed adults, previously shaped by their primary culture and their original experiences of Christian subculture. Thus, since it involves a subculture other than a person's original or primary (sub)culture, it is not truly enculturation or socialization. It more closely resembles Berry's description of acculturation as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members." Berry, "Acculturation," 543. As such, it involves both processes of cultural shedding and cultural learning. Berry, "Acculturation," 547.

56. I will explore the idea of creative contextualization further in chapter 2. The metaphor Phyllis Tickle uses, attributing it to Anglican bishop Mark Dyer, is a powerful one here. Dyer and Tickle speak of the church as periodically undertaking a metaphorical rummage sale, cleaning out its attic, setting some of its discarded things on the curb, and doing some rearranging internally. To make room for the good of the new, we must clear out some of the old that is uselessly, or perhaps even harmfully, taking up space. However, we do not simplistically cast everything out and start from scratch. Instead, we examine the items around us carefully and keep that which sustains us and carries important value for the future. [See Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 16.] Essentially, under the Spirit's guidance, we employ the recently popular KonMari method of tidying: keeping that which sparks joy, graciously letting go of that which has served us in the past but is no longer

For the success of this project, I also assumed that a sufficiently large and willing group of ARC stakeholders would be available to work through the various steps of the project's process. I was working on the assumption that the Eden Community and ARC would maintain their general trajectories for the duration of this project and that these groups would remain available to participate in ways that supported the completion of this project.⁵⁷ Furthermore, I assumed that ARC stakeholders would not only be available but would be truly eager to participate in this project and would have significant perspectives to contribute to the formation of the ARC Pathways.

I made three further assumptions, all connected to the subculture of the Eden Community. First, I assumed that the Eden Community's subculture was a sufficient enough, though not exhaustive, example of regenerative Christian culture to build off of, and thus could successfully be used as the foundation for comparison and refining in this project.⁵⁸ Second, I assumed that the research into the Eden Community's subculture that

helpful, and making space for life to emerge anew. [See Marie Kondō, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2014).] And as Berry reminds us, "in the case of acculturation, transmission of developing individuals comes from at least two cultural groups, sometimes creating confusion and conflict and sometimes producing new ways of living. Hence, acculturation can be seen not only in terms of loss and acquisition but also as a creative process, from which new societies emerge." Berry, "Acculturation," 547–48.

57. As already noted, several important shifts actually did occur in ARC during the timeframe of this project, each of which had some impact on the project and its methodology. It is true that, as a character in the science fiction book *Cibola Burn* reminds us, "No research protocol survives contact with the subject population." [See James S. A. Corey, *Cibola Burn* (New York: Orbit Books, 2014), 161.] For one, the COVID-19 pandemic limited ARC's development and thus also the pool of potential Pathways Team members. In addition, in the protracted period between when I initially conceived of this project (January 2019) and when I implemented the intervention (summer 2021), the ARC leadership team did some significant work toward developing the ARC Pathways. Furthermore, the introduction of Eden Fellows as a component of the Eden Community's training work affected how the leadership team anticipated the ARC experience unfolding overall. All that being said, these shifts, while important—and challenging to portray in a cohesive narrative—were not insurmountable obstacles to the success of this project.

58. Of course, other widely diverse expressions of regenerative Christian culture exist, and the Eden Community affirms these. For the purposes of this project, however, it was important to correlate the

I based this project upon (which I will describe in detail in chapter 3) provided a sufficient and trustworthy enough portrayal of the Eden Community's subculture for the purposes of this project. The professors I had previously submitted the research to seemed to confirm this through their own analysis. Finally, I assumed that I could manage well any bias that might potentially arise from my own deep personal investment in the Eden Community's subculture. I engaged this project according to methodological commitments that would hold me accountable to this end; these are outlined in chapter 4, with triangulation being a particularly important component. As another way of acknowledging and managing my potential bias, at the conclusion of the project, I examined the trustworthiness of this research through the lenses of credibility and reflexivity, including my conclusions in chapter 6.

Delimitations

Measuring spiritual growth and maturity is a dubious and delicate affair, an unattainable goal, even. Therefore, while it was central to the purposes of this project to discuss and imagine the potential effectiveness of various spiritual formation methods that ARC could employ, no aspect of this project attempted to measure anyone's spirituality. Instead, as we refined the initial set of ARC Pathways, I relied on individuals' testimonies and experienced intuition regarding what they believed might be most spiritually uplifting and transformative for ARC students.

I further delimited my research in this project to the specific context of ARC.

Although I and other members of ARC's leadership team are highly curious to see how

ARC Pathways with the particular expression of regenerative Christian culture that the Eden Community embodies, as it is the one from which we primarily operate.

the pathways might transfer to other contexts, any potential future applications are tentative and will have to be uniquely adapted to those situations. In this project, I focused solely on how well the Eden Community might shape regenerative culture through ARC in the context of students at ACU.⁵⁹

Limitations

The success of this project was in large part related to the available time, attention, and resources of its participants, including me as the researcher but also the ARC stakeholders who participated in this project (known hereinafter as the “Pathways Team”). In a busy and transient college culture—just as among members of a small intentional community where attention is spread thin—inadequate time, attention, energy, and resources posed a potential challenge to this project. This was particularly true in a time when the COVID-19 pandemic had already placed significant stressors on people. Although scheduling did indeed prove to be a difficulty, we were able to work through it relatively well, with a great deal of patience and adaptability on everyone’s part.

While my initial plan was to gather the Pathways Team in person, the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic compelled us to use a videoconferencing platform to conduct the project’s sessions. There were certainly advantages to this arrangement, including the opportunity to incorporate Pathways Team members who were not in geographical proximity, the possibility of an extended timeline for the overall project because Pathways Team members and focus group participants did not have to be in Abilene, and

59. Because the conceptual evolution toward Eden Fellows was happening concurrently to this project’s own development and implementation, there were some ways in which the two programs—ARC and Eden Fellows—were discussed in overlapping ways. That being said, at some level, Eden Fellows could be described as simply a reframing or even just a renaming of Level 3 of the ARC experience. I do not see this as an overstepping of the delimitation outlined here.

the capacity to easily gather quality audiovisual recordings and transcripts of meetings. That being said, there were also significant limitations to conducting this project in a virtual format. At the onset of our project sessions, we were over a year into the pandemic, and many people, me included, were weary of virtual meetings. Several related potential limitations could have threatened the success of this project. Otherwise promising participants could easily have opted out of the project entirely or chosen to engage halfheartedly. Even when present on the calls, people could have chosen at times to disengage. This is certainly understandable, as virtual meetings, even when conducted extremely well, cannot entirely match the capacity in-person meetings have for facilitating joyous connection between people. When we all had the temptations of the internet at our fingertips, as well as the capacity to turn off microphones and cameras—all things that are not readily available in face-to-face meetings—we may have allowed ourselves to disengage more, and unless it was me in question, I might not even have been aware it was happening. Furthermore, in a virtual setting, informal interpersonal interactions were minimized, as people could not physically enter or exit the room together or group up privately for further conversation during breaks. Verbal engagement and body language were minimized or even missing altogether if a participant's microphone was muted or camera was turned off. Finally, our virtual meetings occurred not just in one environment that everyone shared—and that I could shape to a great degree—but rather in numerous environments that were different for each participant and thus provided unique experiences, opportunities, and challenges for each individual while still potentially affecting all participants. In order to facilitate a successful series of virtual interactions that would accomplish this project's purposes, I had to attend carefully to

these matters. Most significantly, I tried to build sustainable rhythms, combining dynamic interactions that encouraged us to engage well with planned times for disengagement so that we could rest and come back refreshed. Relatedly, I had to walk the fine line of inviting participation from everyone while also graciously allowing space for people to disengage without judgment if and as they needed to.

Another important limitation to note is that audiovisual recordings have inherent constraints. They cannot record anything happening outside the camera's field of view nor anything that occurs when a camera is turned off or a microphone is muted. Nor can current videoconferencing technologies capture all subconversations, such as those that happen in breakout rooms. When possible, I did note if participants chose to turn off their audiovisual components, though this typically seemed to be more related to technological issues and courtesy regarding background distractions than to levels of engagement. In addition to these inherent limitations of audiovisual recordings, it is possible that by employing recording methods in the project's sessions, I limited both the data provided by participants and my own interpretations of it. Knowing that I was recording their answers, participants may have hesitated to engage fully and forthrightly. To address this potential limitation and assure team members of the safety of the project environment, I kept audiovisual recordings of our sessions confidential. By doing these things and by taking initial in-session field notes that I later expanded upon, I hoped to combat these potential limitations.

Relatedly, limitations related to the Hawthorne Effect could have occurred to a significant degree in this study. According to this theory, when research participants are conscious of being observed, they have a tendency to modify their behaviors, even in

significant ways that can affect the outcomes of an experiment.⁶⁰ That being said, while the use of audiovisual recordings was obvious in our project sessions, in this time when videoconferencing meetings are commonplace, audiovisual recording now feels rather standard for many people, even to the point that they can sometimes forget they are being observed. As a result, its use may not have greatly altered participants' engagement. In similar fashion, participants in research projects comparable to this one often desire to see the principal researcher do well in their endeavors and thus may modify their own behavior and contributions in an attempt to help achieve this end. As Tim Sensing notes, "congregants want their ministers to do well. When they know the minister is doing the project for a grade, they want their minister to make an A."⁶¹ This is not always a negative thing, as it can encourage greater participation. However, my close personal relationship with some participants may have limited this project if the nature of our relationship made it difficult for them to respond to the research interventions in reliable ways. I attempted to limit the extent of the Hawthorne Effect in several ways. First, I deemphasized the value this project had for me academically, emphasizing instead its value for participants, for the Eden Community and ARC, and for student spiritual formation efforts overall. I made it clear to participants that my own success in the D.Min. program was not predicated upon any particular outcome from our sessions but

60. Stephen W. Draper, "The Hawthorne, Pygmalion, Placebo and Other Effects of Expectation: Some Notes," 7 November 2019, <http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/hawth.html>. Some studies have called into question the results of the original Hawthorne experiments that the phenomenon is named after, but overall studies have indicated that participation effects of various sorts do exist. Kendra Cherry, "The Hawthorne Effect and Behavioral Studies," *VeryWell Mind*, 13 October 2020, <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-hawthorne-effect-2795234#how-to-reduce-the-hawthorne-effect>.

61. Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 82.

rather upon my own capacity to reflect on whatever did occur in the project. Second, I actively cultivated a hospitable environment of creative thought and constructive interactions in which participants were encouraged to speak their minds freely. In other words, I attempted to create what Moschella speaks of as “a healthy and open community, [where] members know that they are free to speak the truth of their experience, that their speech will be heard and engaged theologically, and that they can have a role in co-creating the group’s actions in the present and in the future.”⁶² In all my interactions with participants—from the initial project invitation, through all of our sessions, and as we evaluated the project together at the end—I sought to act respectfully and non-coercively. I told participants that our attempts to refine the ARC Pathways would only be effective if they were based upon honest feedback, reminding them that challenging perspectives and voices of dissent and contrast can be incredibly important for helping us listen to the Spirit and come out with a better product. When participants spoke up about things that may have been difficult to say or hear, I tried to actively affirm that choice. Finally, I prioritized participants’ confidentiality by keeping all questionnaire responses and audiovisual recordings confidential and by anonymizing any references to individual participants in all my reports on this project. In addition to attempting to mitigate the Hawthorne Effect in these ways, I also kept its potential influence in mind as I interpreted the responses this project elicited.

Finally, the stage of development that ARC was in at the time of this project was a limitation. Going into this project, the Eden Community had well-informed assumptions, based off extensive similar experiences, about how to shape regenerative

62. Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*, 219.

culture and form vibrant families of Jesus in the latter stages of ARC. Since ARC had not yet reached maturity in those stages at the time of this project, however, few of the project's participants had much understanding of these potential experiences, and as a team we may not have been able to fully anticipate ways in which the Eden Community might best take on its work in those contexts. Nevertheless, I do believe we were able to use the initial ARC Pathways and the AI process to provide constructive feedback that helped us imagine how we might best engage those stages.

Conclusion

The Eden Community's work in ARC is one expression of its larger mission "to be a vibrant family of Jesus ourselves and to equip others to cultivate regenerative ecosystems of God's love in their own lives." In this chapter, I have depicted the context for that work, provided a bit of history, described the purpose of this project, and set forth fundamental definitions, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations. In chapter 2, I will outline the theological foundations that undergird the Eden Community's pathways for shaping regenerative Christian culture among ACU students through ARC.

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The principal goal of the Eden Community is to instantiate and shape regenerative Christian culture, with ARC aspiring to that task specifically among students at ACU. In this chapter I will flesh out several key theological foundations that undergird the Eden Community, ARC, and this project.

First, I will explore the importance of diversity and creative contextualization, elements of the church that reflect the nature and purposes of God. Next, I will examine the role that intentional Christian communities can play in the renewal of the church, inspiring and strengthening it by telling another life-giving story. Finally, to draw all this together in a way that also provides essential background for my project, I will highlight the Eden Community's work of cultural incubation and present the basic structure of Regenerative Culture Portfolio, a framework the Eden Community has developed in our efforts to shape regenerative culture.

The Value of Ecclesial Diversity

Even a brief survey of history or the world around us evidences the fact that the church has found expression through many incredibly diverse ecclesial subcultures across time and place. Variation is undeniably present within the church, and the reasons for its existence are manifold.¹ Some might lament this situation, longing for a singular coherent

1. For example, a historian might point out the ways in which the realities of a unique time and its associated happenings affected the development of certain ecclesial expressions. A cultural expert could name how social backgrounds and norms shaped the contours of an expression of kingdom life among a

expression of Christian community that fits all people, times, and places. The reality remains, though, that while God intends the church to be unified, it has never been uniform in its expressions of the life and work of God.²

Certainly, similarities should exist between ecclesial subcultures, as all of them should mirror God's character and purposes. The same God is at the center of all of them, informing and shaping them. And the core identity of the church does not change, for that identity is established by God, not by us or our external circumstances. We are always disciples of Jesus, called by the Holy Spirit into community that transforms us more into the likeness of Christ. As Franke says, "the entire biblical panorama may be read as presenting the purpose of God as bringing into being a people who reflect the divine character and thus fulfill the vocational calling to be the image of God."³

particular people. A theologian might call attention to the impact of doctrinal views in the formation, development, and dissolution of diverse expressions of the church. None of these interconnecting perspectives is sufficient by itself, as each of them has something insightful to contribute when it comes to expressing how and why diverse ecclesial subcultures have arisen throughout the church's history.

2. Historians, theologians, and ecclesiologists all provide fascinating perspectives on the diversity of the church, and there is a multitude of resources I could cite here. I will limit myself to three resources that I have found particularly helpful. Philip Sheldrake gives a sweeping overview of expressions of Christian spirituality throughout history, illustrating the diversity of ecclesial subcultures across time and space. [Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, while not venturing to say a great deal about cultural reasons for ecclesial diversity, does explore how theologians and traditions have defined the church in many divergent ways, which certainly leads to great diversity in ecclesial expression. He offers accessible sketches of twenty-one unique perspectives, which he gathers into three categories: ecclesiological traditions, the perspectives of leading contemporary ecclesiologists, and contextual ecclesiologies. [Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002).] And Graham Joseph Hill outlines significant elements of the ecclesiological perspectives of sixteen Western voices and twenty-five Majority World voices, mining them for connections to missional ecclesiology. [Graham Joseph Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City: Ecclesiology for the Global Missional Community: Volume 1, Western Voices*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), as well as Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City: Conformation*, which I have mentioned already.]

3. John R. Franke, *Missional Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020), 44. I will draw on this book a great deal throughout this chapter, as it explores at great length—especially in chapters 4 and 5, "Missional Multiplicity" and "Missional Solidarity"—the connections between God's nature and the nature of the church in ways that point toward the value of diverse ecclesial expressions.

Having this shared origin and *raison d'etre* should lead all our expressions of ecclesial subcultures to reflect both the fundamental commitments of the Christian faith and greater manifestations of godliness in our lives. Christians will undoubtedly differ in their perspectives on what these fundamental commitments of the Christian faith are, however, as well as disagree about what godliness entails. Scripture and the longstanding traditions of the church can help guide us into some shared understandings of what it means to follow Christ.⁴ But, if history is any indicator, we will never reach consensus on these matters, at least not before Jesus's return.

However, while the church is called to be unified amid this diversity, uniformity (theological or otherwise) is not the primary measure of that unity.⁵ Christ is. As Kathryn Tanner points out, Christians are unified as a subculture not by holding the same viewpoints or adhering to the exact same way of life but by the shared task of discerning what discipleship to the free Word, Christ, should look like.⁶ Franke agrees, insisting that “we will not find ultimate truth in abstract notions or theories but rather in the person of Jesus Christ and the way of life he invites us to follow”⁷ and that “ultimately, the

4. The life and words of Jesus himself serve as our primary guide. The remainder of Scripture, both in its specifics and in its overarching story, also serve to direct us. In addition, the church has historically used creeds to express the centrality of certain beliefs. The Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed, for example, serve to encapsulate the major tenets of the Christian faith in ways that can unify the church while leaving a great deal of room for theological differences. Franke briefly explores Scripture, culture, and tradition as resources for theology in *Missional Theology*, 91–96.

5. Franke speaks about the importance of unity, saying, “The promotion and preservation of the unity of the church is part of its missional vocation. The mission of the church is vitally connected with an appropriate and visible manifestation of its unity in the midst of its diversity, and failure to maintain this unity will significantly compromise its mission and witness to the world.” Franke, *Missional Theology*, 145.

6. Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 155.

7. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 159.

solidarity of the church is found not in [our] Christologies but in the living presence of Christ.”⁸ It is our common pursuit of Christ that unifies us. And this endeavor will lead us at some points toward similar expressions of ecclesial subculture and at other points toward widely divergent manifestations. Franke reflects on this reality in a way that bears quoting at length:

The sort of unity often imagined is that of a church in agreement around a universal theology or the practice of a common liturgy or shared understanding of the proper principles of biblical interpretation. Much ecumenical conversation has been pursued in the past in order to arrive at a common confession and theology through the incorporation of various insights, and the rejection of others, into a melting pot out of which it is hoped will emerge a singular expression of Christian faith, thereby securing the unity of the church. It is also suggested, implicitly by some and explicitly by others, that the church cannot manifest this unity apart from a common theological expression of this sort, since that would amount to a compromise of truth. The danger here is equating unity with uniformity. In the expression of missional theology developed in this book, there is a different conception of unity, one that not only affirms the value of multiplicity but also connects it directly with the mission of God as a necessary component of living God's love in the world. From this perspective, we should not expect complete agreement and commonality on matters of theology and biblical interpretation.⁹

Far from being a deviation from God's intent, diversity is very close to the nature of God and the church as shown throughout Scripture. Throughout all eternity, God exists as loving, diverse, interdependent relational plurality. From this foundation, God brought a dizzyingly kaleidoscopic creation into being, affirming the goodness of its astoundingly multifaceted expressions of life, which all reflect something about God's own nature. Jesus assembled a ragtag bunch of followers from widely divergent walks of life, inviting them into a shared life together that did not attempt to deny or dismantle their differences.

8. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 161.

9. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 147. He affirms the nature of unified diversity that I am highlighting here, saying that Christian theology “resists an ‘anything goes’ approach that is characteristic of radical cultural relativism,” instead holding to “a ‘thick’ or ‘convictional’ plurality rooted in the Christian tradition.” Franke, *Missional Theology*, 161.

The early church embraced disciples from a broad array of backgrounds, and its leaders theologized extensively about the importance of unified diversity.¹⁰

Plurality is a beautiful part of God’s intentional design for creation and the church. Our God, who exists as differentiated integration in Trinitarian relationship, has a multifaceted image that is expressed in manifold ways through an incredibly diverse creation, including humans and our varied ecclesial subcultures. Union does not destroy identity or diversity; it highlights and harmonizes it. As Franke reminds us, “the love of God is not an assimilating love. This love does not seek to make that which is different the same.”¹¹ Or as Kopic puts it, “God does not absorb us into the divine by this union [with Christ], nor does he blend believers into an undifferentiated sameness with each other.... Counterintuitively, union with Christ glories in maintaining the Creator-creature distinction, as well as the endless differences that remain between people. The promise of union in Christ by the Spirit is not to overcome difference, but to overcome sin.”¹² Because both God and humanity are multifaceted, then, our expressions of ecclesial life, while having certain commonalities, will also be diverse, highlighting different angles of God’s nature and our own.

In addition to reflecting the multiplicity of God and God’s creation, manifesting diversity in the church’s subcultural expressions can also extend the church’s transformative influence. Our assorted ecclesial subcultures have the capacity to meet the

10. Paul’s use of the body metaphor in 1 Cor 12:4–27 is one prominent example that comes to mind.

11. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 17.

12. Kelly M. Kopic, “Evangelical Holiness: Assumptions in John Owens’ Theology of Christian Spirituality,” in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 103.

wide-ranging norms and needs of incredibly divergent audiences. “The various historical, cultural, global, and contemporary embodiments of the church,” Franke says, “may be viewed as a series of local iterations of God’s universal mission of love to all of creation.”¹³ Thus, for yet another reason, the presence of expansive diversity among our ecclesial subcultures is not something to mourn or fix, but rather something to celebrate! In this regard, the presence of ecclesial diversity also closely reflects God’s own openness to and practice of creative contextualization.

The Practice of Creative Contextualization

Much like the value for diversity, the practice of creative contextualization is closely connected to the nature of God and the church. God has consistently sought loving union with humanity, reaching out in a wide variety of ways to invite people into that relationship and the regeneration that it brings. In doing so, God has always taken into account the realities of our existence as material beings embedded within culture and context, often using these very elements to help us understand the invitation.

We see the pattern all throughout Scripture. God first walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden, appearing to them in a way that they could comprehend. Even after sin marred God’s original relationship with humanity, God continued to seek connection with people, often using incredibly creative ways to help them perceive the invitation into union and discipleship.¹⁴ God formed the people of Israel, drawing them into a shared way of life that both mirrored and challenged the cultural norms of their environment in

13. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 63.

14. Wrestling matches, the miracles of the Exodus, and a talking donkey come to mind. See Gen 32:22–32, all of Exodus, and Num 22:21–39, respectively, for these stories, which are just a few among many instances of God’s creativity in contextualizing communication so that humans might receive it.

its embodiment of God's invitation. In the ultimate expression of creative contextualization, God took on human nature in the incarnation of Christ—and not just generic humanness, but the highly specific existence of a first-century Jewish male, living under the oppression of Roman rule, with all that that entailed.¹⁵ Jesus's own life and ministry reframed much of traditional Judaism, creatively reinterpreting Scripture so that his audience could grasp God's intent in a meaningful way. In each of these scenarios, God's identity and invitation, while never changing in substance, were ingeniously portrayed in diverse ways that fit the needs and opportunities of the time and people in question. In this way, God made it possible for all to hear and respond to the invitation into communion.

The church follows suit, imitating God by imaginatively adapting itself to its contexts so that its own articulation of God's invitation might be understood and accepted. We see this in Scripture, too, particularly as God persistently led the early church to expand from its Jewish foundations, including Gentiles in its midst in ways that challenged its closely held suppositions and traditions. Before ascending to heaven, Jesus instructed his disciples to reach into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth with the message about him (Acts 1:8). At Pentecost, the Spirit decentered any particular language or culture, confirming the nature of the church as a “multifaceted, multidirectional movement”¹⁶ in which “the recipient culture [is] the true and final locus of the proclamation, so that the religion arrives without the presumption of cultural

15. Howard Thurman reflects in powerful ways about the specificity of Jesus' human identity in *Jesus and the Disinherited* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1949), particularly in his first chapter, “Jesus—An Interpretation.”

16. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 98. See Acts 2:1–13 for the story of the Holy Spirit's descent on the disciples at Pentecost.

rejection.”¹⁷ And although the early church had to wrestle with what it meant for their identity and norms, the trajectory of its expansion was clearly toward greater inclusivity, which entailed adapting its message and practices so that they could be received and accepted by new audiences.¹⁸ Through this process of creative contextualization, “the Spirit calls forth a new community from every tribe and nation, centered on Jesus Christ, to be a provisional demonstration of God’s will for all creation and empowers it to live God’s love for the sake of the world.”¹⁹

Clearly, the practice of creative contextualization is an essential component of the church that emulates an incarnating God. As Van Gelder says, “The church that is missionary by nature inherently seeks its contextuality—it seeks to become responsive within and adaptive to every context in which it finds itself.”²⁰ Accordingly, then, “in [its] missionary engagement of bearing witness, the church continually reinvents itself to

17. Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 20; quoted in Franke, *Missional Theology*, 98. The practice of creative contextualization could be alternately described as the practice of encouraging indigenous expressions of ecclesial subculture. Franke deals some with the concept of indigeneity, referencing Sanneh here and briefly mentioning Richard Twiss on page 59. And he does say that we must “resist and repudiate” the “colonizing trajectory” that minimizes the voices of those at the margins, those who do not accept the assumptions and presuppositions of the majority (Franke, *Missional Theology*, 59–60). That being the case, there is a great deal we could learn from Majority World and indigenous Christian movements as we attempt to practice creative contextualization in healthy ways. Hill’s second volume on Majority World voices, *Salt, Light, and a City: Conformation*, is an excellent resource for one beginning this exploration, as he surveys the theologies of Lamin Sanneh, Richard Twiss, Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, Lewin L. Williams, and others.

18. Here the stories of Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10), the decision of the council at Jerusalem (Acts 15), and Paul’s message at Mars Hill (Acts 17:16–34) seem particularly apropos.

19. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 19.

20. Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 62. Here, Van Gelder is reflecting on the “inherent translatability” of the gospel and the church, a characteristic that reflects the fact that “in becoming flesh, Jesus Christ as the living Word became understandable, knowable, and accessible for all time and to all persons.” Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 61.

meet the challenges of relating the gospel to new peoples and new cultures.”²¹ The church is always forming and reforming, wrestling with the dynamic relationships between gospel, church, and culture and relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit as it does so.²² As Menzies and Phelan remind us, in pursuing creative contextualization, “We are faced with a task that requires significant theological reflection as well as creative and imaginative thinking and experimentation.”²³

Given the diverse nature of people and the creative capacity of the Holy Spirit, then, not all manifestations of the church will look identical, nor should they. All families of Jesus should aim for vibrancy and faithful expression of the life of God in their unique time, place, and circumstances. However, engaging in this common pursuit will unavoidably result in a profusion of imaginative contextualizations and ecclesial subcultures, for “the very nature of the call to take the good news of the love of God to the ends of the earth and embody it among all peoples and situations for the good of the

21. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 99.

22. In regard to the concept of “forming and reforming,” see Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 54–61. “Forming” is the church’s missional impulse to continuously engage in contextualized ministry, and “reforming” is its confessional impulse to constantly center its identity in the historic Christian faith. Participating in both impulses helps prevent the church from either overcontextualizing or undercontextualizing, as Van Gelder notes on page 54. The entire chapter in which this discussion of forming and reforming is contained (“Spirit-Led Ministry in Context”) is an excellent reflection on the contextual nature of the church.

Regarding relationships between gospel, church, and culture, one helpful resource is the triangular model developed by missiologist George Hunsberger to summarize Lesslie Newbigin’s perspectives. See George R. Hunsberger, “The Newbigin Gauntlet: Developing a Domestic Missiology for North America,” in *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, ed. George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 9. As Hunsberger says, “Newbigin’s model helps us become more discriminating in our concern to avoid both syncretism and irrelevance, more focused upon inhabiting the biblical vision as part of a multicultural Christian community, and more open to the ongoing dialogue with our own culture, which is as much an inner dialogue as an outer one.” Hunsberger, “The Newbigin Gauntlet,” 10.

23. Menzies and Phelan, *Kingdom Communities*, 55. This excellent resource highlights diverse creatively contextualized Christian community as it is taking shape across Australia, challenging our imagination for what is possible.

world leads inevitably to diversity and multiplicity.”²⁴ In this vein, the expansion of the church throughout history should be understood “not as simply the propagation of ready-made doctrine but as the constant discovery of the gospel’s ‘infinite translatability’ and missionary intention.”²⁵ After all, “there is no cultureless gospel,” as “the church is always bicultural, conversant in the languages and customs of the surrounding culture and living toward the language and ethics of the gospel.”²⁶

Engaging in this kind of creative contextualization often asks and yields unexpected new things. Israel was at times astounded with the emphasis God placed on inclusivity amid their world of tribalism and division.²⁷ And leaders in the early church were certainly surprised, sometimes even to the point of resistance, at what the Spirit was doing in their midst.²⁸ But Van Gelder reassures us that “living within a dynamic, changing world is part of God’s design for human life.”²⁹ Jesus even points out that sometimes innovation is exactly what is called for, and to avoid it can cause more harm

24. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 99.

25. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 2.

26. Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 114. Or, to put it in anthropological terms, the church exists not as a primary culture but as a subculture.

27. Certainly, Israel maintained clear boundary markers regarding its identity and relationship with God. There are, however, enough instances of God’s inclusion of those typically perceived as outside those boundary markers that the trend is worth noting. The stories of Rahab, Ruth, and the Ninevites, whom Jonah despised, particularly come to mind. For a fuller treatment of the idea of inclusivity in the Old Testament narratives, see Ananda Geyser-Fouche and Carli Fourie, “Inclusivity in the Old Testament,” *HTS* 73.4 (2017): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i4.4761>.

28. Again, responses to Peter’s engagement with Cornelius’s household (Acts 10–11) and the Jerusalem council’s decisions (Acts 15) are good examples, as is the continued work of the Judaizers in the history of the early church, which Paul addresses throughout Galatians.

29. Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 154.

than embracing it: “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved” (Matt 9:16–17, NRSV).³⁰ Hill concurs, maintaining that “the Spirit and the gospel demand the continual reform and renewal and revitalization of the church. This requires courageous action and theological reflection.”³¹ Menzies and Phelan offer further exhortation, reminding us that “God is always ahead of us on the journey and promises to shine a light for our path (Ps 119:105). Our challenge is to look, listen and adapt rather than resist and defend old ways and attack those who see things differently, like religious leaders constantly did with Jesus.”³²

Uniformity would prevent the church from being the church “for the whole world.”³³ The presence of diversity and the practice of creative contextualization in the church’s expressions of its subculture—in biblical times as well as our own—allow it to both reflect and reach the entire world with the good news of Christ and his regenerative work. The very nature and purposes of God affirm diversity and call Christians to creatively contextualized gospel living. As Guder says, “one of the tasks of the church is to translate the gospel so that the surrounding culture can understand it, yet help those

30. The same illustration is also used in Mark 2:21–22 and Luke 5:36–38.

31. Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City: Ecclesiology*, 36–37. In this chapter, Hill is exploring the ecclesiology of Hans Küng, who portrayed the church as an eschatological community of salvation.

32. Menzies and Phelan, *Kingdom Communities*, 61.

33. See Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 214, where Kärkkäinen states even more strongly: “uniformity finally leads to stagnation and an inability to become a global church, a church for the whole world.”

believers who have been in that culture move toward living according to the behaviors and communal identity of God’s missional people.”³⁴ We are “invited into creative communal participation in the mission of God so that the good news of God’s love, made known in Jesus Christ, can be extended to every tribe and nation and lived out in culturally appropriate idioms.”³⁵

The Life-Giving Power of Another Story

The church’s practices of diversity and creative contextualization contribute significantly to its capacity to exist as an “alternative, distinct, eschatological society” that will point the world to God’s invitation.³⁶ For, as Franke reminds, us, “in the midst of a world torn asunder by discord,” God calls the church as a whole to “tell a different story and live an alternative life, a life in which the social conventions that divide people from each other ... are set aside for a vision of unity in the midst of diversity and difference.”³⁷ In addition to helping the church reflect the multifaceted nature of God and humanity, then, these practices empower the church to reach the entire world with comprehensible articulations of God’s good news—good news that points to God’s value for the entire incredibly diverse constellation of creation.

34. Guder, *Missional Church*, 114.

35. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 161.

36. Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City: Ecclesiology*, 188. Newbigin uses the terminology of “sign, instrument, and foretaste” to describe the church’s role in this regard. See Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 124.

37. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 142.

The story that we embody as diversely unified followers of Jesus is compelling. Not only that, it is also part of God's larger narrative, a story that has power formidable enough to change the world. As Ivan Illich once wrote about story,

Neither revolution nor reformation can ultimately change a society, rather you must tell a new powerful tale, one so persuasive that it sweeps away the old myths and becomes the preferred story, one so inclusive that it gathers all the bits of our past and our present into a coherent whole, one that even shines some light into the future so that we can take the next step forward. If you want to change a society, then you have to tell an alternative story.³⁸

When seen in this larger frame, the church's lived story has the capacity to open the world up to the truly transformative tale of God's regenerative good news.

In addition, however, the multiplicity of ecclesial subcultures that diversity and creative contextualization engender has incredible potential for the church itself. Much like our broader cultures of origin, our assorted ecclesial subcultures tell the stories of who we are and what is central to us. They do so in an embodied way, highlighting elements of each group's development and its identity through our lived practice as well as our language. Each of these subcultures offers important truths that the rest of the church might learn from and grow in response to. Each of them demonstrates the life-giving power of another story.

Christian values support and challenge aspects of every culture, even ecclesial subcultures. Each unique family of Jesus has areas of health that reflect something valuable about God and humanity. Likewise, each of them has inherent limitations as well as areas of infirmity, ways in which they tend to fall short of God's character and

38. I am unable to find an original source for this quotation from Illich, and it seems others using it have the same challenge. For one secondary use of the quote, see Patrick Scriven, "Telling an Alternative Story," *Lewis Center for Church Leadership*, 25 February 2015, <https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/telling-an-alternative-story/>.

purposes.³⁹ Our inhabited stories may tend to bring life or suppress it. The stories we live in our ecclesial subcultures may or may not be consistent with the stories we espouse, which adds further complexity to the overall narrative. Regardless, such narrative is incredibly powerful.

The existence of diversity within the church and the stories we inhabit helps bring to light both these positive and negative dimensions, the strengths and weaknesses of each ecclesial expression that its members should understand and attend to for health and flourishing. Our lived instantiations of story, just as their language-based counterparts, have the capacity to either affirm our existing outlooks or to “shatter complacency and challenge the status quo.”⁴⁰ And what Proverbs says about interactions between individuals—“as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another”—is also true about the formative capacity of interactions between ecclesial subcultures (Prov 27:17, NRSV).

The diversity present within the church offers incredibly rich opportunities for revelation and transformation. Thus, the stories expressed in our diverse ecclesial subcultures can be an immense blessing to the church itself, helping us grow in faithfulness as we instantiate the life of God in our particular contexts. Since we as Christians aim to reflect Christ in increasing ways, we would do well to purposefully attend to the alternate stories we encounter, seeing what they have to teach us. It is important, therefore, for different ecclesial subcultures to be in conversation, discerning

39. I will say more on this later in my section on Cultural Theory, which briefly describes the “palace” and “prison” dimensions of cultures.

40. Richard Delgado, “Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative,” *MLR* 87.8 (1989), 2414, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1289308>. Delgado’s article, which examines how stories have been used in the efforts of racial reform, probes into how stories and counterstories can be both destructive and constructive, how they can both subvert and deepen culture.

what the Spirit might wish to impart amid their interactions. Franke strongly affirms this notion, declaring:

Openness to the witness of other Christian communities can provide a context in which our own assumptions and presuppositions can be challenged and corrected where necessary for the sake of the proclamation of the gospel and the mission of the church. From this perspective, and in light of the opportunities and resources available in an increasingly global environment, engagement with the theological reflection and witness of the church in history and in other cultural settings *can no longer be viewed simply as a luxury* or as only an enterprise for specialists, which most churches can safely disregard and ignore. Rather, it *should be viewed as a crucial component of critical theological reflection* that seeks to be attentive to the guidance of the Spirit in the church throughout its history and in its contemporary iterations.⁴¹

Such conversation between ecclesial subcultures should reflect God's love, affirming the value of both diversity and creative contextualization. The interaction does not require animosity. In fact, it should be pervaded by humility, for, as Franke reminds us, "Forms of theology that are properly shaped by the mission of God will continually be characterized by openness and commitment to the voices of others in the task of Christian witness. This is consistent with the rule of love that governs all forms of Christian discourse that would be faithful to the triune God of love who lives in eternal fellowship with otherness and difference."⁴² Nor should conversation between ecclesial subcultures be coercive. If our stories are to be effective invitations into another way of life, they must be attractive and compelling, not compulsory. They must "invite the reader to suspend judgment, listen for their point or message, and then decide what measure of

41. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 81, emphasis mine.

42. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 129. This flows from his statement in the previous paragraph that "missional theology resists the totalizing power of reason in order to celebrate difference and diversity as a means of remaining open and committed to the witness of others."

truth they contain.”⁴³ Furthermore, “the diversity and infinite translatability of the Christian tradition is a powerful reminder that it should not be viewed as a weapon to be employed against other communities with which we may be at odds.”⁴⁴ Because we recognize “the cultural embeddedness of all articulations of the gospel and all forms of Christian faith and theology ... [we may] conclude that no particular group of Christians ‘has therefore any right to impose in the name of Christ upon another group of Christians a set of assumptions about life determined by another time and place.’”⁴⁵

Particularly when characterized by this kind of loving, humble, non-coercive attitude, the exchange of embodied stories between ecclesial subcultures has the potential to help the church learn and grow in important, astounding ways. Our distinct stories, each a creatively contextualized articulation of God’s larger narrative and invitation, all point to something important about God’s multifaceted nature and how God engages with a diverse humanity. That being the case, the narratives we all inhabit have the potential to bring incredible new life to the church, leading us deeper into expressions of regenerative Christian culture.

Intentional Christian Community as Counterstory

The story that the Eden Community embodies is part of the larger narrative of intentional Christian communities.⁴⁶ According to my own previous definition, an ICC is

43. Delgado, “Storytelling,” 2415.

44. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 96.

45. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 100, quoting missiologist Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 8.

46. Hereinafter, “intentional Christian community” may be abbreviated as ICC or, in its plural form, ICCs.

a group that practices an uncommon level of sharing, of both life and resources, on the basis of shared vision and shared Christian commitments. David Janzen, long-term member of Reba Place Fellowship and respected thought leader in the ICC movement, describes an ICC as “a group of people deliberately sharing life in order to follow more closely the teachings and practices of Jesus with his disciples.”⁴⁷ He goes on to say that “the more essential dimensions of life that are shared—such as daily prayer and worship, possessions, life decisions, living in proximity, friendships, common work or ministry, meals, care for children and elderly—the more intentional is the community.”⁴⁸

ICCs are far from uniform, exhibiting a great deal of diversity, both because they have arisen from a wide variety of backgrounds and because many of them value creative contextualization, which leads them into unique expressions of ecclesial life.⁴⁹ Still, though, there are some commonalities. Many contemporary ICCs have been strongly influenced by Anabaptist and neo-Anabaptist theology, leading them to view the church as “a community of character [that] embraces a unique social ethic and politic.”⁵⁰ With

47. David Janzen, *The Intentional Christian Community Handbook: For Idealists, Hypocrites, and Wannabe Disciples of Jesus* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2013), 13. For more on Reba Place Fellowship, visit their website at <https://rebaplacefellowship.org/>.

48. David Janzen, *Intentional Christian Community Handbook*, 13. Another good resource here is Smith, “Ecosystems of Grace,” which explores eight assets a community can examine to determine the thickness of its shared life.

49. Thus, there is a great deal of potential for individual ICCs to learn from each other, as well as from other ecclesial subcultures, other ways of narrating the story of who God is and what God is up to. Even a quick survey of the communities mentioned by the Nurturing Communities Network will make this diversity clear. See Nurturing Communities Network, “Working List of Christian Intentional Communities in the US and Canada,” <https://www.nurturingcommunities.org/communities>.

50. Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City: Ecclesiology*, 156. In the chapter this quote is taken from, Hill examines those perspectives in a brief but compelling way, looking at the ecclesiology of Stanley Hauerwas and a collection of Neo-Anabaptists. In a similar vein, many ICCs, particularly those that would identify as part of the “new monastic” movement, cherish and adhere to the principles and practices outlined in The Rutba House, ed., *School(s) for New Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2005).

this commitment at the forefront, they frequently embody the kind of transformed discipleship that characterizes “a prophetic, dangerous, and activist church, which nurtures and releases generations of ‘transformed nonconformists’ who conform only to Christ Jesus their Lord.”⁵¹

Clearly, it is not only ICCs and their members that can have the capacity to engage “missional relevance and critical contextualization” while maintaining the church’s identity as an “alternative, distinct, eschatological society.”⁵² In fact, the reality that this is God’s call to the entire church is part of the reason many ICCs exist in the first place. Sometimes ICCs are born simply out of a sense of God’s invitation toward something new or different. In other instances, they surface because members consciously aspire to highlight and improve upon the limitations they perceive in the normative ecclesial expressions of their contexts.

Whatever the reasons for their formation, ICCs can serve the church by instantiating counterstories. Such stories, which “challenge the received wisdom,” have the formative capacity to “open up new windows into reality, showing us that there are possibilities for life other than the ones we live. They enrich imagination and teach that by combining elements from the story and current reality, we may construct a new world richer than either alone.”⁵³

51. Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City: Conformation*, 266. Here, Hill quotes Martin Luther King, Jr., who said that “the saving of our world from pending doom will come, not through the complacent adjustment of the conforming majority, but through the creative maladjustment of a nonconforming minority.” Martin Luther King, Jr., *A Gift of Love: Sermons from Strength to Love and Other Preachings*, (Boston: Beacon, 2018), 18.

52. Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City: Ecclesiology*, 188.

53. Delgado, “Storytelling,” 2414–15. One author whom I have seen employ counterstorytelling incredibly well in this way, helping readers envision an alternative reality, is Elaine A. Heath in *The Mystic*

The way of life led by ICCs—their strong emphasis on sharing, as well as on close-knit intimacy and Christ-centered mission—is not the norm in the West.⁵⁴ In a world where “globalization and consumer capitalism have become such all-pervasive stories among us that we have forgotten that there have been and can be alternative stories,” the way of life that ICCs share stands out.⁵⁵ They do what Illich says has the power to ultimately change a society: tell an alternative story. Through their creative instantiations of radical discipleship, these groups inspire Christians to be more fully “formed imaginatively by the Holy Spirit through core practices such as worship, forgiveness, hospitality, and economic sharing into a distinctive people in the world, a new social option, the body of Christ.”⁵⁶ In this way, ICCs can serve as “demonstration plots” of what is possible in the church, offering compelling renditions of what wholehearted, transformative discipleship can look like.⁵⁷ By doing so, they serve to

Way of Evangelism: A Contemplative Vision for Christian Outreach, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

54. Regarding close-knit intimacy and Christ-centered mission as defining characteristics of ICCs, see Luther E. Smith, Jr., *Intimacy and Mission: Intentional Community as Crucible for Radical Discipleship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1994).

55. Alan J. Roxburgh and Martin Robinson, *Practices for the Refounding of God’s People: The Missional Challenge of the West* (New York: Church Publishing, 2018), 165. While Roxburgh and Robinson are not speaking specifically of ICCs in this passage, they are referencing practices often shared by ICCs, “forms of protest and disorientation that create the possibility for Euro-tribal Christians to awaken from modernity’s wager, from the hills and high places of Mammon, to see that there is, truly and hopefully, another way to live, another way to be God’s people for the sake of the world.” Roxburgh and Robinson, *Practices for the Refounding of God’s People*, 165.

56. Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom*, 15.

57. The point of an agricultural demonstration plot is to experiment with innovative practices and technologies, showing what results they yield, in order to convince the broader population of farmers that these may be safely implemented in productive ways. Clarence Jordan, who in 1942 helped found Koinonia Farm—an intentional Christian community in Americus, Georgia, that was particularly controversial because of its racially integrated nature—was well known to have used this same metaphor to describe the role that his community played in exhibiting the kingdom for observers to learn from. See, for example, Andrew S. Chancey, “‘A Demonstration Plot for the Kingdom of God’: The Establishment and Early Years of Koinonia Farm,” *GHQ* 75.2 (1991): 321–53, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40582321>.

spark the church's imagination and renew its faithfulness. In embodying a counterstory, then, intentional Christian communities are "a witness with the potential to alter the religious and social landscape."⁵⁸

This is good news for the church. In living another story, a variation on what has been the normative story of the church in the West, ICCs bring an important, life-giving diversity of ecclesial expression to the church.⁵⁹ While certainly having their own limitations, the various manifestations of ecclesial subculture found among ICCs are a blessing that can help propel the church—and other ICCs themselves—toward even healthier, more vibrant ways of being.⁶⁰ The possibilities for conversation between ICCs

58. Smith, *Intimacy and Mission*, 21. The overall premise of Smith's book is that "church leaders could tailor aspects of religious communalism to fit the character and needs of their congregations." Smith, *Intimacy and Mission*, 21.

59. In this regard, one helpful framework to place ICCs within is that of renewal and restoration movements, which seek through their own instantiations of ecclesial subculture to bring new life and vitality to the church. For one survey of some renewal movements, see R. Allen Diles, *Let Truth Prevail: An Introduction to European Christian Renewal Movements* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2021). Everett Ferguson names some emphases that are common among what he calls "restitution movements," many of which can be found among ICCs too: "believers' membership, separation from the world, discipline, the Great Commission, religious liberty, and mutual aid." Everett Ferguson, *The Early Church and Today: Volume 2—Christian Life, Scripture, and Restoration* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2014), 264.

60. The impulse to revive the church is a beautiful one when permeated by humility and an appreciation for ecclesial diversity, as I have already explored. Unfortunately, many renewal movements throughout history—including within ICCs—have viewed their own expression of ecclesial subculture as the only faithful expression, seeing all others as insufficient or errant.

Just as with every ecclesial expression, the limitations of ICCs, while certainly important to examine, do not preclude the movement from presenting important questions and insights to the broader church. Diles says as much about renewal movements, noting that "while there may be legitimate concerns regarding the faulty approaches to restoration, the enterprise itself is worthy of consideration, and we certainly have something to learn from those who have attempted it." Diles, *Let Truth Prevail*, 18. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen makes a similar point in his discussion of the Shepherding Movement. Noting one limitation that many young expressions of church have, he says, "For academic theology, it is too easy to simply ignore experiments at the grassroots level for the simple reason that most often these kinds of popular movements lack needed theological clarity and precision." He goes on to say, though, that "This fact, however, is nothing more than a cheap excuse for theologians not to engage with phenomena like this and start asking theological questions, such as: What was the driving need and agenda for the emergence of the movement? Or, what is there in the movement that made it so appealing to so many people? Theologians should also ask questions like What is it that is missing in the more traditional ecclesiologies that makes Christians hungry for experiments like this?" Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 203. Clearly, the presence of ICCs indicates that many Christians are indeed feeling a hunger for something other than that which is readily available to them in traditional ecclesiological expressions.

and other ecclesial subcultures are abundant, and the potential benefit to the church as a whole is immense. As theologian Luther Smith puts it: “Religious communities symbolize hope. In them members experiment with methods that enable ideals to become reality.... Religious communities are places of searching and discovery.... They are places where failure and success are instructive and inspiring to the ongoing work of the church. They are places that provide the church methods of discipleship that renew commitment and hope.”⁶¹

The Eden Community: A Cultural Incubator

The Eden Community originated out of this exact dynamic. Its hope and belief are that its unique ecclesial expression will, in a wide variety of ways, tell a different story, serving as evidence that a substantially different way of life is possible. In fulfilling its mission to create, share, and nurture regenerative cultures, the Eden Community must continually navigate a tension that arises when guiding the process of creative contextualization: enculturation into something already existing must be balanced with active openness to something new and potentially surprising.

The community certainly does not presume that one ecclesial subculture (namely, its own) reigns supreme and that all families of Jesus ought to be shaped into that image if they are to be faithful. Such an assumption, aside from being the height of arrogance, is in direct conflict with the reality that a multifaceted God created diverse people and works within distinct situations to bring about imaginative, uniquely contextualized instantiations of Christian community. Regenerative culture may take on many forms,

61. Smith, *Intimacy and Mission*, 43–44.

being expressed extremely differently in different contexts.⁶² Part of the point of a diversely contextualized church is to help all people in the process of “learning with increasing clarity to confess the one Lord Jesus Christ as alone having absolute authority and therefore to recognize the relativity of all the cultural forms within which we try to say who he is.”⁶³ Thus, while the Eden Community yearns for all people to experience life in a vibrant family of Jesus as part of regenerative Christian culture, it recognizes that this must be creatively contextualized in ways appropriate to the people, time, and place. Clearly, then, a value for diversity is intrinsic to the Eden Community’s identity and work, as is the incubation and shaping of regenerative Christian culture in its many and varied expressions.

At the same time, however, as it undertakes this task of incubating regenerative culture and nurturing vibrant families of Jesus, the Eden Community cannot help but work from its own cultural framework. Like all ecclesial subcultures, it is inescapably shaped by the surroundings and experiences of its members. Moreover, the community firmly believes that its ecclesial subculture—the forms it uses to try to say something about who Jesus is—offers something crucially refreshing and revitalizing to the church in its context.

Knowing the role that alternative and experimental ecclesial forms like ICCs can play in inspiring and equipping the church for vitality as it creatively contextualizes, the Eden Community believes that its own unique ecclesial subculture can serve as part of

62. This multiplicity of expression is a result of how people engage differently with the frameworks of Story, Setting, and System that I will introduce shortly.

63. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 159.

the foundation from which the kingdom and the world can both move toward greater health. The community's way of life as an ICC contains a great deal that is of value for the church, acting in many ways as a counterstory, and one that is especially heartening to those longing for something different from the norm. Because the community has encountered God's good news in such powerful ways in its own ecclesial expression—through values and practices that are central to its subculture—it eagerly offers what it has experienced and learned to the broader church, believing God will use that to bless and guide others. The Eden Community's witness has the capacity to be transformative for many—for its own members, for ARC students, for the many people the community knows and loves, for the church, and, yes, even for society as a whole.

Like all ecclesial subcultures, then, the Eden Community's subculture, while certainly reflecting limitations and brokenness in its own ways, is worth sharing as the community attempts to shape regenerative culture in a variety of forms. Not only is its way of life a testimony to what God has done in its midst, but also extending that subculture to others may prove to be of benefit to the community itself, to other individuals, and to the church and the world more broadly. As the Eden Community pursues its larger calling to incubate regenerative cultures, then, it shares about its own subculture, believing that the Spirit very well may lead others to adopt aspects of it as they pursue faithful, creative contextualizations of regenerative ecclesial life in their own circumstances. In ARC specifically, the Eden Community invites students to experience its ecclesial subculture through apprenticeship and LPP. As it does so, it attempts to recognize the realities of students' context, to honor the diversity found among those it engages, and to embrace the new and creative things that God is doing.

Regenerative Culture Portfolio: A Tool for Cultural Incubation

One tool that the Eden Community has developed in recent years to aid in its work of incubating regenerative culture, both in ARC and beyond, is the Regenerative Culture Portfolio.⁶⁴ The portfolio process invites participants to examine life and culture through three distinct but inextricably intertwined frames: Story, Setting, and System. Each of these frames takes on further specificity, resulting in ten areas of focus. The Eden Community usually depicts the portfolio guide in table form to demonstrate the ways its contents may best be offered throughout the training process.

This framework is not merely theoretical, however. Rather, in keeping with Lave and Wenger's conviction that learning is an embodied social experience, the Regenerative Culture Portfolio lays out a variety of concepts and practices that are to be actively examined and implemented in people's lives, typically in the context of supportive Christian community. It is an interactive, co-creative process that, when used comprehensively, serves as a highly effective guide for people considering how to live regeneratively as communities of God's love and purpose. Because working through the portfolio process can offer immense theological, personal, communal, and missional clarity, the Eden Community regularly uses this tool as it nurtures individual and communal spiritual formation. In the context of this project, it was a version of this framework, contextualized specifically for ARC, that the ARC leadership team named

64. The use of learning portfolios has become common in the field of education in recent years, particularly as the option for highly interactive, adaptive ePortfolios has emerged. The theory behind learning portfolios fits well with the Eden Community's emphasis on learning-in-practice, with belonging- and behavior-based cultural transmission happening within communities of practice. (Refer to the next paragraph, or back to my definition of apprenticeship in chapter 1, for more on this.)

the “ARC Pathways” and used as the focal point for the Pathways Team’s refining efforts.⁶⁵

Story

First in the Regenerative Culture Portfolio comes Story. Narrative is an incredibly powerful device through which we both understand and construct the worlds and realities we inhabit.⁶⁶ Our perceptions of God, self, community, the meaning of life, and so much more are intimately entwined with Story, and it has an astounding capacity to help us create meaning. The portfolio process explores the four primary stories we all find ourselves embedded in: The Story, My Story, Our Story, and This Story.

Clearly, each of these four stories is intricately interwoven with all the others, affecting and being affected by them. There certainly is a “chicken or the egg” kind of situation that arises, making it impossible at times to discern which narrational commitments arose first in any given person’s or community’s life. Such is the beautifully messy nature of both human existence and culture. No matter which commitments may have originated first, though, as people and communities deeply examine each of these four stories in their own lives, they are able to adjust and harmonize any incompatible components so that the whole then hangs together with a compelling kind of integrity. The Regenerative Culture Portfolio aims to help people do

65. The ARC Pathways can be seen in their initial and refined forms in Appendix E and Appendix G, respectively.

66. I have explored this idea to some degree in my discussion of embodied story, but I will say more on it when I introduce AI in chapter 3.

just that, beginning from a gospel-infused version of The Story and aiming to see how that leads toward regeneration in all other aspects of life.⁶⁷

The Story

Most foundational is The Story, the metanarrative that takes primacy in shaping all our other narratives. There are, of course, many divergent ways of understanding The Story, perspectives that are closely tied to diverse worldviews, cultures, religious commitments, and personal life experiences. How we frame this most foundational narrative will have massive implications for everything else we believe and do.

At a fundamental level, Christians have a commonly shared version of The Story, which provides an established hermeneutic with which to examine every other aspect of life. There is, then, some consistency in how Christians tell The Story. But there is also a great deal of variation, as we may see it from different angles or emphasize different aspects. After all, Christianity is, as Tanner puts it, the collection of those who share in the common task of discerning what discipleship to the free Word should look like, even as we argue about our different conclusions.⁶⁸

Hill comments on the nature of the gospel story as this kind of foundational interpretive perspective, saying, “The entire, defining, biblical story describes our being. It frames our identity. It determines our purpose. It gives us our mission. And it reveals our hope. This story shapes my theology’s vision—a vision of God (the *visio Dei*). This

67. Certain aspects the portfolio could be explored in a non-Christian setting with some success, but the Eden Community’s typical application of them, as in ARC, stems from and is permeated by its Christian commitments.

68. Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 155.

biblical narrative must frame, infuse, and shape all theology.”⁶⁹ Lesslie Newbigin held a similar perspective, reminding us that The Story’s influence reaches into every component of our lives as followers of Jesus: “If it is really true that God has done what the Gospel tells us that he has done, then how can I be silent about it, or allow it to be considered merely one of a variety of possible opinions. It must, it necessarily must become the starting point and the controlling reality of all thought, all action and all hope.”⁷⁰ Clearly, how a person or community tells The Story has immense ramifications for how they engage every other aspect of life, including each of the other three stories.⁷¹

My Story

Next is My Story, the distinct narrative God is telling in and through each individual. Christians believe that every person is uniquely created in the image of God, each of us a singular individual who reveals important aspects of God’s multifaceted nature.⁷² Our particular backgrounds, personalities, giftings, wounds, and passions come together in one-of-a-kind combinations, with God working amid these details to invite each of us to participate in The Story in remarkable ways. My Story attends to these

69. Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City: Ecclesiology*, 4–5.

70. Lesslie Newbigin, “The Gospel and Modern Western Culture” (unpublished address given to the Swedish Mission Council, 1993), *Newbigin Resources*, <https://newbigindotnet.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/93gmwc.pdf>.

71. The Eden Community’s most common way of telling of The Story places God’s invitation to joy and communion at the center. One of the community’s founders likes to sum it up in just a few words: “In the beginning was joy. In the end will be deeper joy. In between is an astounding invitation: ‘Come! Share in Our joy!’” (Dr. P. Kent Smith, on many occasions and in several publications). In other words, the Trinitarian God, who is in essence communion, love, and delight, has, out of that very nature, eagerly invited all creation into an experience of even deeper communion, love, and delight.

72. Scriptural references for this concept of *imago Dei*, or humans being created in the image and likeness of God, are many: Gen 1:26–27, Gen 9:6, 2 Cor 3:18, Col 3:10–11, Jas 3:9.

matters, aiming for the formation of healthy individuals who are flourishing as God created them to.

Our Story

Third is Our Story, the narrative God is telling among and through a community of people. Christians do not exist in isolation, after all, for the Christian faith is a communal one. And just as each individual reflects something about God’s multifaceted nature, so too does each uniquely formed family of Jesus, called together by God as an unparalleled expression of God’s life and mission. Eden Community member Kent Smith speaks of these communities of Christians as “ecosystems of God’s grace,” which “are full yet unique expressions of the life of God and bearers of God’s in-breaking reign in history here and now.”⁷³ Our Story examines the ways we all exist as part of ecosystems larger than ourselves, with each group of people distinctively shaped by the other aspects of Story, Setting, and System its members find themselves in the midst of. Our Story examines what is true about the identity and functioning of a community of people, as well as exploring what ought to be true for that group to thrive in their shared life and mission.

This Story

Finally comes This Story, the narrative that explores the contextual nature of all things, including how God’s redemptive, regenerative good news is most needed and can

73. P. Kent Smith, “Love, Joy, and Grace: Formation Together in the Life of God,” in *Missional Life in Practice and Theory: Essays in Honor of Gailyn Van Rheenen*, ed. Greg McKinzie and Christopher L. Flanders (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, forthcoming). In this chapter, Smith also comments on the way that Christians *communally* reflect the image of God: “As the letter to the little band of people in Colossae puts it, ‘In Christ, the fullness of Deity is *presently living in bodily form*—and you [Colossians, together among yourselves] have the fullness of Christ (Col 2:9).’” Smith, “Love, Joy, and Grace,” emphasis and bracketed notation both in the original.

best be expressed and received. We are all, as individuals and communities, embedded within the realities of a particular time and place, with all its attendant parameters, challenges, and opportunities. As we engage This Story, we learn about the ways we are shaped by and can shape our context. For Christians, this means looking for how God is already at work around us, as well as seeking to understand how God is calling us to embody and witness to the gospel in this unique moment and location in history. Narrating This Story is essentially about expressing how God is inviting us, particularly based on Our Story and the variants of My Story it entails, to practice creative contextualization and regenerative culture here and now as part of The Story.

Setting

Story is not the only important factor in determining how followers of Jesus might best live into regenerative culture. Setting also plays a significant role. The physical environments that we inhabit both shape and are shaped by our presence there. The Regenerative Culture Portfolio gives attention to two components of Setting: natural environment and built environment.

Natural Environment

Each individual and community exists in a specific locale, a place that is strongly influenced by its geography, biome, and climate. These components of our natural environments mold the realities of our contexts in significant ways. That being the case, needs and opportunities for expressing God's good news differ from place to place, and what might be good news in one setting will not always be right for another. Thus, we must consider natural environment as we imagine how regenerative culture might take shape in a given location. In addition, of course, the world's widely diverse

environmental contexts are connected into one larger ecological system covering the whole planet. This larger natural environment is also desperately in need of attention and regeneration. The Regenerative Culture Portfolio invites us to observe, analyze, and critically evaluate the norms and possibilities for engagement with both local and global natural environments.

Built Environment

Similarly, the portfolio leads us to examine the physical structures that are present in a context. The homes and buildings that we use are a prominent component of our lives, and they strongly affect the ways in which we function, as well as the ways in which we are able to participate in and witness to God's regenerative good news. Our normative practices regarding built environment often go unexamined, however, leading us to employ structures—as well as connected expressions of community and culture—that, while acceptable in our contexts, may not be highly reflective of ideal circumstances or Christian values. By closely scrutinizing the built environments we have inherited or chosen, we can understand ways in which they do or do not manifest gospel, as well as how they influence other components of our existence. From this foundation, we can discern how to engage the dynamic of built environment in ways that purposefully further God's mission.

Both natural and built environments can be deeply connected to the realities of our everyday lives, affecting and being affected by the choices we make regarding things as fundamental as food, housing, transportation, health, finances, and more. In examining Setting, the Regenerative Culture Portfolio carefully attends to how people in various

contexts typically engage their environments, as well as what regenerative ways of living might call us to in those environments.

System

The final frame in the Regenerative Culture Portfolio is System, where Story and Setting converge to generate a particular way of life. The portfolio highlights four major elements of communal life: covenant, communication, governance, and rhythms. By reflecting carefully on these areas and purposefully constructing its expressions of System, a community may align its unique calling to its unique context in ways that lead its members deeper into regenerative culture as a vibrant family of Jesus.

Covenant

Covenant is central to a community's life together. A shared understanding of identity and commitments is helpful for any group, but it is essential for vibrant families of Jesus if they are to truly flourish. The way a group outlines its covenantal commitments indicates what it believes to be truly central, non-negotiable.⁷⁴ Covenant is about more than just concepts and words, however. It involves elements of embodiment, accountability, and remembrance.⁷⁵ And it is about more than just human relationships, placing the community's mutual commitment to one another in the larger context of

74. The Eden Community's own covenant, found in its Statement of Grace (available upon request), is as follows: "Because we affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord, the Eden Community is committed to a life of shared purpose and practice under the leadership of Jesus Christ as we discern the guidance of his Spirit together." This covenant places submission to Jesus' lordship, shared life, and communal discernment of God's will at the center of the Eden Community's ecclesial expression.

75. Covenants, as binding agreements between two parties, are often accompanied by solemn oaths, stipulations, signs, and ceremonies—things that indicate the concrete things agreed to and that serve to remind all parties of their commitments. Whitney Woolard briefly outlines the concept of covenant in the Bible, then discusses five key biblical covenants (Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New). Whitney Woolard, "Covenants: The Backbone of the Bible—Partnerships Between God and People," *Bible Project Blog*, <https://bibleproject.com/blog/covenants-the-backbone-bible/>.

relationship with and commitment to God. Without a shared, enacted covenant, a community is more prone to splinter or stray from its God-given identity and vocation. Without covenant there is no clear understanding of what people have committed to be and do together, nor is there a common sense of accountability to that commitment. Furthermore, there are no clear guidelines for how and why people may enter and exit the community. The Regenerative Culture Portfolio calls us to examine the concept and practice of covenant, exploring how we might incorporate covenant into our lives as vibrant families of Jesus.⁷⁶

Communication

Our communication patterns also strongly shape our experiences of relationships and community. By looking at both theory and theology, as well as by offering opportunities for embodied practice and guided reflection, the portfolio process strengthens people's capacity to communicate in healthy, godly ways. As we come to greater understanding about our own communication norms and needs, as well as those of others we are in relationship with, we lay the foundation for real relationships of mutuality and love. Growing in our capacity for regenerative communication in these ways allows us to enter conflict in Christlike, Spirit-led ways, transforming the experience into an opportunity for deeper understanding and love, mutual growth, and the emergence of greater insight into God's truth and desires. If this is how we view and

76. Covenant is probably the element of the Regenerative Culture Portfolio framework that I have the weakest grasp of. In my experience, this also seems to be true of many others who, like me, have been strongly shaped by the highly individualistic society and churches of the United States. I have grown in my convictions about the importance of shared covenant through my various experiences in intentional Christian community, however, sometimes by its positively formative presence and sometimes by its marked absence. Though I still have a great deal to learn about covenant, I am grateful for how two of my fellow Eden Community members, Kent Smith and Dan McVey, have helped shape my thoughts and experiences thus far.

engage conflict, then when conflict surfaces (as it inevitably will), we can embrace it as a normal part of healthy relationships and growth rather than fearing and avoiding it.

Governance

The Regenerative Culture Portfolio also delves into leadership structures, authority, decision-making, and communal discernment—all of which are components of governance. A variety of models for community governance exist, and the model a group employs can have massive implications for its functioning. Because needs vary from context to context, differing models might be applied helpfully in differing situations.⁷⁷ Often, though, groups unreflectively adopt and implement the governance norms of their surrounding culture, whether or not these actually serve them well or reflect Christian commitments. If we are to reach more toward regenerative Christian culture, however, we must examine our assumptions and consider the range of options available to us, seeking in our governance structures, as in all our life choices, to embody fundamental values of the Christian faith. The portfolio guides people in an exploration of their governance structures, helping them evaluate their current practices as well as consider alternatives that might align more with God’s call into regenerative Christian culture.⁷⁸

77. Here we might usefully apply the framework of Cultural Theory, which I summarize in chapter 3. The four major models of culture that arise in Cultural Theory each have attendant norms for and expressions of authority and decision-making. Each of those models has its inherent strengths and weaknesses, including in its governance practices.

78. A little-known form of governance that the portfolio strongly emphasizes is Dynamic Governance, also sometimes known as Sociocracy. The Eden Community has employed this model since its outset. While it is not the only form of governance that a group may practice regeneratively, our experience has shown us that it has many benefits and aligns strongly with many Christian values. This model seeks and values the input of all invested parties. Particularly when it is integrated with opportunities to discern the Spirit’s guidance through the voices of all who are present (a modification that we sometimes call “Divine Governance”), this model has the potential to serve the church incredibly well. For a brief video explanation, see Jerry Koch-Gonzalez, “Sociocracy: The Operating System of the New Economy,” 30 May 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3zFWpntExg>. For a fuller exploration, visit The Center for Dynamic Community Governance at <http://www.dynamic-governance.org/>.

Rhythms

The ways we choose to invest our time and attention shape our lives and relationships profoundly, whether that is toward our central aims or away from them.⁷⁹ If we are to live into regenerative Christian culture, we must make space for what is truly important, arranging our routines around our God-given identity and priorities.⁸⁰ The Regenerative Culture Portfolio invites people to step into a cohesive set of rhythms that help them embody the life that they have envisioned and committed to.⁸¹

Certain things characterize the kind of rhythms that lead toward regenerative Christian culture. A group's rhythms should be comprehensive, attending to individual, communal, contextual, and missional needs—distinct but often overlapping areas of concern. Rhythms should encourage unity in diversity, seeking healthy shared communal formation while accounting for differences in areas such as personality, spiritual styles, life stage, and individual needs and abilities. They should be historically rooted in the tried-and-true practices of the church while remaining open to the creative, regenerative work of the Spirit in the present.

79. Eden Community member Kent Smith speaks about our attention as our most precious asset. He reflects on this in his “Ecosystems of Grace” article, examining how we might work to reclaim our attention and direct it more fully toward the mission of God. A similar take on the idea of focusing our attention on what really matters (though this time not from an explicitly Christian perspective) is found in Greg McKeown, *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less* (New York: Crown Business, 2014).

80. McKeown would argue here with the use of the plural form of “priority,” noting that the word originated in the singular in the 1400s to indicate the “very first or prior thing,” and was only pluralized in the 1900s, so that we can now illogically speak of “multiple ‘first things.’” McKeown, *Essentialism*, 16. Whether or not Jesus would agree with this linguistic critique, he does reiterate on many occasions the importance of centering our lives around what is essential, as in the story of Mary and Martha, where he reminds Martha that “few things are needed—or indeed only one,” namely, close attention to Jesus. Luke 10:38–42, NIV.

81. This section of the portfolio is the one that most clearly resembles a traditional rule of life, or *regula*, though other sections certainly provide important framework for how that rule might take shape.

There is great diversity possible in how rhythms will take shape from one group to another, however, for a community's rhythms should be closely tied to its unique identity and vocation. Thus, creative contextualization also plays a significant role in helping each group (or individual, for that matter) determine its optimal rhythms. As a group establishes its rhythms, it may find that some rhythms are best shared communally, while others arise from a common impulse but take on diverse individual manifestations. Some may be expressed in everyday life, while others occur less frequently or even only occasionally. Some may be experimentally tried for a season, while others are foundational commitments that stem from the community's core identity and endure throughout its life together. With all this in mind, the Regenerative Culture Portfolio seeks to integrate key takeaways from all areas of focus in the Story, Setting, and System frames, drawing on the insights and implications of those sections to establish a set of rhythms that fits the identity and vocation of the group in question.⁸²

Theological Reflections

As the Eden Community goes about its work of incubating regenerative Christian culture, it adopts a stance comparable in many ways to that illustrated by Jesus throughout Luke 10.⁸³ This chapter tells three primary stories, each highlighting features

82. The set of rhythms shown in the ARC Pathways (Appendixes E and G), for example, is specifically adapted to fit ARC students at ACU who are in formative relationship with the Eden Community. Many of them might be fruitfully adopted in other settings, of course, but the Eden Community formed them with this specific context in mind.

83. I am indebted to Dr. Andrew Menzies for prompting my reflections on Luke 10, which has been an important passage for the Eden Community, providing encouragement and inspiration over the years. In fact, founding Eden Community member Kent Smith even helped start another nonprofit called LK10, which has the same essential mission—"to see a vibrant family of Jesus within reach of every person on the planet"—carried out in some slightly different ways and contexts across the world. For more information, see www.lk10.org.

of Jesus’s own way of life and the way of life he invited his followers into. The Eden Community seeks to follow the example and guidance that Jesus provides here, also calling others to do the same, so that we might all flourish in life as communities of God’s love and purpose.

In Luke 10:1–24, we read of Jesus sending out seventy-two disciples to share the good news of the kingdom’s presence with those in the surrounding areas. He reminds them at the outset of their journey that “the harvest is plentiful” and that they must rely on “the Lord of the harvest” to provide sufficient workers for the effort (Luke 10:2). They go forward in great vulnerability—“like lambs among wolves”—relying on each other, the Lord, and the strangers they encounter to provide strength and sustenance for their potentially arduous endeavor (Luke 10:3–8). Everywhere they go, they proclaim peace to everyone they meet, investing themselves in forming new relationships and preparing the way for the Lord (Luke 10:1, 5–7). To those who welcome them, they boldly demonstrate the proximity of the kingdom, using both word and deed to share this good news (Luke 10:9). Some receive them openly and graciously; others respond with indifference or even opposition, choosing to reject the message they offer (Luke 10:5–16). After a time, the disciples return to Jesus, recounting all that they have experienced and learned, rejoicing in the blessing of partnering together with God and each other in this mission (Luke 10:17–24).

The insights this passage holds about Jesus and the disciples also apply to the Eden Community, as well as to other varied expressions of ecclesial subculture. Discipleship to Jesus and life in Christian community, though closely intertwined with the rather abstract theological commitments I have outlined in this chapter, are not merely

abstruse concepts. Rather, they are real, tangible instantiations of kingdom life as it is embodied by Jesus's followers in actual, unique contexts. They are firmly embedded in the real, the local, and the particular: the places we inhabit, the people we meet, the way of life we choose. That being the case, no two encounters with or responses to Jesus—and thus also no two expressions of ecclesial subculture—will be exactly the same. Like the disciples in Luke 10, we must be open to the diverse ways in which kingdom life might take shape among us as we follow the instructions of Jesus and the guidance of the Spirit in responding to real people and places. As we share with others the story of our own encounters with Jesus, we must rely vulnerably on each other, those we meet, and, most of all, God. Regardless of how we are received, we may rejoice both at what we have seen and that our “names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20, 23–24).

Next, in Luke 10:25–37, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan, illustrating the centrality of love in God's kingdom, something that must be paramount to all we are and do as God's people. The Greatest Commandments are all-encompassing in their call to love: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). Discipleship to Jesus entails fully infusing every aspect of our lives with the love and character of Christ, a goal the Eden Community pursues and calls others to as well. As the parable of the Good Samaritan indicates, sometimes this may lead toward actions that are surprising and even offensively countercultural. The path of radical love and mercy, however—one that Jesus exemplified most thoroughly—is the way to inhabit and inherit eternal life, and it is the path the Eden Community seeks to tread.

Finally, in Luke 10:38–42, the story of Jesus’ visit to Mary and Martha reminds us that while opportunities for work—including work specifically for God—are abundant, it is essential to attend first and foremost to the Lord’s presence and guidance. Jesus commends Mary for choosing to invest herself in attentive relationship with God, something that he himself modelled in his regular practice of seeking time with God for companionship, direction, and revitalization. As the Eden Community engages in its mission to be a vibrant family of Jesus and to cultivate similar communities, it grounds itself in attentive relationship with the Lord to receive sustenance and guidance for its life and work, and it invites others to do so as well.

Conclusion

Using the three frames of Story, Setting, and System, the Regenerative Culture Portfolio provides a way to examine a group’s identity, vocation, and ecclesial subculture, revealing areas of clarity and strength, as well as areas for potential growth. The Eden Community employs this framework in ARC and beyond, inviting us all to consider how we might live regeneratively as communities of God’s love and purpose.

As the community does so, it seeks to attend to the theological foundations I have outlined in this chapter. In sharing about its life together as an intentional Christian community, the Eden Community humbly offers its own embodied story, hoping it might be life-giving to others. At the same time, because the community affirms that diversity and creative contextualization are central characteristics of the life God has called the church to, it actively makes space for multiplicity, as well as for the Spirit’s work to emerge in unanticipated, innovative ways. Shaping regenerative culture through this portfolio process is dynamic, interactive, and generative, leading to expressions of

ecclesial subculture that are diversely contextualized but unified in their common pursuit of Christ. All of this is in line with the nature of both God and the church. Having laid these theological foundations in chapter 2, I will now turn to chapter 3, where I will explore three theoretical frameworks that were central to this project: AI, Cultural Theory, and the ecclesial subculture of the Eden Community.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Because the Eden Community firmly believes in the significance of regenerative Christian culture, it seeks to fulfill its dual calling to embody life as a vibrant family of Jesus itself and to equip others for cultivating regenerative ecosystems of God's love and purpose in their own lives, as I outlined in chapter 1. As I explored further in chapter 2, the community sees this work of incubating diverse and creatively contextualized expressions of regenerative Christian culture as contributing to the renewal of the church and the world. To enhance the Eden Community's ability to do this work among ACU students, the ARC leadership team wanted to refine the pathways it had used to shape regenerative culture through ARC. I chose to fulfill that desire in this project by convening a team of ARC stakeholders to offer constructive corporate feedback on the ARC Pathways and to make adaptations to them so that they might more fully reflect and transmit regenerative culture, particularly as that finds expression in the Eden Community's own ecclesial subculture.

Three theoretical frameworks are significant for understanding this project's intervention and results fully. The first is AI, a powerful paradigm and process for effecting cultural change that served as my project's primary guiding construct. The second, less directly emphasized in this project but still prominent in its data, is Cultural Theory. The third is an articulation of the Eden Community's own ecclesial subculture, the expression of regenerative culture that served as the basis from which the Pathways

Team worked to refine the ARC Pathways. In this chapter, I will explore each of these theoretical frameworks in turn, showing how they are integrated into this project.

Appreciative Inquiry

David Cooperrider first formally introduced AI as a strategy for organizational change in 1986. It is, in short, a “collaborative and highly participative, system-wide approach to seeking, identifying, and enhancing the ‘life-giving forces’ that are present when a system is performing optimally.”¹

Often the organizational change models that we employ “tackle problems with the very assumptions and mentality that created the problems in the first place. The upshot is that people learn to live with diminished expectations and settle for coping with what is feasible rather than being open to new possibilities.”² AI, however, recognizes that, no matter how unideal things may be at times, “in every organization there are some successes that fulfill the vision. AI is about analyzing this so as to capture it in essence and reproduce it.”³ The strategy thus relocates the change process from the sometimes-precarious foundation of deficit models and problem solving to a firmer, more hopeful foundation that recognizes the generative, transformational power of a focus on the good.⁴

1. Jane Magruder Watkins, Bernard Mohr, and Ralph Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2011), 22.

2. Jeff Pugh, “Appreciative Inquiry: Principles, Process, Proposal and Project,” Bible College of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, 2010, 4. This guide, provided to me as part of Dr. Graham Hill’s “Missional Ecclesiology” course at ACU, is an incredibly helpful review of AI, designed specifically with D.Min. and Ph.D. researchers in mind.

3. Pugh, “Appreciative Inquiry,” 3.

4. A good metaphor for AI’s process of naming and building on the best is that of seed saving, where a gardener harvests and later sows the best seeds from the strongest, healthiest plants. By focusing on the best in this way, over time the gardener develops a breed with less disease, greater vitality, and more robust desired characteristics (color, flavor, etc.). In its purposefully positive focus, AI reminds me strongly

In this way, AI resonates with deeply held Christian convictions about remembrance and gratitude, practices that have long been central to the life of God's people. Israel was called to regularly remember and give thanks for the good that God had done in their past, using this testimony to encourage them (and God) toward faithfulness in the present.⁵ Their psalms, their gatherings, and the rhythms of their daily life were permeated with "the narratives of God's presence, God's Word, God's promises, [which] are the very bedrock of communal and personal identity, faithfulness, and hope."⁶ And the church has continually remembered and told "the Spirit-appropriated community-fashioning narrative of Scripture," which "provides the overarching theme through which members of the community can view their lives and the present moment in history as part of a story that transcends the present."⁷ Connecting our memories of God's work in the past to our present and future hopes is powerful!

The practice of remembering through the lens of gratitude does not deny our difficulties or problems; it simply refocuses our attention in a way that allows us to approach the future with hope in God's capacity to bring good out of even the most

of asset-based community development (ABCD), which has become an important framework in the realm of community development in recent years. For a helpful short description of ABCD, see Nurture Development, Ltd., "Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)," <https://www.nurturedevelopment.org/asset-based-community-development/>.

5. Instances of this call to remembrance, expressed both verbally and in embodied practice, are far too many to note exhaustively here. Deuteronomy, for instance, is liberally peppered with instructions to remember that God had brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Isaiah 63:7–14 is a beautiful example of this kind of extended remembrance being practiced. Thanksgiving was a central rhythm that the people of Israel built into their System and even their Setting (for instance, in the use of booths to celebrate Sukkot).

6. Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry, Missional Engagement, and Congregational Change* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 55.

7. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 53 and 52, respectively.

challenging of situations. Psalms of lament and disorientation often do this very thing. Although they recount the troubles the psalmist is facing in the present, they locate those experiences alongside God’s redemptive work in the past.⁸ While confession and lament certainly have an appropriate and important place in the Christian faith, adopting a posture of appreciation prevents us from becoming stuck in our problems. It gives us hope for what can be, leading us closer toward the gospel-filled future that God desires for us.

As Lau Branson notes, “gratitude makes us available to see more of God, to know ourselves more fully, to enter into lament and confession as means of life, and to know that sorrow and sin are encompassed in God’s love.”⁹ The letters to the Thessalonian and Corinthian churches, for instance—two churches with significant problems!—begin with thanksgiving and appreciative greetings that reframed the identities of the church members. There was certainly much to lament in the circumstances of those churches, as well as numerous problems to be fixed. And Paul did not hesitate to address those concerns throughout his letters. But he started with gratitude, naming the good that he had seen in these churches as a way of reminding them what they were capable of becoming.¹⁰

8. Walter Brueggemann discusses this turn from “plea” to “praise” in the Psalms, saying, “a whole new world of trust and gratitude is entered into in that moment.” Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 36. Brueggemann’s exploration of these psalms is not primarily related to the power of gratitude to reframe our thinking, but the point remains.

9. Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*, 61.

10. Lau Branson explores these letters, as well as the seven letters to the churches in Revelation, in *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*, 53–54 and 59–60, respectively.

With Paul’s responses to these churches in mind, Lau Branson reminds us of the power that appreciation has to shape our thoughts and future, saying, “gratitude is a stance that changes our perceptions, our thinking, our discernment. When our beginning place is thankfulness—for God, for God’s creation and redemption, for God’s ongoing mercies, and for evidences of God’s grace—we give attention to any and all signs of grace.”¹¹ We eagerly seek to see the good and build on it. Philippians 4:8 encapsulates the appreciative drive behind AI particularly well, saying, “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil 4:8 NRSV). Engaging life and organizational change with this kind of thoroughly appreciative mindset allows us to step into the future with hope, joy, courage, confidence, and a renewed imagination.

Foundational Principles and Processes of AI

AI’s overall stance is largely based upon theories regarding social constructionism and the power of positive images and narrative.¹² Social constructionism is the viewpoint that meaning is created socially and linguistically, rather than arising from objective reality. Meaning develops out of human relationships and contexts, with the parameters of our language systems shaping our perceptions and thus our experience of knowledge.

11. Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*, 54. The entirety of chapter 3 of Lau Branson’s book is an excellent resource for making connections between AI and the witness of the Christian Scriptures. In addition to exploring the ideas I have put forth in this section, Lau Branson also examines biblical passages that correlate to each specific stage of AI, considering how Scripture might be most helpfully engaged throughout the AI process. Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*, 51–72.

12. It also relies heavily on the new sciences, (e.g., chaos theory and quantum physics). For more on this, see Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 9–19.

In other words, what we focus on and speak about becomes our reality.¹³ Thus, if we choose to focus on problems, we end up with a “habitual deficiency orientation” that structures our reality.¹⁴ If, instead, we focus on images of the good that can be, we will move more closely toward that reality. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly put it this way: “AI is, in part, the art of helping systems create images of their most desired future. Based on the belief that a human system will show a heliotropic tendency to move toward positive images, AI is intentionally focused on the generative and creative images in a system that can be held up, valued, and used as a basis for moving toward the future.”¹⁵ In addition to pointing us in the direction we would like to go, this positive focus has the capacity to kindle an incredible amount of energy and creativity within a group. As Lau Branson says, “Attentiveness and appreciation stand in a mutually generative relationship with courage and imagination.”¹⁶ Thus AI frequently uses images of the ideal that *can* be, particularly favoring images produced through narratives of what already *has* been.¹⁷

13. For a brief definition and history of social constructionism, see Oxford Reference, “Social Constructionism,” <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100515181>. Or for more on social constructionism as a theoretical foundation for AI, see Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 38–49. Interestingly, anthropologist Mary Douglas, who developed Cultural Theory (which I will explore more shortly, as it served as one of this project’s theoretical frameworks), also played a role in the formation of social constructionism.

14. Pugh, “Appreciative Inquiry,” 4.

15. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 43.

16. Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*, 60.

17. All this falls in line with current neuroscientific research into the power of gratitude, especially narrative-based gratitude. See, for example, the work of Dr. Andrew Huberman, a tenured professor of neurobiology and ophthalmology at Stanford School of Medicine, in Huberman Lab, “The Science of Gratitude & How to Build a Gratitude Practice,” 22 November 2021, <https://hubermanlab.com/the-science-of-gratitude-and-how-to-build-a-gratitude-practice/>.

In fact, AI's processes rely greatly on memory and narrative, awakening and then fueling in participants a deep desire to creatively shape the future along the lines of the best of what they have experienced in the past. Narrative is a powerful reflective and constructive tool that can, as discussed earlier in chapter 2, "shatter complacency and challenge the status quo."¹⁸ Using real stories rather than simply envisioning an ideal reality is imperative. It helps us relive and learn from our past experiences, opening up new ways of thinking and imagining, both about our present reality and about the future possibilities that experience has shown us we are potentially capable of. As Franke says, "more important than merely articulating past events, recalling the narrative retrieves the constitutive past for the sake of personal and communal life in the present."¹⁹

From these theoretical and research foundations, five core principles of AI arise.²⁰

First, the Constructionist Principle indicates that knowledge about an organization is

18. Delgado, "Storytelling," 2414. Like AI, Delgado affirms the idea that reality is socially constructed, arguing that "we decide what is, and, almost simultaneously, what ought to be. Narrative habits, patterns of seeing, shape what we see and that to which we aspire." Delgado, "Storytelling," 2416. While Delgado focuses on the ways we often use stories to deter us from exploring alternative visions of reality, AI invites its participants to utilize narrative to do the exact opposite. It seems Delgado might affirm this approach, as he does speak of the power of counterstories, at least, to help us construct new worlds. Delgado, "Storytelling," 2414–15.

19. Franke, *Missional Theology*, 52.

20. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 71–75. As the field of AI matures, further principles continue to arise in the literature, gaining broad acceptance in the field of AI even though they were not part of the original five principles. At this time, additional commonly used principles include the Principle of Wholeness, the Enactment Principle, the Narrative Principle, the Free Choice Principle, and the Awareness Principle. For a summary of these new principles, see The Center for Appreciative Inquiry, "Principles of Appreciative Inquiry," <https://www.centerforappreciativeinquiry.net/more-on-ai/principles-of-appreciative-inquiry/>.

The Principle of Wholeness fits particularly well with the central themes of this thesis, the egalitarian nature of the Eden Community, and the central commitments of Dynamic Governance. It argues that dichotomous parts may be held together as a larger whole, whether those parts are differing voices, differing components of an organization, or differing perspectives. Rather than assuming an irreconcilable antagonism between divergent parts, we should adopt an attitude of curiosity that will allow us to explore how they truly do exist as part of a larger, coherent whole.

intricately entwined with the destiny of that organization, for the knowledge that we construct about an organization through our discourse about it creates or limits its possibilities for future development. Practitioners of AI frequently summarize this principle with the phrase, “Words create worlds.”²¹ Second, the Principle of Simultaneity asserts that inquiry is inseparable from change, as it *is* change itself. Questions are powerful enough that asking even one can shift an organization’s attention and thus also its future. That being the case, we must consider our questions carefully. Third, the Anticipatory Principle claims that our behaviors are based largely on what we can anticipate. In other words, we tend to move toward our images of the future, whether those are positive or negative. Thus, when it comes to attempting constructive organizational change, our collective imagination and our associated conversations about the future are our most important assets. Fourth, the Poetic Principle contends that an “organization’s past, present, and future are endless sources of learning, inspiration, or interpretation, just as a good poem is open to endless interpretations.”²² With such expansive possibilities before us, we have a choice in what we study and the attitude with which choose to engage it, and this choice has the potential to impact our findings—as well as the organization—in significant ways. Finally, the Positive Principle declares that “momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding—things like hope, inspiration, and sheer joy in creating with one another” and that positive questions lead more readily to positive change.²³

21. For one example of this frequently used verbiage, see The Center for Appreciative Inquiry, “Principles of Appreciative Inquiry.”

22. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 74.

23. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 74.

Building from these five core commitments, AI encompasses five overlapping generic core processes: (1) choose the positive as the focus of inquiry, (2) inquire into stories of life-giving focus, (3) locate themes that appear in the stories and select topics for further inquiry, (4) create shared images for a preferred future, and (5) find innovative ways to create that future.²⁴ Using this core process, AI, when employed in a faith-based setting,

provides an organization-wide mode for initiating and discerning narratives and practices that are generative (creative and life giving) ... provides a process to bring our own narratives into conversation with the biblical and historical narratives of our faith ... [and] can guide and nourish (reconstruct) the organization along the lines of its best stories as discerned alongside God's initiatives.²⁵

Practitioners often use models to show various ways these five core processes of AI can be enacted. Importantly, though, rather than each individual process being confined to a singular stage, the five processes recur and intersect throughout the different stages of various models, for “the core processes don’t begin and end neatly. Instead, they overlap and repeat themselves without predictability.”²⁶ In fact, these “generic” core processes are called that specifically to remind practitioners of AI of the flexibility the framework has. AI includes specific practices, but it is really more of a mindset, with its underlying convictions and theory permeating everything. As Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly note, “AI is a perspective and theory rather than a prescribed ‘model.’”²⁷ They then go on to add, “Because AI is of the new paradigm, each time you work with it

24. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 82–83.

25. Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*, 21.

26. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 82.

27. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 90.

it will be different. It has the power of being totally unique to any group that chooses to take this route to organization transformation and renewal.”²⁸

The 5D Model of AI

The model of AI that I adapted for my project is called the 5D model. This model includes five stages of appreciative work: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Deliver.²⁹ It can be depicted as shown below, in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *5D model of AI.*



Source: Dyfrig Williams, “Building on strengths through Appreciative Inquiry,” Medium, 31 July 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/4arsdrru>.³⁰

28. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 240. Thus, adaptations of any AI model that still fall within the theoretical constructs of AI are considered valid and welcome in the field. This is good news in the context of this project, as various constraints prevented the direct, exact application of any other AI model I have ever encountered.

29. The original AI model expressed by Cooperrider and Mann contains only the last four Ds. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly adapted it by suggesting a fifth D, Define, and placing it at the beginning of the cycle. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*.

30. Oddly enough, Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly do not include a visual representation of their 5D model in *Appreciative Inquiry*. Instead, they rely on a figure that shows a previous 4-D model developed by Mann and Cooperrider, mentioning the new stage that they proposed, Define, in the following paragraph before dedicating an entire chapter to it (Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 86).

The Define stage of the 5D model ensures that the AI process is well planned out and prepared for rather than carried out haphazardly. In this earliest stage, an organization makes an irreversible commitment to focus on the positive as it engages change through AI. The Discover phase draws out the life-giving stories of an organization, leading stakeholders to uncover and express gratitude for the best of what exists within that organization. Based upon the appreciation of the organization and its history that is elicited through narrative and memory, positive defining factors of its identity and subculture become the focal point as its stakeholders consider how to move forward into the future. From this foundation, AI then moves into the Dream stage, with stakeholders envisioning together “provocative proposals” or “possibility statements”—audacious yet conceivable ways forward for the organization that align with both its positive past practices and its future potential. Next, in the Design stage, stakeholders undertake the work of fashioning the kinds of structures, processes, and subculture necessary to engender and sustain the preferred future of the organization. The final stage, Deliver, enacts what has been envisioned, doing so in a fluid, experimental way and evaluating progressively. Rather than being a one-time implementation of something static, the Deliver stage “is a time of continuous learning, adjustment, and improvisation ... [with] a high level of innovation and continued learning about what it means to create an organization that is socially constructed through poetic processes in a positive frame that makes full use of people’s anticipatory images.”³¹

31. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 89.

Modifications to the 5D Model in This Project

I made various adaptations to this 5D model to help it fit the needs of my own project, as I will explain shortly in chapter 4, where I describe my methodology in great detail. The most significant modification bears attending to now, however, as it is closely related to my previously expressed theological foundations, as well as to two additional theoretical frameworks that were central to this project overall.

My project's goal was not simply to appreciate the best of what was already happening in ARC and build upon that. As valid and delightful of an undertaking as that would have been, this project aimed at something slightly different, something in which elements of cultural transmission and creative contextualization are inherent: building upon and improving the ways in which the Eden Community shapes regenerative culture *through* ARC. Thus, I did not use the Discover phase of this AI process to inquire into the positive components central to ARC, for an AI delimited to ARC would not have accomplished the objectives of this project. Instead, I chose to take on the main Discover phase of this AI prior to the project itself, conducting my own research into the ecclesial subculture of the Eden Community, the primary foundation from which the community works to shape regenerative culture through ARC. Having laid this groundwork, I then led a team of ARC stakeholders through a modified version of the 5D model, imagining and innovating a positive future in which the Eden Community can more effectively shape regenerative culture through ARC.

All that being the case, it was a description of regenerative culture as expressed in the Eden Community, defined by research prior to this project, that served as the main source of data in the team's Discover phase, leading to themes for this project's AI

process and initial codes for my later evaluation of the project. Thus, it is also essential to note in this section on theoretical frameworks just what insights that prior research yielded about the subculture of the Eden Community. First, though, there is one additional framework that I must explore: Cultural Theory.

Cultural Theory

Cultural Theory was developed by anthropologist Mary Douglas and other collaborators.³² Sometimes referred to as Grid-Group typology or social game theory, this way of examining culture attends to two primary dimensions of how people engage socially: Grid and Group.

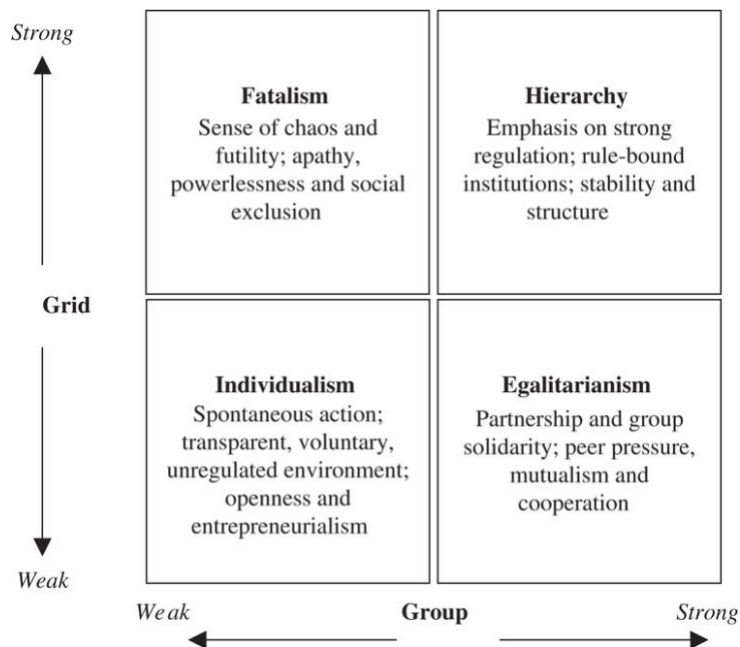
In the area of Grid, Cultural Theory looks at the degree to which things in a culture are structured, systematized, or boundaried, as well as the degree to which individuals' choices are circumscribed by their position in society. It examines how private or shared these systems of classification and structure are, ranging from a relative lack of purposeful structure, with loose, informal ways of doing things (weak Grid) to a relatively high presence of purposeful structure, with very prescribed, codified, boundary-defined ways of doing things (strong Grid).

In the area of Group, Cultural Theory looks at the degree to which people within a culture are bonded together into a shared collective identity, or the degree of solidarity that exists among members of a society. Cultures range from weak Group, where things are very individualized, with more of an emphasis on the narratives and freedoms of

32. One helpful introductory resource for understanding the development of Cultural Theory is Dustin Stoltz, "Diagram of Theory: Douglas and Wildavsky's Grid/Group Typology of Worldviews," 4 June 2014, <https://www.dustinstoltz.com/blog/2014/06/04/diagram-of-theory-douglas-and-wildavskys-gridgroup-typology-of-worldviews>.

individual people, to strong Group, where the emphasis is more on collective identity, narratives, and interests, which individuals are integrated into. A researcher can plot cultures on a graph based on how they score regarding these two dimensions, resulting in four distinct cultural models in the four quadrants, as indicated in Figure 2 below.³³

Figure 2. *Cultural theory models.*



Source: Stoltz, “Diagram of Theory.”³⁴

Each cultural model has great value and the potential to serve well under certain circumstances. Each has its attendant strengths and weaknesses, or “palace” and “prison”

33. In some models, a complete absence of both Grid and Group yields a fifth expression, the recluse, or hermit. See, for example, Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Transforming Culture: A Challenge for Christian Mission*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 30–34. I only recently encountered this book directly, but it was a substantial basis for the content of Dr. Chris Flanders’ “Culture, Context, and Community” course at ACU, in which I first learned about Cultural Theory.

34. This depiction is one of the many helpful figures included in Stoltz, “Diagram of Theory.” As is apparent in the article, various terminology exists for the different models. In the descriptions that follow, I have included more than one term for each model to make the correlations to Figure 2 apparent, as well as to provide alternate phrasing that may prove helpful to some readers.

dimensions, a few of which are also noted in Figure 2.³⁵ And each can take on healthy and unhealthy expressions. There is no one model that is more right or godly than the others. Each of them has great potential—whether realized or not—to express Christian values and components of regenerative culture. They are just different, and those differences can be incredibly important, particularly when considering process of acculturation, as I did in this project.³⁶

Strong Grid and weak Group yields the authoritarian (or fatalist) culture, pairing high structure with an emphasis on individuals. These cultures can give very clear direction and be very effective at getting things done, and they offer security for those who are acting according to cultural expectations. They can also be very resistant to creativity and change. Furthermore, the goodness or badness of the leader, who is prone to be viewed as an idol, strongly affects the whole system.

Strong Grid and strong Group yields the hierarchist (or corporate) culture, which pairs high structure with a collective emphasis. Hierarchist cultures can accommodate great diversity and can be very cohesive and effective at getting things done. Within them, however, it can be hard to keep the sense of collective identity, and they can

35. The language of “palace” and “prison” comes from Lingenfelter, *Transforming Culture*, 19–22. Here the author describes how the customs of nineteenth-century Korea prevented the king from leaving the lavish Palace of the Secret Garden (Changdeokgung) for his own safety. With this illustration, Lingenfelter makes the claim that “Our cultural palaces are our prisons; in them we find comfort, security, meaning, and relationships. Yet the wall of culture restricts our freedom and sets barriers between us and others of different ethnic origin.” (Lingenfelter, *Transforming Culture*, 20. Lingenfelter does not cite a source for this story, and I cannot readily find a record that substantiates it. Nevertheless, the story powerfully illustrates the capacity our palaces have to also serve as our prisons.)

36. For the purposes of this project, the Eden Community’s own understanding and expression of regenerative culture, which has strong egalitarian overtones, served as the basis for refining the ARC Pathways. It would certainly be fascinating to research aspects of regenerative culture that the other cultural models engender, as well as how regenerative culture might best be implemented within each model. That, unfortunately, was far beyond the scope of this project.

quickly devolve into individuality or authoritarianism depending on the kind of leadership that emerges.

Weak Grid and strong Group yields the egalitarian (or communitarian) culture, which combines low structure with a collective emphasis. Egalitarian cultures value all voices and gifts, and with their strong passion and emphasis on purity of vision, they are often sources of important countercultural reform.³⁷ That being said, they are not always good at getting things done, and the strength of the system depends on the character of its members. They are also prone to isolate from the rest of the world and to splinter internally.

Weak Grid and weak Group yields the individualist culture, with low structure and an emphasis on individuals. Individualist cultures are great at creativity, experimentation, and flexibility, and they place a strong emphasis on the pursuit of individuals' preferences, dreams, and needs. As a result, though, they also have a high probability of consumerism and fragmentation, with no sense of shared truth, norms, or worldview readily emerging.

An in-depth analysis of the different “social games” cultures play yields even more detailed understandings of cultural realities. A researcher can look at how a culture engages different components of its life together—things like authority, property and resources, labor, and conflict—learning how Grid and Group may be expressed differently in various facets of life. This is exactly what I did in my first study of the Eden Community's subculture. I will now turn to the results of this study, as well as one

37. This is closely connected to my discussion in chapter 2 of intentional Christian communities' potential role in renewing the church.

additional study, both of which provided important insights into the ecclesial subculture of the Eden Community.

The Eden Community's Ecclesial Subculture

My final theoretical framework is an articulation of the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture. I conducted two major studies of the Eden Community in preparation for this project. The first used Cultural Theory as its organizing principle. The second study employed AI as its main framework. These two lenses provided intensive, if not exhaustive, ways to analyze and articulate the most central aspects of the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture. By focusing these two research projects toward the purposes of this larger intervention, I was able to gather a rich supply of data, much of it appreciatively generated. The Pathways Team used this data as the foundation for its work together, selecting themes and building generatively on what is best about the Eden Community's expression of regenerative culture.

Through the Lens of Cultural Theory

To understand the Eden Community's subculture through the lens of Cultural Theory, in the spring of 2019, I conducted a guided survey with nine of the community's adult members, including myself.³⁸ The survey asked participants to respond to sixty different questions, five about Grid and five about Group for each of the six different social games under examination: authority, property and resources, labor and ministry, conflict, beliefs and worldview, and worship. By rating the Eden Community's

38. The original survey was provided to me as part of Dr. Chris Flanders's "Culture, Context, and Community" course at ACU. It needed some adaptation to fit the context of the Eden Community better, but, as quickly became clear, even those adaptations were not always sufficient to align with some of the theological paradigms the Eden Community assumes.

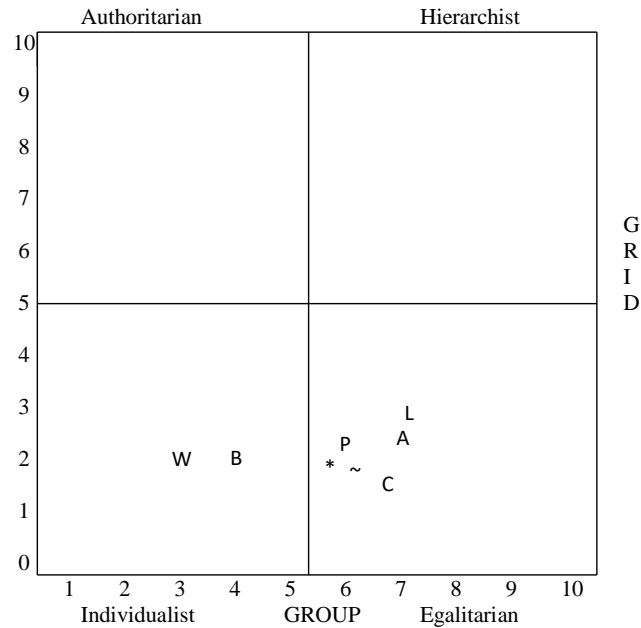
subculture on a scale of 0–10 for each question, with descriptions to clarify exactly what each number meant, participants provided quantitative data that I computed and analyzed from varying angles.

Though the results of the full study were complex, in short, the Eden Community is generally an egalitarian community.³⁹ On the whole, and specifically regarding issues of authority, property and resources, labor and ministry, and conflict, the Eden Community has a culture of relatively private structures (weak Grid) and relatively close-knit relationships (moderate to strong Group). Regarding issues of beliefs and worldview, as well as worship, the Eden Community is more individualistic, with similar levels of structure (weak Grid) but a greater emphasis on individual narratives than the collective narrative (weak to moderate Group). In all the games except for worship, the survey responses were very tightly clustered, indicating a very closely shared set of perspectives about the Eden Community’s subculture overall. These findings are illustrated below, in Figure 3. In addition to forming one portion of the data the Pathways Team used in its sessions together, they supplied some of the initial codes I used to analyze the data resulting from this project.⁴⁰

39. My extensive analysis of the Eden Community’s subculture through this lens is available for review in my May 2019 paper, “A Study of the Social Games of the Eden Community,” submitted to Dr. Chris Flanders as a part of the “Culture, Context, and Community” course.

40. My final list of codes for this project is visible in Appendix M. The presence of these themes from my Cultural Theory study is also evident in my note taking protocol, found in Appendixes C and K.

Figure 3. *Social games of the Eden Community.*



A = authority game; P = property and resources game; L = labor and ministry game;
 C = conflict game; B = beliefs and worldview game; W = worship game;
 * = overall average score; ~ = overall average score excluding worship game

Source: Laura Callarman, “A Study of the Social Games of the Eden Community,” May 2019.⁴¹

Through the Lens of AI

The second study I made of the Eden Community’s subculture took place in the summer of 2019, this time specifically using the framework of AI.⁴² I hoped to generate usable data for the Pathways Team’s endeavors by helping the Eden Community more clearly articulate its own ecclesial subculture, as well as its perspective on what vibrant

41. This graph shows the averages for discrete social games, as well as an overall average. I also included an average that purposefully excluded the worship game scores. I chose to do this because worship as typically defined was not a prominent practice within the Eden Community at the time, and the questions provided on the survey seemed a poor fit to measure the Eden Community’s own understanding and expression of worship.

42. The full findings of this study are available in my October 2019 paper, “Articulating the Core Identity of the Eden Community: Reflections on an Appreciative Inquiry,” submitted to Dr. Andrew Menzies as a part of the “Leading Change in Christian Organizations” course at ACU. At the time I wrote this paper, I was still using the phrasing of *core ecclesial identity* rather than *ecclesial subculture*.

families of Jesus can and should entail.⁴³ Both areas of inquiry had the potential to provide important insights into the kind of regenerative culture that the community hopes to shape among ACU students through ARC.

Prior to this study, the Eden Community certainly had well-informed ideas and clearly expressed convictions about these subjects, based on many years' worth of experience. These were often strongly shaped by a subset of the community, however, especially by its more outspoken founding members. Those perspectives were incredibly valuable, fundamental to the inception and identity of the community. Nevertheless, significant experiences through the intervening years of the community's history and two families' entire engagement with the community had yet to be incorporated. Furthermore, narrative has a way of surfacing important new perspectives that may not readily arise in abstract conversation, thus its centrality in AI.

For these reasons, as well as to help me gain familiarity with AI itself, I chose to undertake an in-depth, more systematic examination of the Eden Community's subculture using the narrative-based framework of AI before embarking on the journey of refining the ARC Pathways. I conducted individual interviews with most of the adult Eden Community members. I also conducted a group interview with two of the community's teenagers and gathered feedback via email from the remaining two adult community members, who were unable to meet for an interview. By inquiring into the most positive stories and life-giving characteristics of the Eden Community, I was able to help

43. While the Eden Community certainly aspires to vibrancy itself, it is also true that we are but one finite instantiation of a much broader set of possibilities for what this kind of regenerative culture could look like. Furthermore, the reality of our shared life and culture sometimes falls short of our aspirations. Thus, these two categories are distinct even if hopefully overlapping to a large degree.

community members reflect on and narrate a sense of the community's identity, culture, and values, describing in detail how they had experienced those things in the past. I also asked a future-oriented question that was intended to surface additional components of regenerative culture that may not have been strengths of the Eden Community's own ecclesial subculture.

Not surprisingly, the study both reiterated many of our previously expressed viewpoints and yielded significant new insights. Everyone, including the teenagers to an impressive degree, displayed a considerable capacity to articulate in a unified kind of way the core components of the Eden Community's subculture, and overall, there was a great deal of consistency among the responses. I identified six major themes: (1) communal connection and togetherness, (2) healthy unity in diversity, (3) radical vulnerability with and reliance on each another, (4) radical reliance on God, (5) shared mission-centric work, and (6) sacrifice. Each of these major headings included various subthemes. And at times data could be coded into more than one place, for these ideas are all closely intertwined in the life of the Eden Community. These themes provided another important framework for this project, as well as a substantial basis for the codes I used to analyze its final results.⁴⁴

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the three major theoretical frameworks that I used in this project: AI, Cultural Theory, and the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture as portrayed through these lenses. AI's iterative, cyclical, and adaptable nature, as well as its

44. I will explore each of these themes in greater detail in chapter 5, as I unpack the results of this project. My final codes for data analysis are included in Appendix M. Additionally, the themes of this AI study influenced my note taking protocol, the two versions of which are found in Appendices C and K.

strong emphasis on reflective gratitude, were a good fit for this project, and I used it as my primary structure. I did adapt the 5D model of AI (Define, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver) to suit the purposes and scope of this project. Doing so allowed me to use my prior research into the ecclesial subculture of the Eden Community, conducted using the theoretical frameworks of Cultural Theory and AI, as the primary Discover stage.

In chapter 4, I will explain the qualitative research methodology I employed in this project. First, I will describe the project's team and sessions in detail, following this up with a delineation of my procedures for data collection and analysis. Then, in chapter 5, I will turn to the results that the intervention yielded before drawing out implications of the project in chapter 6.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

I designed this project to refine the pathways the Eden Community employed for shaping regenerative Christian culture among students at ACU through ARC. Using the results of prior research as a foundation, I guided a team through the process of AI to refine those pathways so that they would more fully reflect and transmit the Eden Community's own ecclesial subculture and, by extension, its paradigm for regenerative Christian culture. In chapter 1, I described the context of the Eden Community and ARC, highlighting the goals of this project. In chapter 2, I outlined the theological constructs undergirding the project, exploring the importance of diverse, creative contextualization and the Eden Community's work of incubating regenerative Christian cultures. In chapter 3, I looked at the framework of AI, a research paradigm used for effecting positive cultural change, and then explored what two cultural analysis models, AI and Cultural Theory, revealed about the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture. In this chapter, I will outline the methodology of this project, providing a detailed account of the intervention's sessions, as well as my procedures for data collection and analysis.

Qualitative Research

This project entailed studying human systems, social structures, and lived experience as fieldwork. That being the case, it fits into the category of qualitative research, incorporating the five characteristics that Merriam describes as common to all qualitative research: "the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as

primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of fieldwork, an inductive orientation to analysis, and findings that are richly descriptive.”¹ Merriam’s summary of the nature of qualitative research clearly aligns with the overall purpose and parameters of this project.

Participatory Action Research through AI

In addition to being rightly categorized as qualitative research, this project specifically took the form of participatory action research, research that “introduces an intervention in order to provide ministerial leadership for the transformation of the organization.”² As such, it entailed a collaborative approach that elicited imaginative and influential input from all participants. It represented a modified form of participatory action research, however, in that, as the principal investigator, I, not the community being studied, was the “primary actor in defining the project’s problem, data collection, methods of analysis, and how and where to use the findings.”³

To reach the goals of this project, I used the process of AI to lead a team of ARC stakeholders, the Pathways Team, in refining the initial set of pathways that the Eden Community used in its attempts to shape regenerative culture among students at ACU through ARC. AI, described in detail earlier as one of my theoretical frameworks for this project, is a type of participatory action research particularly well suited for soliciting constructive feedback and envisioning hopeful ways forward. Describing it as action research, Lau Branson says, “At its best, it is a collaborative process that shapes a

1. Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1998), 11.

2. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 58.

3. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 58fn23.

participatory community that engages an iterative spiral of experience, awareness, query, reflection, new knowledge, imagination, innovation, and evaluation.”⁴ The Pathways Team worked through a modified version of the 5D model of AI, described in further detail below.

Overview of the Project Intervention

The intervention primarily took place over the summer of 2021. In May, I extended an invitation to participate in the project to a select group of ARC stakeholders, explaining to them via email and occasional in-person conversations the purposes and overall structure of the project. Among the eleven invited, eight ultimately opted to commit to the Pathways Team. We met together virtually via Zoom for eight sessions, from May through September. I also provided opportunities for two optional in-person fellowship meals at the beginning and end of the project. After the team concluded its work together, I assembled a small focus group in November 2021 to provide feedback through conversation and a questionnaire regarding the refined pathways the team had developed.⁵ Two outside experts also each provided their perspectives by responding to a questionnaire and submitting an opinion paper in March 2022.

In my initial plans for this project, I envisioned ten two-hour in-person sessions for the Pathways Team, but the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic required me to make some adaptations to those plans for the sake of participants’ safety and availability.

4. Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*, 25.

5. I was able to gain approval for student participants in the Pathways Team and focus group to receive ACU chapel credit for their work on the project, at levels that reflected the different time commitments each group made. They were not aware of this before they agreed to participate, so it did not influence their decision to join the project. It did, however, serve as a small way to say thank you to them afterward by meeting a need they had that correlated nicely with the intent of both the project and ACU’s chapel credit system.

Most prominently, we were required to shift to a virtual meeting format for the Pathways Team sessions. Meeting virtually rather than in person did have some positive implications. For one, it allowed for participants to join remotely. This meant that the scheduled sessions could continue even when people were traveling and could even include one participant, an alumna, who no longer lived in Abilene and thus would not have been available to meet in person. Meeting virtually also allowed the team's timeline to be rather flexible, as it made it viable to meet regardless of the bounds of a school semester's official start and end dates. In fact, meeting largely during the summer months meant that most participants had greater availability and flexibility than they would have had during the school year. After some conversation with the invited Pathways Team members about their availability and preferences, I adapted my planned project schedule to entail a total of eight sessions. Most of these were two hours long, but one was slightly shorter, and two were extended three-hour sessions. In making these alterations, I did not lose any planned content, but I did have to shift to a slightly more compressed schedule. I did reclaim some time by consolidating opening, closing, and break rhythms. While this worked out well in most instances, it did turn out that Sessions 5–7, especially, would have benefitted from the original, less condensed schedule.

The Pathways Team

I used purposive sampling of ARC stakeholders to form the Pathways Team, incorporating people with various roles and perspectives in order to gain broad, trustworthy feedback. Such sampling, Sensing says, “select[s] people who have awareness of the situation and meet the criteria and attributes that are essential to your

research.”⁶ In selecting my invitees from among the pool of potential stakeholders, I attended to two primary considerations. First, I was more inclined toward people who, to my knowledge, had proven trustworthy in keeping commitments. This trait is sometimes hard to come by, particularly among busy college students, but I knew it would be a significant factor in this team’s cohesion and the project’s success. Second, I worked to incorporate diversity of age, gender, and ethnicity into the team. Thankfully, this task was not particularly difficult, as ARC has generally attracted a diverse group of students, and the intergenerational nature of ARC and the Eden Community allowed for ready access to some team members whose age could complement the youth of the students. I identified five main groups of stakeholders and sought to draw team members from each of them.

First, to represent the Eden Community, I invited my two fellow members of the ARC leadership team to participate. In addition to dedicating their attention to ARC in significant ways on a regular basis, these people were both already deeply familiar with both the Eden Community’s ecclesial subculture and the initial set of pathways we had in place with ARC. Including me, then, this group of stakeholders totaled three people.

Second, I extended the invitation to four students who had regularly been active in ARC’s chapel and cohort gatherings. As members of ARC’s target audience who had

6. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 83. For my purposive sample, I selected participants from among different groups of ARC stakeholders. Sensing defines a stakeholder as “a person who has a vested interest in the project or ministry context” and notes that “the stakeholder’s position accrues that person with power and influence that can be wielded for either good or bad.” Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 14fn17. While not all ARC stakeholders selected as members of this Pathways Team had direct involvement in ARC itself, they all had a vested interest in the larger ministry context of disciple-making and spiritual formation at ACU. I believe that the purposive sampling I utilized reflected the important, informed insights and concerns of various stakeholder groups and that the stakeholders chosen as members of the Pathways Team used the power given them over the potential future of ARC for good.

apparently found something compelling about ARC and seemed motivated to see ARC grow and flourish, these participants had the potential to offer important viewpoints. Three of the four invited students participated in Session 1, but only two of them were able to commit to the duration of the project.⁷

Third, I invited two of our recent ARC alumni to join the Pathways Team. As recent graduates of ACU and arguably the most deeply invested participants in ARC's highly successful initial cohort, these individuals had the potential to provide particularly significant insights. Furthermore, as people who were close to current ARC participants in age but who had begun encountering life outside of the "ACU bubble," they bridged gaps in age and life experience that could have otherwise been present between other team participants.

Fourth, I invited a young woman who, though never a participant in ARC, seemed like an especially promising Pathways Team candidate because of her involvement in a community experience comparable to the envisioned team mission stage of ARC. Although the group did not last long, quickly succumbing to the common pressures and obstacles to community, this young woman continued to pursue a relationship with me and the Eden Community. In addition to her age, gender, and ethnic background helping round out the group's diversity, she brought to the Pathways Team an important perspective because of her recent experiences of the demands and challenges of community.

7. One student did not respond to my e-mail invitation or follow-up. Another hoped for a time to participate long-term, and we attempted unsuccessfully to incorporate her into the early sessions. Eventually, though, it became clear that she would not be available. She opted to consider participation in the later focus group instead, but timing did not allow for her participation in that group either.

Finally, I invited two experienced practitioners of student formation at ACU into the team, one of whom was able to join us. This young woman was already somewhat familiar with the Eden Community and its aims from past relationships and interactions. For this reason, and also because she had been embedded as a practitioner of student formation in the ACU context for some time, she was well suited to this team as an insider. However, as someone with no direct involvement in ARC itself, she also had the capacity to provide the helpful, potentially corrective, perspective of an outsider. Her age, gender, and ethnic background also contributed to the diversity of the Pathways Team.⁸

In the end, the Pathways Team was comprised of nine members, including myself. In addition to including significant variety regarding people's level of familiarity with the Eden Community, their involvement with ARC, and their lifetime investment in spiritual formation initiatives, the team that coalesced was broadly diverse in age, gender, and ethnicity. It included five young adults aged 20, 21, 22, 24, and 26, two slightly older adults aged 29 and 36, and two more mature members aged 57 and 66. There were five males and four females. The group included five white participants, one black participant, one Asian American participant, and two Hispanic participants. One of the team members had extensive experience with international students at ACU. That person and two other individuals had also spent a significant portion of their lives outside of the United States (two in Africa and one in Asia) and were deeply shaped by those experiences.

8. Many of the same things could be said for the additional invitee who was not able to participate. His age, ethnic background, and particular experience and field of expertise would have added a great deal to the team. He was, however, unable to participate due to other commitments that needed his attention.

The Project Sessions

I planned the sessions of the Pathways Team's work together as a modified version of the 5D model of AI, previously described in chapter 3. Rather than having the team itself work through every one of the five stages (Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Deliver) to their fullest extent in that order, I adapted the model to reflect the realities and needs of this project as well as the core principles of AI.

I had already completed most of the work of the Define stage for this project through the development of my prospectus, particularly regarding the project's methodology. Rather than having team members themselves conduct the AI interviews typical of the Discover stage, I chose instead (for reasons described earlier in my section on theoretical frameworks) to use already existing and coded data from prior research I had conducted, some of it with an explicit AI framework.⁹ This data, which I presented to the Pathways Team in early sessions, served as the main resource for the team's analysis and proposals throughout the remaining stages of the project. Given both my own role as principal investigator and the time and attention constraints of project participants, I believe this was a sound choice. Because diversity, creative contextualization, and

9. While interviews I conducted regarding student experiences of spiritual formation (in 2017) and the subculture of the Eden Community (in 2019) were done using an appreciative framework, not all the data presented for the Pathways Team's consideration in this AI process was acquired appreciatively. I did not conduct either my 2017 study of spiritual and missional formation at ACU or my 2019 study of Cultural Theory as applied to the Eden Community with explicitly appreciative frameworks. Neither did I, however, conduct them with deficit-based frameworks. Furthermore, the data they yielded were purely descriptive, not necessarily prescriptive. That being the case, while these studies and their findings did not exactly reflect the core commitments and structures of AI, neither were they incompatible with AI as initial sources of data for further appreciative reflection. Moreover, the Cultural Theory study in particular highlighted significant aspects of the Eden Community's subculture that could not be brought the forefront through my AI into the same topic. Thus, both these sources of data (the Cultural Theory study and AI regarding the Eden Community) were necessary for a full depiction of the Eden Community's unique expression of regenerative ecclesial subculture. Every set of data, whether acquired appreciatively or not, provided unique and important insights that the Pathways Team benefited from as we named generative themes and moved forward appreciatively.

communal discernment were central to this project's aims, however, I attempted to give the Pathways Team ample opportunity to reflect on if and how the data I presented reflected their own observations and experiences, making space for the team to revise the themes as they saw fit. In this way, I sought to verify that we had trustworthy interpretations from which to work.¹⁰

Session 1: Define the Project

The first session served as an orientation to the project, something akin to the Define stage of AI, though I had already completed much of the work typical of the Define phase in my own preparations for this project. To equip participants well for our work together, I sought to do two principal things during this session. First, I desired to allow participants an opportunity to meet and learn a bit about each other, to gather a sense for who they might be working with in this project. Second, though participants had already learned broadly about the purposes and parameters of the project when they were invited, I wanted to say a great deal more about the content of and plans for the Pathways Team's work together in order to achieve clarity and commitment. In addition to using a presentation to guide our time together, I supplied the team with a one-page summary of the session's main points so they could review it further at their leisure.¹¹

After a few minutes to settle in, we began with a welcome, a moment of silence, and a prayer. We then launched into an extended time for introductory interactions,

10. I also made the more detailed findings of my research available to participants by providing them access to the course papers I wrote after each of my research studies. Those findings, while important for my own perspective as principal investigator, were rather extensive, however, and I believe it honored and most effectively used the Pathways Team's time and attention to have me summarize the results for them.

11. This project summary is available for review in Appendix D.

giving each person an opportunity to share about themselves, their connection with ARC, and their reasons for considering participating in this project. We also incorporated a check-in, a common Eden Community and ARC rhythm in which each person is given the opportunity to tell about something they are grateful for and to share what they are feeling at that moment. Since many of the team members were familiar with these rhythms and already knew each other—though they had not known going into the meeting who would be participating—it was rather easy to form a sense of openness and safety relatively quickly among the team. In addition to affirming their desire to help me in my doctoral research, participants expressed a great deal of excitement about the project and its potential to serve ARC, the team members themselves, the Eden Community, and other audiences as well.¹² Engaging in these conversations served to open us up to connection, ground us in a sense of self, relationship, and community, and help us recognize each other as people, not just participants.

Having begun to cultivate a sense of community among the participants in these ways, I then invited team members to read aloud brief summaries of the project's context, problem, and purpose, about which I offered some further explanation. I then spoke for a few minutes about the central theological foundations and theoretical frameworks of the project: apprenticeship, regenerative culture, diversity and creative contextualization, ICCs and their role in equipping the church for renewal, the Eden Community's subculture, and AI. After pausing for questions (there were none), I followed this up with

12. Given the existing close relationship between me and most of the team members, it is not surprising that they would express their love for me and their desire to support me as reasons for their participation in this project. To prevent our relationship from becoming problematic for the validity of my research, however, I talked with participants toward the end of Session 1 about the Hawthorne Effect (though I did not use the term directly) and ways we might combat it, something I wrote about previously in my section on potential limitations of this project.

a short discussion of the processes and timeline for our work together as a team, as well as a description of the responsibilities of team members.¹³ After discussing the informed consent form, which I asked them to sign and return to me if they opted to continue with the project, I offered a summary of some next steps.¹⁴

We drew this session to an end with a closing round, allowing for some silent reflection, followed by a chance for each person to share their thoughts, feelings, hopes, and intentions going into the project.¹⁵ Team members clearly voiced excitement about the ways the project would serve ARC, the Eden Community, and broader audiences. They also expressed desires to further interpersonal connections, to engage in constructive conversations, to deepen their understanding of ARC, to be challenged by diverse perspectives, and to consider how to fruitfully transfer their ARC experience into other contexts. Overall, the group that gathered seemed very engaged in our session and eager to continue in the project. We concluded our time together with a prayer led by one of the members of the ARC leadership team, someone whose vision for vibrant families of Jesus has given major shape to ARC from its outset.

13. Primary responsibilities of team members were to communicate clearly about their scheduling needs; to participate for the full extent of all sessions, barring extenuating circumstances; to engage with open hearts and minds, offering their honest perspectives and showing hospitality to others as they also did so; to care for themselves as necessary during our sessions; and to preserve confidentiality and anonymity.

14. The Pathways Team's informed consent form can be seen in Appendix B.

15. Following the procedures of Dynamic Governance—the Eden Community's governance form that influences many of its operating procedures—most of the conversations in this project's sessions were conducted in rounds. In a round, every person present in a gathering is given an opportunity, in a prescribed order, to voice their perspective. They are expected to speak up, even if only to indicate that they have nothing to contribute at that moment. In this manner, every individual is given space to speak, indicating that their viewpoint is important and valued. Working in rounds also helps prevent more vocal individuals from taking over a conversation, indicating that their viewpoint, while also important and valued, is but one of many perspectives that the group needs to hear.

Session 2: Discover the Eden Community

The second session constituted the first of the Pathways Team's three Discover sessions, providing us with a large portion of the data that we would engage in the remainder of the 5D model of AI. After a time of welcome and small group check-ins, our agenda revolved around an exploration of the ecclesial subculture of the Eden Community. This survey happened in three main stages, each of which included time for clarifying questions, as well as an opportunity to contemplate and discuss the data and what they indicated about the Eden Community's subculture.

The primary aim of this session was to present a summary of the subculture of the Eden Community, particularly by highlighting themes that I had identified in my own prior research. For this reason, the session was highly informative, using a presentation to provide participants with the background knowledge necessary to move forward well with the project. In addition, however, I desired the session to be reflective and generative, allowing the team members to take on some of the work of the Discover stage of AI themselves.¹⁶ Thus, I constructed our agenda in a way that encouraged participants to reflect individually and together on their own perspectives about the Eden Community's subculture, as well as on ways the Holy Spirit was calling us as a team to understand and respond to the insights we were uncovering.

First, we discussed the concepts of culture and ecclesial subculture. I shared the basic definitions I was using for those concepts in this project, connecting the ideas to the

16. This was particularly true because my prior research was conducted with Eden Community members, who, as insiders, take certain things for granted about the community's subculture and thus may not have named them explicitly. Since most Pathways Team participants were *not* members of the Eden Community, their perspectives as outsiders to that group had the potential to surface important aspects of the Eden Community's subculture that my research did not focus on, things that might have proved important for further exploration in our AI work together.

Eden Community’s vision and mission statements, as well as to the concept of regenerative culture. Wanting to encourage the Pathways Team to consider their own insights into the Eden Community’s subculture before they heard the findings of my research, I asked them to reflect individually for a few minutes on the question “What is one defining characteristic of the Eden Community’s culture?” I invited them to consider stories that exemplified their thoughts as well as to contribute a summative word or phrase to the chat record so we could revisit the ideas later.¹⁷

Second, I shared the framework of Cultural Theory. I explained to the Pathways Team the ideas of Grid and Group, sharing major characteristics of the four resulting models in Cultural Theory typology, including some strengths and weaknesses of each cultural type. Using the polling feature of Zoom, I then asked team members, solely based on my explanation of Cultural Theory and their experience of the Eden Community, to guess which quadrant the Eden Community fell into. Without exception they guessed correctly that the community has an overall egalitarian culture. I then proceeded to plot the major findings of my 2019 Cultural Theory study of the Eden Community (referenced previously in chapter 3) on the chart, giving a brief explanation of each component as I did, and offering an opportunity for clarifying questions as I concluded. With this information in hand, we then took an opportunity for processing and conversation in breakout rooms, considering the question, “What seems significant about this data that helps you understand the Eden Community and ARC better, or understand

17. Team members submitted the following comments: mission-centered; radical attention-paying; attentive to God and people; purposeful; gentleness; environmentally redemptive; considerate/caring (tend to be intentionally focused on promoting values that aid in exemplifying this Scripture: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

ways in which the Eden Community's culture can serve as good news?" We wrapped up this portion of our session with a time for each breakout group to share their reflections. Primary things that the group mentioned included the openness of the Eden Community to theological diversity, how an egalitarian culture can provide a strong support system, intergenerationality as good news, and the ways that God's kingdom emphasizes community but also reflects (and is reflected in) aspects of each Cultural Theory model.

Third, I presented AI as a change paradigm and process, sharing the themes that I identified when I applied this research method to my 2019 study of the Eden Community's subculture. I emphasized the positive perspective that AI employs, reminding team members of the words of Philippians 4:8–9 and employing the metaphor of seed-saving as an illustration for how AI works. I also talked some about the narrative- and image-orientation of the process. After offering a summary of the 5D model of AI we were utilizing in our project and locating our work as a team inside that model, I proceeded to share the findings of my own AI regarding the Eden Community's subculture (referenced previously in chapter 3). We then moved back into breakout rooms, using the same question as before to explore aspects of the Eden Community's subculture that were standing out to team members as significant to attend to in our project. Areas of focus the groups said they had reflected on included intergenerationality as a significant mode for transmitting culture over time; how it is ironic but befitting of followers of Christ that we consider sacrifice and self-emptying something to appreciate; the centrality of communal discernment, commitment, togetherness, and reliance on God; the unfulfilled longing that people have to be known and loved in community; and the

fact that good conflict resolution is necessary for communal life if it is not to be an ill-fated utopian vision.

Having explored the subculture of the Eden Community through the frameworks of Cultural Theory and AI, we then briefly revisited the perspectives on the community's subculture that the team members had shared at the beginning of our session. I read the previously submitted comments aloud and offered an opportunity for further sharing and conversation. We followed this up with a time of listening prayer and sharing around areas of significance that we might want to pay attention to as we worked toward shaping the ARC Pathways. Among other things, team members discussed the importance of genuine interdependence in egalitarian cultures; how to nurture a community that engages diversity, disagreement, and conflict well; how to shift people's mindsets to see the Eden Community's subculture as a desirable norm rather than merely a countercultural oddity; and how to helpfully adapt aspects of the Eden Community's subculture to other cultural expressions.

Though we did not have time for the planned closing round, as we concluded our time together, I invited the team members to reflect on the following question, closely reflective of our immediately prior time of sharing, in preparation for Session 3: "As we consider how to refine the ARC Pathways so they better transmit the Eden Community's culture and shape regenerative culture among ACU students, what important things about the culture(s) of ACU students come to mind?" I then ended our time with a prayer. Shortly after the session concluded, four of the Pathways Team members, plus one

person's immediate family, joined me for an optional in-person dinner at a local restaurant to celebrate the kickoff of the project.¹⁸

*Session 3: Discover ARC at ACU*¹⁹

The third session, also part of the Discover phase of AI, used presentation interwoven with conversation to explore the two remaining sets of foundational materials that were essential for the project's aims: information about student spiritual formation in the ACU context and the initial set of ARC Pathways that the team would be working to refine. Since it had been several weeks since Session 2, after an initial time of welcome and partner check-ins, I began with a concise recap of the Eden Community's subculture as discussed in that prior session.

While an understanding of the Eden Community's own ecclesial subculture was central to this project, that alone would not have formed a sufficient basis for the

18. I did not originally anticipate having any family members join us for the meal. In fact, I purposefully did not mention the possibility, as I wanted to be careful about not compromising the anonymity of the Pathways Team participants. When one team member inquired immediately prior to the meal if he could bring his family members, I was torn about how to respond, feeling tension between that commitment to confidentiality and the value of hospitality and communal connection, particularly given the voluntary nature of the gathering, the ways that the pandemic had required everyone to sacrifice so many opportunities for togetherness already, and the high level of openness that team members had already exhibited about their participation in ARC and the Pathways Team. Rightly or wrongly, I agreed to the family members' participation and tried to notify other attendees of that developing circumstance. Thankfully, the team members who participated in the meal did not have any objections to the presence of these additional unexpected guests, welcoming them warmly. I immediately realized that I should have anticipated and prepared better for this potential development, one that reflects a dilemma we occasionally encounter about the nature and permeability of group boundaries in the Eden Community and ARC.

19. Three members of the Pathways Team had conflicts that prevented them from participating in Session 3 as originally scheduled. To make sure that all team members were prepared to move forward together in Session 4, I conducted makeup conversations with them. In one instance, that entailed a two-hour meeting with two participants, following the same agenda as the original session. In the other case, the participant also missed Session 4. He was, however, able to review the video recording of the makeup version of Session 3 (with participant permission), look through the materials from Sessions 3 and 4, and then talk with me for a 20-minute phone conversation that allowed him the opportunity to process the information and ask any questions he had. I have incorporated pertinent aspects of these conversations in the summary below at the appropriate points.

Pathways Team’s work. If the team was to craft successful proposals for how the Eden Community might shape regenerative culture through ARC, they also needed to consider the cultural realities of ARC’s target audience: students at ACU. Extensive firsthand experience with ACU student subculture served as their primary source of knowledge, but I chose to supplement that in this session. As our first major set of materials, therefore, I presented findings from my 2017 AI interviews of ACU students, offering Pathways Team members further insight into students’ perspectives on their own best experiences of spiritual formation. I also included several points from my concurrent interviews with faculty and staff at ACU in 2017 about student spiritual formation on campus.²⁰ Familiarity with these findings enhanced the team’s capacity to hold both the Eden Community’s and students’ subcultures in mind, considering how ARC might most effectively support the incubation of regenerative culture among these students by building a bridge between the two.

After a short time for clarifying questions and general reflections, we moved into breakout rooms to reflect on areas of correlation and contrast we were seeing between these data and what we had learned about the Eden Community’s subculture. As points of

20. This study did not connect directly to the Eden Community’s subculture, but its findings did illuminate the context in which the community is attempting to shape regenerative culture. As well as providing important background knowledge, it had the potential to bring to the forefront some additional areas worthy of attention as the team analyzed and selected generative themes for the remainder of our AI work together. A full description of this research, the larger study it was part of, and the results it yielded are available in my March 2018 paper, “Ministry Context Analysis and Proposal: Faithfully Forming, Catalyzing Culture Shift,” submitted to Dr. Carson Reed as a part of the “Theological Foundations for the Practice of Ministry” course at ACU. In short, though, the study yielded eight major themes regarding spiritual formation among ACU students: (1) Christian community serves a major role, for good or for ill, (2) vulnerability is transformative, both in relationship with God and others, (3) rhythms of private and communal devotion are significant for students’ flourishing in faith, (4) experiences of diversity shape students significantly, (5) students are fiercely individualistic, (6) students crave face-to-face connection, (7) students desire but have little opportunity for practical theological reflection that connects to their daily lives, and (8) missional formation is not a strength of the ACU context (at least according to those I interviewed in 2018).

convergence between the two, team members noted shared values for diversity and face-to-face connection (especially during the pandemic), as well as a shared longing for interactive connection with God—though participants also noted ways that the expression of these values was circumscribed by culture and norms. Areas of dissimilarity included locations in different Cultural Theory models, differing norms for how leaders are developed and sustained, a dearth of missional imagination among ACU students, limited experience of and imagination for deep community among ACU students, and a stark contrast between the Eden Community members’ relatively consistent spiritual journeys and maturity levels and the much less homogenous expressions of spirituality found in the larger and more diverse ACU student body.

After this preliminary conversation, which served as a helpful reminder of the ACU student context in which ARC is situated, I spent most of Session 3 orienting team members to ARC itself. First, I shared about the goals of ARC, the ways that ARC had developed from its inception until the present, and the leadership team’s hopes for where it might go in the near future. After a short time for questions and initial feedback, we then reviewed together the initial set of pathways that ARC had been using for student spiritual formation (found in Appendix E).²¹

Unfortunately, reading each detail of the ARC Pathways table out loud would have been time prohibitive. Instead, I opted to have us only read aloud the introductory portions of the pathways, which gave context to the overall training timeline and the

21. While certainly in need of evaluation and refinement, the initial set of ARC Pathways, visible in Appendix E, does also at some level represent an appreciative perspective. It portrays what members of the Eden Community’s training team, each with a great deal of experience in spiritual formation, understand to be the best of our past and potential future approaches to sharing the Eden Community’s ecclesial subculture with ACU students.

Story table. We then designated time for each horizontal section of the tables in which team members would read silently and offer clarifying questions and reflections about the content, much of it already familiar to many of them from experience. Taking the material level by level in this way, we worked our way through the entirety of the ARC Pathways until team members had a general sense of what they entailed. The group raised many noteworthy questions and observations during this process. Some of these were clarifying questions, easily answered in the process of our conversation. Others prodded deeper, noting important ways in which the pathways might benefit from further development over time.²²

Unfortunately, given the time and project constraints we were working with, we were only able to begin to mine for the valuable insights the participants clearly had to offer. Looking back afterward, I realized that I should have planned for this to be a three-hour session rather than a two-hour session.²³ As it was, I had to severely curtail the amount of time we were able to spend in listening prayer at the end of this session, taking only two minutes of silence, and combining our sharing time with our closing round. This did not allow for enough time to thoroughly reflect on the questions I put forward: “What

22. As I clarified to the team at the outset of our review of the pathways, our goal in the project was not to perfect the ARC Pathways but rather to select and use four specific themes as lenses through which we could look for and suggest improvements. While the questions and observations the team raised in this session did not all end up applying to those eventual four themes and our conversations going forward in this project, they might nonetheless serve in helpful ways in the larger process of implementing and further improving the ARC Pathways over time.

23. Attempting to retroactively fit a large amount of content into an altered project timeline and schedule proved difficult. In addition, though, I was reminded throughout the course of this project that I have a propensity to attempt too much in too little time, not always accurately anticipating the depth of engagement that almost inevitably arises. I am not convinced we would have made it through our overview of the entire ARC Pathways had all team members been present in the initial session. Perhaps it was a blessing in disguise that several of them were absent, making room for deeper, more targeted processing in the initial session and subsequent makeup conversations.

important things are you noticing regarding the Eden Community's culture, ACU student culture/formation, and the ARC Pathways, particularly about areas of correlation or contrast? What seems significant to attend to as we consider how to adapt the current ARC Pathways so they more fully reflect and transmit the Eden Community's culture in the ACU context?" I did invite the participants to spend some further time in prayer and thought about these questions in preparation for Session 4, however, and I adapted my agenda for that session to include a small amount of space for reflection and sharing. As we concluded Session 3 together with our closing round and a prayer led by one of the other participants, I was encouraged to see that despite having a long, very full session, participants still seemed energetic, engaged, and joyful, experiencing our time together as a privilege and blessing.

Session 4: Discover Our Themes

Session 4 concluded the major Discover portion of the team's AI process. In the first half hour, after an initial time of welcome and partner check-ins, I offered brief refreshers about the major components of our project that would coalesce in this session: the five processes of AI, the Eden Community's subculture, ACU student subculture and spiritual formation, and the initial ARC Pathways. Building off this foundation, we began the process of discovering the themes we would like to attend to in our subsequent sessions, which would engage the additional phases of AI (Dream, Design, and Deliver). As we generated potential themes, we worked iteratively, employing individual listening prayer, breakout room conversations, and large group conversations multiple times in order to surface important insights.

First, I invited the group to explore observations and questions that had arisen since our last session, as well as to discuss general areas of correlation and contrast they were noticing between the subculture of the Eden Community and the experience of student spiritual formation at ACU. The group reflected on how a desire for face-to-face connection can bridge the chasm between students' fierce individualism and the community's emphasis on interdependence. We also discussed how everyday life can provide an effective opportunity to teach about foundational concepts like forgiveness and hospitality.

Next, we explored how the Eden Community's subculture lined up with the initial ARC Pathways, noting elements that were already well represented, as well as elements that needed greater or modified representation for those pathways to successfully reflect and transmit the Eden Community's subculture in the ACU context. The team affirmed that a great deal of the community's subculture was already well represented, particularly noting a strong emphasis on joyfulness and gatherings that cultivate safe spaces for vulnerability. Intergenerationality, unity in diversity, and the idea of mission as radical attention-paying had some good representation but were mentioned as areas that could use further development, especially in the earliest levels of the ARC Pathways. The group also articulated a desire to see greater emphasis on sacrifice and submission, shared mission-centric work, and interdependent reliance, especially with a goal of authentic student leadership in ARC.

Finally, after spending a few minutes in silence and prayer to listen for the Spirit's guidance, each team member offered one or two suggestions in response to the question I posed for reflection: "What most needs attention as we refine the ARC Pathways so that

they more successfully draw ACU students into regenerative Christian culture in ways that reflect the Eden Community’s culture?” The topics the team brought up in response were potential themes for our further inquiry throughout the remainder of the AI process. There was a great deal of resonance between topics they suggested, particularly regarding mission, intergenerationality, and hospitality. At this point, I was delighted to feel the project taking on a life of its own, with the team beginning to truly steer the direction of the conversation and project in significant ways. After a closing round, I concluded our session with a prayer.

Because three team members had been unable to join us for this session, I did not venture to make an official proposal during the session about what themes we would address in the remainder of the project, as I wanted to gather their feedback before doing so. I emailed each of these participants a summary of the questions we explored in the session, along with a copy of the presentation. After giving them some days to review and reflect, I called each person to gather their insights. I then combined what I had heard from all the team members into a proposal about the four themes we would address together. In the end, the four themes I selected, closely paralleling what developed in our conversations, were as follows:

1. Missional Paradigm Shift—mission as participation in communities of God’s love and purpose.
2. Inclusive Diversity—being desirous of, hospitable to, and honoring of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and input.
3. Interdependent Co-Creators—ARC and Eden Community as a two-way, symbiotic relationship that encourages student leadership.

4. Intergenerationality—strengthening imagination for and experience of relationships across generations.

Once decided, I communicated those themes to the whole Pathways Team in an e-mail. I asked them to consider how the current set of ARC Pathways reflected those themes, as well as what stories came to mind about how they had seen the Eden Community and ARC engage those themes well. All of this prepared us to directly deal with our themes in subsequent sessions. In these ways, Session 4 concluded the primary tasks of our shared Discover stage.

Session 5: Dream and Design Themes 1 and 2

Session Process

Sessions 5 and 6 were designed to carry us forward into the Dream and Design phases of AI, with each session engaging two of the generative themes we selected in the Discover phase.²⁴ After our opening check-in and a prayer led by another team member, we began Session 5 with a reminder of the four themes we had selected, a brief refresher about the parameters for each step of the AI process, and a short time of listening prayer for God's guidance. After this, we walked our way through the first three stages of the AI

24. Sessions 5 and 6 were originally envisioned as four two-hour sessions, each addressing one theme, for a total of eight hours. When I adapted my original plans, I shifted to two three-hour sessions, a total of six hours. Though there was a two-hour difference in these plans, I only lost about one hour of content time overall, as I was able to streamline the agenda to eliminate what would have been duplicate check-ins and closing rounds. Though the adaptation was necessary and workable, I do think that the original plan would have served us slightly better, allowing for more time, as well as greater levels of focus and energy around each unique theme.

process—Discover, Dream, and Design—with our selected themes, in this case missional paradigm shift and inclusive diversity.²⁵ In each case, we followed the same process.²⁶

First, to resurface narratives of “the best” from which to work appreciatively, I had team members conduct a miniature Discover session regarding the theme at hand. Joining with a partner or two in breakout rooms, we shared stories and reflections about how they had seen the Eden Community and ARC engage this theme well. We then gathered back together to discuss important elements these conversations surfaced, as well as how the initial set of ARC Pathways reflected what the Eden Community and ARC were already doing well regarding this theme.

Next, we moved into the Dream phase of AI, imagining together how the Eden Community might more fully live into its demonstrated capacity to share this component of its culture with students through ARC. We began with a short time of listening prayer based on what we had discussed, making space for the Holy Spirit’s guidance in our task of communal discernment. Then we briefly shared what we had been sensing, taking turns in a round to make sure that everyone’s voice was heard, and attempting to speak our own thoughts descriptively rather than evaluate others’ ideas.²⁷

25. While we could have addressed the themes in any order, I chose to place missional paradigm shift first, as it was such a foundational concept that had implications for all of what we do in ARC, including how we conceived of the other three themes.

26. My choice to place the Dream and Design sessions in rapid succession for each theme reflected a reality that Watkins, Mohr, and Kelley note: “Both the dream phase and the design phase involve the collective construction of positive images of the future. In practice the two often happen in conjunction with each other.” Watkins, Mohr, and Kelley, *Appreciative Inquiry*, 89.

27. Evaluative responses can be helpful at times, but this round was meant as an opportunity to collect input from a wide variety of angles. Inserting evaluative feedback into that process can distract or derail the group, as well as at times discourage people from sharing their genuine thoughts. It can be important, therefore, to clearly delineate these two different tasks, which strongly correlate to the AI stages of Dream and Design. In terms of Dynamic Governance, the procedure for idea-gathering in rounds is

Having gathered a great deal of perspective in this way, we then began to engage the Design stage. In this stage, we gathered ideas for provocative proposals and attempted to discern together how we might modify the existing set of ARC Pathways to help the Eden Community and ARC live into the future we had dreamt together with respect to the theme at hand. Again starting with a short time of silence and then using rounds, each person offered their suggestions regarding alterations we might make to the pathways. We gathered many ideas, which we would then carry forward for further refinement in Session 7.²⁸

Theme 1—Missional Paradigm Shift

As we walked through this process with our first theme, missional paradigm shift, team members shared many significant ideas. Building on the Discover reflections, in the Dream stage we discussed ways to help students through the challenging task of internalizing the Eden Community’s different paradigm for mission. We would like to see them move away from viewing mission as something they go and do, instead coming to understand it as a way of being they inhabit in their everyday lives, especially as they participate in communities of God’s love and purpose. We talked about ways we might alter the language of ARC to highlight this shift early on and throughout our activities, as

called *picture-forming*, and it is typically followed up by *proposal-shaping*, which does get into details and evaluative feedback.

28. I realized about halfway through conversations about our first theme that our time constraints would not allow us to complete the Design stage for each theme during Sessions 5 and 6. Instead of selling the process short by pushing through at an unrealistic pace, I leaned into that fact. Rather than aiming to form highly specific, concrete proposals in Sessions 5 and 6, then, I used these sessions more as idea-gathering opportunities, helping us start to picture the designs that we would put more emphasis on refining in Session 7.

well as specific ways we might invite students into various deepening ways of “performing community,” as one participant put it.²⁹

Our Design conversations took these ideas further, focusing on three overarching ideas. We discussed the need to make the purpose of ARC as clear as possible to students from the beginning. We explored ways we might draw from Scripture and experience to help students understand mission as participation in communities of God’s love and purpose. And we shared ideas for how we might stretch students’ imaginations early on by offering opportunities to observe and participate in different expressions of missional life in community.

Theme 2—Inclusive Diversity

After taking a short break, we repeated the process with our second theme, inclusive diversity. The Discover portion yielded encouraging insights about how the Eden Community and ARC have emphasized diversity and inclusion well—showing humble, charitable hospitality to people from a variety of ages, backgrounds, and religious views—while also cultivating structures and relationships that encourage students to do the same.

In the Dream stage we talked about developing more opportunities for reflection on what diversity is, as well as how it is (and is not) present within the Eden Community and ARC. We briefly discussed the role that meals and hospitality can play in breaking down barriers and bringing diverse people together. Finally, a few team members expressed a desire for greater clarity about the Eden Community’s core values and theological perspectives, something they felt could serve as a foundation for unity amid

29. RK, in Pathways Team Session 5.

diversity; others, especially those on the ARC leadership team, pushed back some on this impulse, wanting to see ARC emphasize unity in the Spirit and relationship more than theological unity.

In our Design conversations, the team focused on two major ideas. We considered various ways to build in more activities that creatively showcase diversity, particularly pondering how to pair together meals or banquets with opportunities to share about our diverse backgrounds and spiritual styles. We also talked about ways to build greater knowledge of others through relaxed, recreational, and everyday activities that might allow people's personalities to emerge in different ways. All throughout this conversation, I noticed an emphasis on the importance of playfulness.³⁰ We finished our time in Session 5 with a closing round, a few comments on next steps, and a prayer led by one of the team members.

Session 6: Dream and Design Themes 3 and 4

Session Process

When the team met again a month later for Session 6, we followed the same agenda as in Session 5, only with two different themes at the center of our conversations: intergenerationality and interdependent co-creators. After beginning with a check-in and a prayer, we iteratively worked our way through Discover, Dream, and Design conversations. In this session, however, the Discover and Dream stages ran longer than

30. This topic arose again and again in our discussions throughout this project, becoming, at some level, an unexpected fifth theme that regularly shaped our conversations and proposals. As anyone who knows me can tell you, play is far from my strong suit and is thus often noticeably absent in my relationships and pursuits. This personal weakness or blind spot of mind has shaped the ARC Pathways and ARC experience to some degree, resulting in a greater emphasis on serious conversations and experiences to the neglect of play and its own significant formative value. I am grateful that the participants in this project served to remind me of the importance of play for health and balance in life and relationships.

expected, leaving us little time to engage the Design stage of AI. For this reason, rather than gathering Design proposals through verbally shared ideas in rounds, as in Session 5, this time I asked the team to take a moment for reflection and then submit their top proposal for additions or alterations to the pathways into the chat. In this way, everyone had an opportunity to share their own ideas and see those of others, and we were able to recapture some of the time we had lost in our agenda.³¹

Theme 3—Intergenerationality

Conversations about our third theme, intergenerationality, were very rich. The Discover stage unearthed a great deal of affirmation about the Eden Community's emphasis on intergenerationality, showing that it stands in contrast to most of the team members' other family and church experiences, which frequently segregate age groups. This specific form of diversity is almost unavoidable in ARC, as ARC, couched within the intergenerational Eden Community, encourages students toward regular interactions with people across the whole spectrum of age. In this kind of context, students see how intergenerationality is both beautiful and messy, with formation and discipleship for everyone happening intentionally but often informally through genuine cross-

31. Unfortunately, engaging the Design stage in this way did curtail participants' capacity to share in more thorough detail about their ideas. The challenge of having too much to do in the allotted time reflects both my propensity to underestimate how much people will talk and the difficulty I have encouraging them to speak more succinctly in the moment. When I realized that we would not be able to complete our agenda as planned in the timeframe I had outlined for our session, my options were limited. I could have allowed the session to run long, but I did not want to transgress the boundary of the three hours that participants had already generously dedicated to this session. I could have allowed the agenda to unfold as planned, just at a slower pace, but I knew that we would then cut our conversations about our fourth theme short, perhaps without the capacity to revisit it in future sessions. Though I regret the necessity of my decision to alter the plan in this way, I believe it was the best possible option under the circumstances. Although two of the team members did not submit Design proposals in the chat for either of this session's themes, the Design suggestions that were offered closely reflected the Discover and Dream stages. After the session I was able to collect these ideas into documents that I then shared with the team. We used these documents to create further refined proposals in Session 7. Appendix F includes the notes I provided—followed by the proposals the groups shaped—for each theme.

generational check-ins, conflict resolution, and even kids' bedtime routines. Noting that college students tend to run away from family because of their impulse to focus on defining themselves, the team spoke of family as something they believed vital for students to run toward instead, since participation in formative intergenerational interactions offers them the opportunity to discover their true identity and a healthy path for their lives.

From the foundation of these generative reflections, we entered the Dream stage, where two major ideas surfaced. The team expressed an eagerness to more purposefully incorporate Eden Community members into ARC activities, as well as ARC students into Eden Community activities and life rhythms, noting a desire to expand our imagination for the kinds of activities we can share—including opportunities for service, play, and day-to-day interactions—as well as when and where those might occur. We also talked about how we might enhance intergenerational mentoring of ARC students by Eden Community members, deliberately facilitating connections between people with similar interests or life trajectories and offering opportunities for these mentor-mentee pairs to contribute demonstrably to ARC and the Eden Community. Though most Design suggestions that team members submitted in the chat feature were not highly specific, they closely mirrored the Discover and Dream conversations, with a specific emphasis on more shared interactions, especially having more intergenerational activities on campus at ACU.

Theme 4—Interdependent Co-Creators

After a short break, we then moved into conversations about our fourth theme, interdependent co-creators. First, we spent a few minutes clarifying the theme, as it was a

challenging one for at least one team member to conceptualize. We discussed our desire to see ARC students and the Eden Community exist in a dynamic, symbiotic relationship that encourages student initiative, perspective, and leadership in both spheres. We talked about how ARC students gain greater competency in the skills that communal Christian life and mission require through their increasingly complex forms of participation and leadership under the guidance of mentors.³² The Eden Community affirms that everyone has something of value to offer in community, and we want ARC to reflect this conviction in the ways we invite and expect students and Eden Community members to work interdependently, creating the ARC experience together.

As we engaged the Discover process, two emphases came to the forefront, one an abstract set of theological reflections and the second a concrete description of ways ARC has done well at demonstrating its capacity for interdependent co-creation. In assorted ways, several team members talked about the idea of ARC and the Eden Community as an expression of the interdependent body of Christ. This body is made up of different parts that all need each other, and the parts all depend together on God for guidance and sustenance. The diverse gifts, strengths, and resources of the various parts are to be proactively drawn out, affirmed, and employed for the good of all and for the furthering of God's mission. And as interdependent members of one another, ARC and Eden participants must learn how to healthily pair together autonomy, commitment, responsibility, and redemptive conflict engagement.³³ More concretely, Pathways Team

32. Though no one specifically raised the term, the concept of LPP, which I discussed in my definition of apprenticeship in chapter 1, is central to this idea of interdependent co-creators.

33. No one specifically mentioned biblical instances of the metaphor of church as body, but the main points of the conversation clearly aligned with Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts and his usage of that metaphor in 1 Cor 12:4–27.

members also reflected to a great extent about how ARC's purposeful rhythms of attentive connection, listening prayer, and communal discernment of the Spirit's guidance were central to the development of sincere, profound relationships of mutuality that are "refreshing" and "contagious."³⁴ These and other ARC rhythms create opportunities for "co-discovery, co-creation, and co-sustaining," as one team member put it.³⁵

In the Dream stage, the team focused on two areas of potential growth toward greater interdependent co-creation. We imagined how ARC might more purposefully offer opportunities for student leadership in chapel and cohort gatherings, especially in light of the gifts, strengths, and spiritual styles that students are discovering. Students' intergenerational mentoring relationships, discussed previously in Session 6, could also empower them to learn and succeed on these occasions. The team also highlighted a desire to see ARC fully implement its envisioned future for students' communal missional living experiments. When carried out as conceptualized, this team mission stage of ARC will be an inherently co-creative endeavor in which students are given plentiful guidance from a mentor as they discern, creatively imagine, and live into God's calling for them as a team in context.

As was the case with our third theme, I opted due to the constraints of our schedule to have team members submit their Design suggestions in the chat. This time, however, the ideas were more developed and detailed. And though the proposals exhibited some variety in the specifics they suggested, two foci came to the forefront. First, participants recommend that we evaluate students' gifts, abilities, and spiritual

34. IW, in Pathways Team Session 6.

35. MS, in Pathways Team Session 6.

styles early in the ARC process, using this as a foundation from which to nurture their growth in and beyond these strengths, including through inviting them to actively help shape chapel, cohort, and retreat experiences. Second, two team members mentioned the importance of creating even more space to focus together on hearing and responding to the Spirit's guidance, whether that is in our spiritual disciplines, our gatherings, or our selection of partners for the team mission stage of ARC. After gathering these proposals from the team, we drew Session 6 toward its close with a brief discussion of next steps for the project, followed by a closing round in which the comments shared resonated strongly with the emphasis on co-creation. One of the team members then led us in a closing prayer.³⁶

Session 7: Design and Deliver

Session 7 brought together the conversations and findings of the previous two theme-based sessions, leading us into broader-scope Design and Deliver processes. It was weighted toward the Design stage of AI, continuing the task of creating provocative proposals about how the various dreams and designs that we had discussed already for each discrete theme might fit together into a larger, integrated whole.

My original plan for this session had been to use our time as an entire group to fine-tune the proposals we planned to construct in Session 5 and 6. Given the way those sessions developed, though, this plan proved untenable. Instead, to use our time most efficiently, I opted to have us work in four breakout rooms, each one addressing a

36. It seems that, despite our prefatory explanation, this concept of interdependent co-creators was hard for one team member to grasp. He commented in the closing round that he still did not have a good understanding of what we had been talking about. My hunch is that he understands the concept more than he was able to recognize, and that perhaps the phrasing threw him off. Regardless, I am incredibly grateful for his perseverance through and active participation in a long conversation under what may have been frustrating circumstances for him.

separate theme. Prior to the session, I had collected the reflections from Sessions 5 and 6 into four separate documents, one for each theme, so that our Dream and Design ideas were easily accessible. Each theme had roughly two pages of notes, which I organized into general reflections on the theme, ways to foster the theme, and concrete suggestions regarding the theme. I made all these documents available to the Pathways Team members in an email the day before Session 7, also noting the groups that I thought best suited to work on each.³⁷ As this was our last major working session, our objective was to use these notes to complete a finished product: a revised, cohesive set of ARC Pathways.³⁸

We began Session 7 with a quick agenda review and an initial check-in between partners in breakout rooms. Then the team gathered back together for detailed instructions regarding our task. I asked them to take the first few minutes in their breakout rooms to read over the notes pertaining to their theme, following this up with an additional few minutes of silence and listening prayer. After this, they were to use the

37. These documents are available in Appendix F, where the notes on each theme are followed by the related proposals that the breakout groups shaped. One of our team members had to be absent from this gathering, leaving us with a total of eight people. As I thought about how to populate the breakout rooms, I took two main things into account. First, I distributed the Eden Community members into different breakout rooms so that our familiarity with the subculture of the community and the ARC pathways could serve as resources in those rooms. Furthermore, I assigned team members to themes that they seemed to have demonstrated a strong understanding of and passion for throughout the project. I did, however, also invite feedback about the division of labor when I sent the email, asking people to let me know if they had a strong preference for another theme.

38. Though there was opportunity for the Pathways Team to discern otherwise in its work together, our revised set of ARC Pathways retained the same overall format as the initial set of pathways, just as I had anticipated, naming specific concepts to cover in ARC and concrete suggestions for doing so effectively. Though the revised set of pathways can be considered a “finished product” in regard to this project, it will certainly be subject to future adaptation as changes in context and culture occur and as, through implementation and reflection, the Eden Community training team builds greater knowledge about what works and what does not. This is expected as a normal development of the Deliver phase of AI, which is characterized by continual experimentation and appreciative evaluation. It is, however, beyond the scope of this project to carry out that extensive of a Deliver phase.

insights that arose from their reading and reflection to aid them in the task of crafting as specific and concrete of a proposal as possible, incorporating as much of the feedback as they could. I also asked them to compare their ideas to the initial ARC Pathways, looking for how their proposed refinements might best be integrated into the whole. Though we certainly could have fruitfully gone on longer, we spent about twenty minutes in our breakout rooms in this fashion. Groups took notes as they worked and prepared to share a two- to three-minute summary with the whole group. After each group presented its proposal, I solicited succinct feedback from each member of the team in a round.³⁹

In regard to our first theme, missional paradigm shift, the proposal entailed two main points. First, since this concept is such a fundamental one for ARC, we should engage it clearly and early on, guiding students from the beginning of ARC into new ways of thinking and increasingly mature reflection on the nature of mission. Second and relatedly, as students join in the variety of practices that characterize ARC in its different stages and expressions, we should frequently invite them to ask, “Is *this* mission?” Doing so will regularly challenge them to reflect on how actively participating in this community of God’s love and purpose causes them to be awake and alive to God and the world around them.

Our second theme, inclusive diversity, yielded three major insights. First, in ARC we have the opportunity help students expand their definition of diversity and their awareness of its presence, in an assortment of ways that are often unanticipated or understated. To really lean into this theme, we must more purposefully call attention to

³⁹. Summations of each proposal are available in Appendix F, following the notes on the related theme that the breakout groups worked from in this session.

and celebrate the presence of various forms of diversity in our midst as we walk through the ARC experience. Second, we need to offer more opportunities that challenge students to step outside the relatively safe ACU bubble and their comfort zones so they might interact with people who are different from them. Finally, we should more prominently connect the idea of inclusive diversity to the overall missional paradigm of ARC as well as our Story, Setting, and System framework, helping students appreciate and practice inclusive diversity as a reflection of God's and the church's nature and mission.

Next, we discussed the theme of interdependent co-creators.⁴⁰ The proposal entailed three suggestions. First, we should actively incorporate the language of “co-creation” and “co-discovery” as we talk to students early on about what ARC is, as this framework helps them understand its participatory nature. Second, we ought to strengthen our attentiveness to students' gifting by incorporating gifts assessments at the beginning of each level of ARC and gift affirmations at the end of each level. In this way we will be able to see how students' abilities have developed over time. Particularly if we pair this process with guidance from a similarly gifted mentor, this will help students learn to invest and develop their gifts in constructive ways. Third, we should regularly ask students how they are helping co-create—even occasionally reframing the idea of mission as co-creation with God. As we do, we should also invite them into suitable opportunities to shape and lead ARC, such as presenting about Story/Setting/System content they are passionate about or participating in an ARC Advisory Team that meets regularly.

40. Though this was technically our fourth theme, we addressed it third in this session, for no particular reason other than that I had listed the themes in this order in my e-mail.

The final theme we discussed was intergenerationality, and the proposal shared addressed entry level, intermediate level, and advanced level expressions of how a greater emphasis on intergenerationality might play out. At the entry level, the emphasis was on finding ways to incorporate more intergenerational experiences into some of our standing practices, particularly checking in across generations and increasing the number of opportunities for students to engage in the daily life of Eden Community families, both on and off campus. At the intermediate level, we should create more informal opportunities for students to be with children and older people, also leaning into laid back but purposeful mentoring that builds relationships through connections over coffee, walks, and time together in homes. With this increased overlap of lives and personalities, some conflicts will naturally emerge, especially given the different needs and experiences of different generations, and we will want to navigate these constructively, using them as an opportunity to learn, grow, and love each other better. At the advanced level, we will particularly want to encourage intergenerational relationships between students who are living in community and the others who are embedded in their neighborhoods or who are serving as mentors for them.

Having constructed and refined proposals for all four of our themes, we transitioned toward the end of the session into a rudimentary version of the Deliver stage of AI. It was beyond the scope of this project to fully enact the extensive processes of the Deliver phase, but I wanted to be sure to offer an opportunity for the Pathways Team to begin the process of formalizing and refining our planned pathways. To this end, I posed a question for consideration that was purposefully framed more critically than the questions we had typically engaged in this highly appreciative project. I asked the team to

spend a few minutes in reflection and listening prayer to see if any areas of disconnect or divergence were arising between the refined set of pathways we had been crafting and either the Eden Community's subculture or what we knew of student spiritual formation at ACU. By having the team preemptively evaluate the refined ARC Pathways, particularly noting areas of weakness that they observed, I hoped to jumpstart the Deliver stage of AI, naming areas that ARC leadership would want to give attention to in the future as we continued to refine the pathways. This prompt yielded some important insights, particularly regarding ways we will need to attend to our human limitations as we implement the pathways; the challenging nature of what ARC offers, especially to busy students who may not immediately see its value; and how to make ARC's learnings more readily accessible to the group of students who are drawn to it. Unfortunately, we found ourselves running short on time at the end of this session, and our opportunity for constructive, Spirit-led fine-tuning of our proposals based on this feedback was severely cut short. We had to skip the planned time for processing in breakout rooms, and we only had time to gather initial responses from everyone in the whole group. We were not able to intersperse those comments with opportunities for further listening prayer and discernment as I had intended.

All that being the case, the mood of this session seemed to shift significantly at the end, with the energy levels in the group diminishing almost immediately when we began using a more critical framework rather than the appreciative one we had become accustomed to. The feedback we gathered was good, but the toll it took on us was

noticeable and regrettable, particularly in our last major working session together.⁴¹ I attempted to lift the team’s energy levels some by inserting comments early on in our feedback round and near the conclusion of our session about the important function this feedback would serve, even if it was gathered non-appreciatively. But as I ended Session 7 with some announcements, a closing round, and a prayer, I made a mental note to be doubly sure to engage our final session together from a highly appreciative perspective.

Session 8: Conclusion

Session 8 served as the conclusion of the Pathways Team’s work together. We began with a brief welcome, a partner check-in, and a time of prayer requests and prayer. Then we shifted our attention to the refined ARC Pathways. After Session 7, I had integrated the team’s proposals—some highly specific suggestions and some broader ideas—into the entire set of pathways, making the additions and alterations that the team had suggested. I circulated the refined pathways, as well as the project evaluation questionnaire we would be using in this session, to the team a week and a half prior to the session so that they could review them in preparation.⁴²

To begin our work together in this session, I took ten minutes to screenshare and look over the refined pathways, offering an opportunity for team members to pose clarifying questions and initial reflections. With this information in hand, we spent about ten minutes in general conversation about thoughts and ideas that had occurred to us since our last session, further refining and formalizing what the pathways would need and

41. Perhaps it was primarily my own weariness after a hard day personally and a long session that led me to sense this change, but one other participant did mention us all looking “brain-dead” at the end of this meeting. MS, in Pathways Team Session7.

42. The refined ARC Pathways are available in Appendix G. The Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire is included in Appendix H.

areas that the ARC leadership team would need to give attention to in the future.

Collecting these suggestions helped ensure that the work of our Deliver phase would continue, even if outside the bounds of this project.⁴³

In this session, we also took fifteen minutes to complete the project evaluation questionnaire, which we then discussed extensively for most of our remaining time. I asked everyone to respond as thoroughly and honestly as possible, as well as to speak descriptively about their own feedback rather than evaluatively in reaction to others' perspectives. Although I encouraged conciseness, I also knew at this point in the project that our group tended to speak for longer than I had originally anticipated in my agenda planning. In order to make sure we had sufficient time to cover the questions that were most pertinent to my project analysis and evaluation, then, I opted in the moment to make some slight adaptations to my plans, leading us to focus our time on four of the six prompts.⁴⁴ Because team members submitted their questionnaires to me after the session, however, I did retain a full record of their written responses to all the questions, including the ones we did not have time to discuss together in depth.⁴⁵ These questionnaires and the

43. Though other insights would come out later in this session in response to the Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire (Appendix H), at this point we discussed needing to clarify how we might most successfully capture students' attention in the first place so that they can experience the transformative potential of ARC, what accountability should look like in early stages of ARC, and how to best encourage ARC students to integrate their ARC learnings with the other environments and communities they participate in.

44. I chose to focus on questions 1, 2, 4, and 5 to begin with, intending to return to questions 3 and 6 afterward. Though the group did well at responding succinctly, the feedback in the conversation was so rich that we had to skip over question 3 and do a popcorn round in response to question 6. This was an unideal turn of events, but the process overall seemed to successfully elicit the kind of detailed feedback I needed for my analysis.

45. Most team members submitted their completed questionnaires to me immediately after Session 8. Due to distraction on my part and theirs, however, three team members provided theirs significantly later. One had completed his at the time of Session 8 and submitted it later without edits. Another had filled out most of his at the time of Session 8 but had to work months later to flesh out his initial brief notes on questions 5 and 6. A third person used an audio recording of the session five months later to help him reconstruct his responses. The data included in these submissions closely reflected the in-session

recording of our related conversation in Session 8 served as the primary sources of data for my analysis of the overall project.⁴⁶

Having engaged the major task of Session 8 in this way, we drew our time in this session and the project overall toward a close with a time of silent reflection followed by an opportunity for everyone to share their thoughts, reflections, hopes, and intentions coming out of this process in a closing round. Overall, the team members' reflections were highly consistent and highly affirming. Some students articulated appreciation for the way this project facilitated their improved understanding of ARC and the Eden Community. One person said she wished something like ARC had existed when she was a freshman in college. Many people expressed gratitude for the new and deepened relationships formed through this project. Several team members said they were encouraged by the invitation to use their various gifts and perspectives to interdependently collaborate, dream, and co-create something that has immense transformative potential. And overall, the team affirmed the life-giving, encouraging nature of the project and its appreciative framework.

We spent the last five minutes of this final session in celebratory prayer, rejoicing at what God had done among and through us in our time together in this project. Two days later, many of us continued the good cheer, as six members of the Pathways Team along with two of their spouses joined me at a local restaurant for a celebratory meal.⁴⁷

conversation, and I believe it to be generally reliable. It is plausible, however, that there was some effect on the integrity of the data in the second and third cases, as these team members may have forgotten important unspoken insights over time.

46. Since I have included a report of my findings in chapter 5, I will not delve into the details here.

47. Knowing it was possible some family members would be with us this time, I noted to the Pathways Team members that joining the meal would slightly broaden the knowledge of their participation

The mood at the end of Session 8 and during our meal together was joyful, filled with gratitude for the project, its outcomes, and the relationships we had forged.⁴⁸

Evaluation

Procedures for Data Collection

I collected data for this project from four different audiences, resulting in three different angles of evaluation: researcher, insider, and outsider. As the project unfolded, I took field notes, which served as one important source of data for the researcher's angle of evaluation. In addition to recording these observations and reflections in my field notes during each session and expanding upon them afterwards, I also employed audiovisual recording so that I had the option to review and even code transcripts of the interactions that occurred during the project sessions.⁴⁹ The primary source of data for the researcher angle of evaluation, however, was my own summative review of the refined ARC Pathways. I closely examined the final version of the pathways, coding it to note what portions of the Eden Community's subculture I could discern and comparing this to a coded version of the initial set of pathways to note differences.

Pathways Team participants provided the insider angle of evaluation during our final session together. Team members completed a questionnaire that asked them to

in the project to those who gathered that evening. I reassured them, however, that their anonymity in my thesis would remain intact.

48. One team member had to miss Session 8, but she was able to join us for the meal, and she also made herself available the following week to walk through the prompts from this session. Our conversation was shorter and less somewhat structured than the original session had been, focusing primarily on her responses to the questions posed in the session. It generated good feedback that was overall consistent with what other team members expressed, and I have incorporated it into the description of the session's results.

49. See Appendix C for the principal investigator's note taking and audiovisual recording protocol.

reflect on and evaluate the revised set of pathways that the project produced.⁵⁰ We then discussed our responses. I used a recording of that final session's discussion to supplement the coded questionnaire responses, offering further insight and clarification as necessary; this data set constituted the insider angle of evaluation.⁵¹

Two distinct audiences, each uniquely equipped to speak about the value of this project's final product, supplied the outsider angle of evaluation. Going into the project, I was especially eager to gather input from the outsider angle, a perspective generally overlooked by AI's evaluative processes. Without the informed opinions of my outside experts, it was likely that blind spots and limitations in the refined set of ARC Pathways would go undetected, to the detriment of our aims in ARC.

First, I conducted a two-hour long focus group with ARC students who had not participated in the Pathways Team, asking them to evaluate the refined set of pathways

50. See Appendix H for this Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire. Since I was a participating member of the Pathways Team, I did complete the questionnaire and include my own responses in our shared conversation in Session 8. When I analyzed the project's data, however, I isolated my questionnaire responses, using them as part of the researcher angle of evaluation. In my analysis I did attempt to attend to ways in which my own researcher's perspective correlated or contrasted with the other Pathways Team members' perspectives.

51. In the case of both the Pathways Team and the later focus group, I chose to review both recordings and questionnaire responses in my data analysis because they provided overlapping but distinct perspectives. Questionnaire responses had the potential to provide feedback that recordings did not, since not all ideas noted by participants on questionnaires were necessarily brought up in subsequent conversation. Recordings, however, had the capacity to provide more thorough and more refined feedback than questionnaires alone could. My data analysis relied most heavily on questionnaire responses, which I coded thoroughly. In addition, however, I occasionally supplemented questionnaire responses with transcribed and coded data from portions of the recordings that provided further insight and clarification when things were not included or precisely stated on a questionnaire. To allow me to make clear connections between questionnaire responses and recordings, I invited participants to note their initials on their questionnaires. In the case of the Pathways Team, the questionnaires were also voluntarily submitted to me electronically, making it easy to identify them. Frequently, it turned out, respondents read word-for-word off their questionnaire papers as we discussed their responses, thus providing a great deal of consistency between the two data collection methods.

through guided discussion and a questionnaire.⁵² While not experts in the areas of community or missional formation, these students are experts in their own lives and spirituality. Thus, their feedback about how well the revised set of ARC Pathways would work in their context had the potential to be invaluable. In this focus group, I first set the stage with a welcome, an orientation to the format of our session, and an opportunity to sign informed consent forms.⁵³ Then I transitioned into our time of dialogue with an engagement question that invited participants to reflect appreciatively about something they had found positive or life-giving about their engagement with ARC. Next, I took some time to introduce the refined ARC Pathways, allowing participants afterward to speculate about the core beliefs, values, and practices of the Eden Community. After a short presentation about the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture, I asked participants to reflect from an informed perspective about aspects of that culture that they saw highlighted in the refined pathways.⁵⁴ I continued to walk the group through each stage of

52. See Appendix J for the Focus Group Questionnaire, which provided the main structure for the focus group conversation. I planned the focus group agenda according to guidelines found in Eliot & Associates, "Guidelines for Conducting a Focus Group," *Data Innovation Project*, 2005, https://datainnovationproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/4_How_to_Conduct_a_Focus_Group-2-1.pdf. The focus group included three participants, reflecting a diverse set of experiences with ARC. One participant's experience with ARC had been rather brief and shaped strongly by the COVID-19 pandemic. Another's participation in chapel and a cohort had occurred over several years but had been sporadic. And the third had participated incredibly deeply over a long period of time. Two focus group participants were female and one male, and two were white and one Asian American. I had hoped to include more participants in the focus group, but in recruiting for it, I felt the effects of the pandemic, which had caused the number of students in ARC to dwindle in the preceding year. Since Pathways Team participants, some of the strongest ARC participants, were not eligible for the focus group, I had a very small pool of students to pull from, and many of them were unavailable. The group that did gather offered very helpful feedback and insights, however.

53. See Appendix I to review the focus group's informed consent form. As in the Pathways Team sessions, I attempted to mitigate the Hawthorne Effect by emphasizing my desire to hear honest feedback and a wide range of opinions, as well as by affirming that our relationship, as well as the success of my D.Min. project and program, was not dependent upon any particular response from participants.

54. I had not originally planned to include this question, but I realized mid-session that it was an important one to add, so I worked it in as question 1b, which is noted on the questionnaire in Appendix J.

the questionnaire, giving them a few minutes to write out their responses as each question was presented, and then discussing their answers conversationally afterward. I concluded with an exit question that provided them an opportunity to give any further feedback they wanted to, followed by a brief word of thanks and prayer as we closed. During the session, I used an audio recording device to capture the conversation. And in addition to taking a few limited field notes of my own at the time, I also employed a note-taker to take more extensive notes, which I then expanded upon afterwards.⁵⁵ In my analysis of the focus group's perspectives, I considered both the coded responses to the questionnaire and the recording of the session.

In addition to conducting this focus group, I gathered data from one further outsider angle. I supplied a summary of the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture and a copy of the refined set of ARC Pathways to two outside experts in the area of community and missional formation. Rev. Dr. Larry Duggins and Dr. Charles Moore both agreed to serve in this capacity, evaluating the pathways from their expertise.⁵⁶ Although these men were already somewhat familiar with the Eden Community and its work, I provided them with an audio recording in which I described the background of ARC specifically, as well

55. I took on responsibility for capturing the audio recording of the session. The note-taker used the same general protocol as I had outlined for myself in the Pathways Team sessions, but there were some modifications. Particularly important among those changes was that the list of key concepts to note also included the themes that the Pathways Team had developed in its refinement of the ARC Pathways. I have included this updated set of note-taker's field note taking protocol in Appendix K.

56. See Appendix L for the Outside Expert Evaluation I employed, as well as the responses that these men provided. Rev. Dr. Larry Duggins is the executive director of the Missional Wisdom Foundation, a non-profit that focuses on experimenting with and teaching about alternative forms of Christian community. (See <https://www.missionalwisdom.com/>.) Dr. Duggins is an elder in full connection in the Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church and is the author/coauthor/contributor of five books on missional community. A former seminary professor, Dr. Charles Moore is a pastor-teacher for the Bruderhof Community and an author and editor at Plough Publishing. (See <https://www.bruderhof.com/> and <https://www.plough.com/>.) These two men were incredibly well suited to serve as outside experts for this project, and I am immensely grateful for their willingness to do so!

as the framework of the pathways that they would engage. After reviewing in successive stages the refined ARC Pathways, a summary of ACU student subculture and spiritual formation, and a summary of the Eden Community's subculture, they each responded to a short questionnaire. They also provided further critique and constructive feedback about the effectiveness of the pathways in a short opinion paper. I coded their responses and incorporated them into my analysis.

Procedures for Data Analysis

While AI has its own built-in procedures for evaluation, these are mainly useful for evaluating implemented recommendations from an AI process.⁵⁷ The goals of this project differed, as I aimed instead to note the ways in which the refined ARC Pathways did and did not reflect the subculture of the Eden Community. For this reason, and also because AI's protracted evaluative methods were untenable in the timeframe available for this project, I chose instead to use multi-methods analysis triangulation, relying on several distinct data collection and analysis methods to supply data about the refined ARC Pathways.

Denzin and Lincoln remind us that qualitative research is inherently multimethod in focus, explaining that "the combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood, then,

57. Essentially, AI's evaluative process is for the organization to continue experimenting with proposals developed during the Dream, Design, and Deliver stages of AI, evaluating them appreciatively as it does. In this way, the subculture of the organization is transformed into one in which appreciation is the norm. This method of evaluation (or *valuation* as it is sometimes called in AI) is compelling as a long-term way forward, and we may implement it in ARC at some point. It did not, however, meet the immediate evaluation needs this project had. For more on valuation, see chapter 9 in Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry*.

as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry.”⁵⁸ Sensing makes a similar observation, noting that by using “multiple data-collection technologies designed to measure a single concept or construct,” a researcher can more readily obtain thorough and reliable results.⁵⁹ Swinton and Mowat also advocate for the use of multiple research methods, saying that “a multi-method approach that utilizes the best of these methods, but is not necessarily defined by any one of them may be the most appropriate way forward for the practical theologian.”⁶⁰ In this study, then, I employed multiple methods for data collection, combining AI with the use of field notes, questionnaires, recordings and transcripts of conversations, and opinion papers.

Triangulation

Triangulation was another important component of my overall strategy. Bell defines triangulation as “cross-checking the existence of certain phenomena and the veracity of individual accounts by gathering data from a number of informants and a number of sources and subsequently comparing and contrasting one account with another in order to produce as full and balanced a study as possible.”⁶¹ Renz, Carrington, and Badger describe triangulation’s benefits, saying that it has “the potential to increase the validity of the study, decrease researcher bias, and provide multiple perspectives of the

58. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, “Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research,” in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011), 5.

59. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72.

60. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006), 50.

61. Judith Bell, *Doing Your Research: A Guide for First-Time Researchers in Education and Social Science*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999), 102.

phenomenon under study” and that it “can increase confidence in the research data, provide a more robust understanding of the research problem, and reveal findings that would otherwise remain undetected using a single method.”⁶²

My own use of triangulation was two-fold. First, as previously described, I relied upon four distinct audiences to provide unique angles of evaluation for the revised set of ARC Pathways. Second, I employed intramethod data analysis triangulation by combining aspects of content analysis and thematic analysis as I examined the data.⁶³ Content analysis attempts to “discover the underlying meaning of text through the quantification of the meaning of spoken or written language.”⁶⁴ In thematic analysis, “the nuances of the high-frequency themes are explored in depth ... to understand the meaning of texts.”⁶⁵ Supplementing content analysis with thematic analysis is significant, for, as Joffe and Yardley remind us,

even if one quantifies the text for purposes of analysis, the analysis remains partially qualitative. In other words, it is vital to remember that numbers do not tell the whole story—that the number of times a category appears does not necessarily indicate the extent to which it is relevant to interviewees. A point that is only mentioned once, by one person, can still have great empirical relevance and conceptual importance. The aspiration of thematic analysis, in particular, is to stay true to the raw data, and its meaning within a particular context of thoughts, rather than attaching too much importance to the frequency of codes which have been abstracted from their context.⁶⁶

62. Susan M. Renz, Jane M. Carrington, and Terry A. Badger “Two Strategies for Qualitative Content Analysis: An Intramethod Approach to Triangulation,” *QHR* 28.5 (2018): 827, <https://doi-org.acu.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1049732317753586>.

63. Renz, Carrington, and Badger write about analysis triangulation in “Two Strategies,” 827.

64. Renz, Carrington, and Badger, “Two Strategies,” 825.

65. Hélène Joffe and Lucy Yardley, “Content and Thematic Analysis,” in *Research Methods for Clinical and Health Psychology*, ed. David F. Marks and Lucy Yardley (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2004), 63. This entire chapter is a helpful overview of both content and thematic analysis, as well as the process of coding.

66. Joffe and Yardley, “Content and Thematic Analysis,” 67.

Coding Methods

Coding, one of the essential steps of data analysis, is a way of “naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data.”⁶⁷ By managing data in this way, researchers can more adeptly engage the copious amounts of data that a project can generate. In my analysis, I generally followed the steps that Renz, Carrington, and Badger outline as the basis from which a researcher might draw valid and reliable conclusions: preparing the data, reading transcripts repeatedly, making notes on the transcripts, defining the unit of analysis using themes, developing a coding scheme, coding all text, making conclusions from coded data, and describing and interpreting findings.⁶⁸ I did not, however, rely heavily on transcripts of conversations, opting instead to use questionnaire responses as my primary data source and supplementing those with transcripts as necessary for further comments and clarifications. In addition, I began the data analysis with a coding scheme already in place, though it underwent some modifications throughout the process. In other words, as I analyzed my data sources, I coded them both deductively and inductively.⁶⁹

Deductively, I utilized a large number of pre-determined themes and subthemes, primarily derived from my prior Cultural Theory and AI studies of the Eden

67. Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (New York: Sage, 2006), 43.

68. Renz, Carrington, and Badger, “Two Strategies,” 825.

69. For a helpful description of the two different methods (and other aspects of coding), see Alyona Medelyan, “Coding Qualitative Data: How to Code Qualitative Research,” *Insights by Thematic*, 2020, <https://getthematic.com/insights/coding-qualitative-data/>.

Community's subculture.⁷⁰ Doing so allowed me to focus on themes that I already knew were central to my project's aims, namely components of the ecclesial subculture of the Eden Community. By coding deductively using these themes, I was able to easily see the ways they appeared in the data.

Although I entered this project with some themes predetermined, my coding also had an inductive aspect to it, evolving some as the project itself progressed. In inductive coding, themes are not pre-determined but rather are discerned by the researcher through the iterative process of coding. In our initial sessions together, the Pathways Team generated and chose to focus on themes I had not already noted. In addition, my own analysis of the data and its resulting patterns, slippages, and silences also shaped how I understood the developing themes. Consequently, the data that this project produced yielded important modifications to the themes I had initially selected.

I coded and then analyzed the data with the aid of a software called NVivo. This software allowed me to import files and then categorize their contents according to codes and cases that I created. Once I had done a bit of coding to gain more familiarity with the coding scheme and the software's processes, I recoded those first few documents, hoping to ensure greater consistency. Since my coding scheme was developed both deductively and inductively, it did evolve some throughout the course of the coding task. My final coding scheme can be found in Appendix M. When I discerned a new code, I made sure to review previously coded documents with that code in mind. I also coded the data to cases, which could be associated with specific attributes. Creating cases for each

70. Although I used these themes deductively in this intervention as the foundation for concept-driven coding, I originally identified them during inductive coding of data from my prior studies into the subculture of the Eden Community.

individual participant in the project allowed me to analyze the results through lenses like project role, researcher angle, stakeholder group, age, area of expertise, length of participation in ARC, and so on. Creating cases for each individual question allowed me to easily compare responses to each unique question as well as to closely analogous questions.

As I coded, I engaged in the task of interpretively reading the data. Moschella says that “interpretive readings of a conversation involve sorting the data for implied or inferred meanings. In this case you are attempting to ‘read through or beyond’ the words shared. This could overlap with but expand a literal description, in the direction of more interpretation.”⁷¹ This process will “involve you [the researcher] in constructing or documenting a version of what you think the data mean or represent, or what you think you can infer from them.”⁷² That being the case, interpretive reading requires the use of intuition. As Flick reminds researchers when speaking of the tension between formalization and intuition in coding, “a good qualitative analysis finds a combination of rules that are applied and make the analysis transparent on the one hand and the necessary degree of intuition on the other ... that make the analysis creative and fruitful.”⁷³ I attempted to navigate this tension well as I undertook my coding.

Analysis Procedures

I engaged my analysis of the data with methods that were both more and less formal. Less formally, I relied upon the kind of informed intuition that Flick describes,

71. Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*, 172.

72. Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2002), 149.

73. Uwe Flick, “Mapping the Field,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2014), 12.

immersing myself in the ARC Pathways and in the responses provided from each angle of evaluation. My deep familiarity with the data, as well as with the individuals who participated in this project, provided a firm foundation for my understanding of the data and findings. More formally, I used NVivo's query capabilities. The software provided lists of responses that I had coded to each of my themes, permitting me to see how the data as a whole reflected that theme. At times I did some further coding or even uncoding of data once I saw the query results, as I was able to hone my understanding of each theme based upon what I saw in the data overall. I was also readily able to run queries that categorized responses according to different angles of evaluation or demographic attributes, enabling me to notice correlating and contrasting understandings of that theme. In addition, I employed some keyword frequency queries and investigated the quantitative data that NVivo provided about how often certain codes appeared in the data, both overall as well as in specific data sets. Using these kinds of capabilities, I observed how frequently themes were noted by various audiences (content analysis) while also seeking greater insight regarding the ways in which themes were understood, interrelated, and expanded upon by those audiences (thematic analysis).

I analyzed the data for patterns, slippages, and silences from each of the distinct research angles. Patterns note areas of convergence between data sets, overlaps of congruent concepts. Slippages seek "disconfirmation of findings. They search for rival explanations."⁷⁴ In looking for slippages, I noted areas of divergence and even conflict among the data, things that led me to consider alternate ways of organizing and interpreting the data while also at times providing confirmation of otherwise strong

74. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 200.

patterns. Silences are areas that the existing data do not address, things left unsaid, whether purposefully or as a result of intrinsic assumptions. What I found regarding patterns, slippages, and silences formed the bulk of my analysis and reflection, helping me establish how thoroughly, accurately, and effectively the refined ARC Pathways represented and transmitted the subculture of the Eden Community.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have delineated the methodological processes that this qualitative research project entailed. I described the selection of the Pathways Team members who participated in the project, as well as the ways that our eight sessions together unfolded. I outlined the multiple methods of data collection that I employed—field notes, questionnaires, recordings and transcripts of conversations, and opinion papers—to acquire input from researcher, insider, and two outsider angles. Finally, I described the methods of triangulation, coding, and overall data analysis that I applied.

Adhering to these methodological commitments led to two primary results. First, the Pathways Team was empowered to refine the ARC Pathways, strengthening their potential to shape regenerative Christian culture among students in ARC in ways that reflect the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture. And second, I was subsequently able to analyze the degree to which that process was successful. Chapter 5 will examine my findings and results in this regard before chapter 6 draws everything to a conclusion.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

In chapter 4, I described the methodology that I employed in this project, both for its primary sessions and for my data collection and evaluation procedures. Using that methodology—engaging four different audiences, using multiple data collection methods, coding deductively and inductively, and using both content and thematic analysis—I gathered and analyzed data that resulted in the findings that I will summarize in this chapter. I will present the results of those processes, primarily indicating patterns, slippages, and silences regarding ways in which the Eden Community’s ecclesial subculture is represented in the refined ARC Pathways, as well as ways in which the pathways are perceived as effective or ineffective in the ACU context. While my analysis will largely engage areas of the Eden Community’s subculture that I discerned in research I conducted prior to this project, I will also include the four themes the Pathways Team developed during the project itself.¹ After presenting those detailed results, I will mention one additional theme that I discerned in my inductive coding of the data, then I will summarize the participants’ perspectives on the AI process itself. Finally, I will offer concluding reflections on the overall findings of this project.

1. See Appendix M, Codes for Data Analysis, for the full list of codes I employed in my analysis, as well as Appendix N, Data Analysis Tables, for the final quantitative data regarding coding frequencies.

Points of Inquiry

The questions that I included in my data collection instruments for this project centered on two primary points of inquiry, which correlated with the problem and purpose statements of this project. My goal in this project was for the Pathways Team to enhance our initial set of pathways so that they might more fully *reflect* and *transmit* the Eden Community's understanding of regenerative Christian culture in the ACU context. That being the case, two lines of questioning were central to the evaluations.

I first sought to grasp the degree to which the refined ARC Pathways mirrored the Eden Community's own ecclesial subculture. My coding of the initial and refined pathways from the researcher's point of view provided a significant amount of data for this line of inquiry. Several of the questions that I included on the questionnaires also asked about this. The Pathways Team, of course, was working from a highly informed perspective at the conclusion of our project sessions. I asked them to reflect from this knowledgeable point of view about components of the Eden Community's subculture that they did and did not see emphasized in the pathways, as well as how the pathways might shape ACU students' understanding and reflection of that culture.² The focus group participants and outside experts, however, were comparatively unfamiliar with the Eden Community's subculture at the outset of their evaluations. Wanting to capitalize upon the opportunity that this presented, I asked them to provide initial guesses as to what the Eden Community's subculture entailed.³ After I shared a summary of that ecclesial

2. See questions 1 and 2 on the Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire (Appendix H).

3. See question 1 on the Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix J) and question 1b on the Outside Expert Evaluation (Appendix L). I regret not having asked the Pathways Team members in one of our earliest project sessions to offer their own suppositions about the Eden Community's subculture based upon their initial reading of the pathways. If I were to conduct a similar project again, I would be sure to include

subculture with these groups, I then invited them to offer additional feedback from a more fully informed perspective. I asked the focus group to highlight additional components of the Eden Community's subculture that they could now perceive in the pathways.⁴ They also noted ways in which they could imagine the pathways shaping ACU students' understanding and reflection of that culture.⁵ I asked the outside experts to comment on ways in which the pathways were or were not suitable for inviting ACU students to experience the Eden Community's subculture.⁶

The second major point of inquiry was regarding how effective the refined ARC Pathways might be, how well they might serve to shape regenerative Christian culture in the ACU context. I asked every group to provide feedback along these lines.⁷ Relatedly, I was curious to know what various individuals and groups might see as areas for further refinement in the pathways to strengthen their effectiveness in student spiritual formation. To this end, I asked each group to suggest things that they felt should have been added to or omitted from the pathways.⁸ The outside experts also provided broad feedback about

this in my data collection procedures so that I could reflect on ways in which the Pathways Team members' understandings of the Eden Community's subculture grew throughout the project.

4. See question 1b on the Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix J).

5. See question 2 on the Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix J). This question, at some level, addressed both this first line of inquiry as well as the second question that I will explore in the next paragraph.

6. See question 2a on the Outside Expert Evaluation (Appendix L). This question also somewhat bridged the gap between the two points of inquiry explored in this paragraph and the next.

7. In addition to the questions mentioned in the previous two footnotes, see questions 3 and 4 on the Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire (Appendix H) and question 3 on the Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix J).

8. The Pathways Team and focus group provided broad feedback about alterations they perceived as potentially important, whereas the outside experts specifically noted components that might make the pathways more effective at inviting students into the Eden Community's subculture. See question 5 on the

the pathways, including both general observations and constructive critique, which I used to help me understand their perspectives about the pathways' strengths, weaknesses, and potential effectiveness.⁹

In addition, I was also curious to gather summative reflections from Pathways Team members about the project's AI process. The final item on their questionnaire addressed this topic. I asked them about the effectiveness of the AI process in refining the ARC Pathways, as well as about what in that process was life-giving.¹⁰

Eden Community Subculture Represented in the ARC Pathways

In the analysis that follows, I will systematically explore the ways in which the refined ARC Pathways reflect the ecclesial subculture of the Eden Community, as well as how effective they are perceived to be in transmitting the Eden Community's understanding of regenerative Christian culture in the ACU context through ARC. To do so, I will lay out nine major components of the Eden Community's subculture one at a time.¹¹ First, I will offer a summary of the component in question. Next, I will note how, if at all, that cultural component was developed through the course of this project. Finally, I will examine how that component is present in the refined ARC Pathways and whether it seems to be successfully transmitted to ACU students. To do so, I will provide

Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire (Appendix H), question 4 on the Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix J), and question 2b on the Outside Expert Evaluation (Appendix L).

9. See questions 1a and 3 on the Outside Expert Evaluation (Appendix L).

10. See question 6 on the Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire (Appendix H).

11. The cultural components that I will explore here largely correlate to the articulation of the Eden Community's subculture through the lenses of Cultural Theory and AI that I laid out in chapter 3. They also include the four themes chosen by the Pathways Team as areas for development in this project. At times these categories intersect. When this happens, I have attempted to lay out a clear explanation of how and why this is the case. Again, for a full list of the codes I used in this project, see Appendix M.

insights regarding that component that I garnered from researcher, insider, and outsider angles of evaluation, noting patterns, slippages, and silences that I identified among and between groups.¹² I will conclude each section with some summative thoughts.

Egalitarianism

This component of the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture came to the forefront through my prior use of Cultural Theory as a lens for understanding culture, as I described in greater detail in chapter 3. In summary, egalitarian cultures pair a weak Grid emphasis with a strong Group emphasis. In other words, in addition to being relatively informal regarding structure and systematization, with a great deal of freedom about how things may be done, they entail a strong focus on communal identity and narrative, with close-knit relationships among group members. These cultures value the perspectives and skills of all group members and channel these toward a central vision, often a reform-based one. This component of the Eden Community's subculture is prominent enough that, upon hearing a description of all four Cultural Theory quadrants in Session 2, all PT members were successfully able to guess that the Eden Community is overall egalitarian.

The PT did not directly explore this cultural component as part of its AI process, but the concept does connect to some of the project's other themes. Strong resonances exist between egalitarianism and the Eden Community's impulses toward unified diversity, interdependence, and co-creation. Furthermore, egalitarianism is somewhat of a

12. Although there are only three research angles, there are four audiences, with the final two comprising the outsider angle of evaluation together. For the sake of brevity in this chapter, I will hereinafter frequently utilize the following abbreviations: PT (Pathways Team), FG (focus group), and OE (outside expert). I have also chosen to provide anonymity to the PT and FG participants by anonymizing their initials. My own initials remain intact, as do those of the OEs, with their permission.

countercultural shift in the context of the more individualistic norms of ACU students. I will explore each of these items more fully in separate sections below.

Egalitarianism in the Refined Pathways

Egalitarianism was not frequently coded in the refined ARC Pathways, likely because the PT did not directly develop this theme. For this reason, there was not a significant shift in the development of this cultural component between the initial pathways and the refined version. However, no one indicated that it had *not* been emphasized enough in the pathways, and eight out of fourteen participants did note its presence, either directly or indirectly. All four research audiences interacted with it, with rather consistent perspectives overall. As the researcher, I noted the theme most often, followed in decreasing frequency by four of the eight PT members, one of the two OEs, and two of the three FG members. Except for one of the OEs, only direct ARC participants mentioned things connected to this cultural component. The stakeholder group that noted it most prominently was ARC leadership; neither the team mission participant nor the spiritual formation practitioner commented on it.

The term *egalitarian* was not often used verbatim. Only I as the researcher, two FG members, and one OE used the term explicitly.¹³ When used directly, respondents connected it to the ideas of everyone having a voice, the Eden Community's desire for partnership and co-creation, and the participatory nature of the Eden Community and ARC.

13. The OE was able to surmise an emphasis on egalitarianism in the pathways as well as note its presence once he had been informed more fully about the Eden Community's subculture. FG participants did not articulate connections to egalitarianism initially, only noting its presence once they had heard my summary of the community's subculture.

In addition to searching for the term directly in my coding and analysis, I also looked for broader references to egalitarian and individualistic impulses, as well as for components of the ARC Pathways that engaged these impulses.¹⁴ When respondents noted egalitarian impulses in the ARC Pathways, it was largely regarding a strong emphasis on communality (strong Group), and not commonly in regard to informality of structure (weak Grid).¹⁵ Responses indicated that the pathways foster a good balance between individual and communal identities (My Story and Our Story), and that they encourage students to engage the church and mission more communally. The pathways lead toward the conclusion that while every person has an important role to play in God’s story and work, each individual’s story converges with others’ stories to generate a sense of communal identity and mission. This emphasis on communality is highlighted and further cultivated using tools or processes like covenant, the Statement of Grace, Vision/Mission/Aim articulations, and Dynamic Governance. One ARC student even

14. My identification of impulses and responses that fit a concept even though they do not explicitly use my own terminology is an example of employing “experience-distant” language to classify descriptions originally articulated using “experience-near” language. See Clifford Geertz, “‘From the Native’s Point of View’: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding,” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 28.1 (1974): 26–45, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3822971>.

According to Geertz, an experience-near concept is one that a person “might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others,” while an experience-distant concept “is one which various types of specialists ... employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims” (Geertz, “‘From the Native’s Point of View,’” 28).

In my classification of responses related to egalitarianism, I coded things to an experience-distant term that respondents typically described in experience-near ways: “spontaneously, unselfconsciously, as it were, colloquially; they do not, except fleetingly and on occasion, recognize that there are any ‘concepts’ involved at all. That is what experience-near means—that ideas and the realities they disclose are naturally and indissolubly bound up together” (Geertz, “‘From the Native’s Point of View,’” 30).

15. In fact, the Eden Community (and thus the ARC Pathways) does have some relatively formal structure in its use of Dynamic Governance. This governance form, however, is rather egalitarian in nature. It relies much more on flexible relational and gift-related authority than on the kind of highly regulated and bounded rule- and role-based authority that characterizes more hierarchical and authoritarian forms of culture in the Cultural Theory model.

connected this emphasis on communality with the Trinity, saying that through engaging the pathways, students “would become better able to see the significance of the communal nature that God has established in the reality of human relationships, God’s nature as a triune being, and how Christ established his church.”¹⁶

Transmitting Egalitarianism

When respondents highlighted egalitarianism, either directly or indirectly, it was often in contrast to the more strongly individualistic norms of ACU student subculture. Respondents indicated that egalitarianism, particularly its emphasis on community, is a valuable cultural component to transmit to ACU students but that doing so might prove difficult.¹⁷ Through participating in ARC, ACU students “might see pursuing living their faith journey and knowing God even more as something that is meant to be done with their brothers and sisters in Christ, rather than simply as a personal and private experience and endeavor.”¹⁸ Similarly, ARC can “give an idea to this generation of students what a church family is meant to be, and maybe a realization of the fullness of life they are missing ... open[ing] their eyes to see a whole new perspective of faith and start to see the value of worshiping and believing in a God as a community, even when

16. IW, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

17. Since the emphasis was less on the presence or absence of structure (Grid) and more on the presence of communality (strong Group), a hierarchist culture could also present a similarly countercultural stance to individualism. And, in fact, one could categorize some elements of ACU student subculture as hierarchist, as universities tend toward this kind of structure, like many other organizations that students frequently engage, such as churches and social clubs. That being said, hierarchist cultures can, as I noted in chapter 3, quickly shift toward individuality or authoritarianism depending on the circumstances and the leadership that develops. Thus, these kinds of organizations, while technically hierarchist in their own structure, do not always strongly challenge the everyday expression of individualistic norms in the lives of their participants.

18. IW, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

there are challenges involved.”¹⁹ That being said, pushing back on student norms with egalitarian values is an uphill battle, which one OE noted, saying,

Your greatest challenge will be to find ways to bridge the gap between the narrative of hyper-individualism, and how students have already been thoroughly trained and habituated in that narrative, and the more communal vision of a regenerative culture. I suspect this will take a lot of time and creativity. Students have needs, they have desires, they have imaginative limitations, but they also are at a point where all these can be significantly shaped.²⁰

For this reason, the PT relocated the pathways’ emphasis on communal covenant to a later stage, moving it from Level 1 to Level 2, as even a mention of covenant at the outset of ARC seemed too challenging for highly independent, individualistic students.

Summation

There was some level of silence among research participants around this cultural component’s presence in the refined ARC Pathways, as few people commented on it directly or to a great extent. A further silence that appeared was regarding the Grid dimension of egalitarian cultures, as the data principally engaged egalitarianism from a Group perspective. This is consistent with the Eden Community’s own greater emphasis on strong Group, with only some minor emphasis on egalitarian aspects of Grid.

Nevertheless, while research participants did not focus much on egalitarianism in their responses, all who were directly asked could identify the Eden Community as an egalitarian culture, and most others who were not directly asked also noted the presence of this cultural element. Overall, then, there is a pattern of consistency in ARC’s capacity to communicate this component of the Eden Community’s subculture. There is also a

19. AV, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

20. CM, Outside Expert Evaluation.

great deal of consistency in respondents' perspectives that egalitarianism serves as an important contrast to students' individualistic norms, even if it is a challenging cultural element to draw students into.

Egalitarianism is a foundational feature of the Eden Community's subculture, a stance that, even when not directly accentuated, undergirds and informs many other components of our life together—from informal things like our daily interactions to more formal elements such as our governance procedures.²¹ It seems that this cultural component, while not always at the forefront of research participants' minds, is nonetheless recognizable as a feature of the Eden Community and is noted as a valuable contribution toward ACU students' growth, especially in the ways it accentuates the communal nature of the Christian faith.

Connection and Togetherness

This cultural component (as well as the next four that I will explore) originated in the AI study I conducted in 2019 of the Eden Community's subculture.²² That study indicated that a defining element of the Eden Community's subculture is its emphasis on purposeful time together in daily life. By making space for different forms of connection and by living so that our daily lives overlap significantly, the Eden Community meets

21. This is in alignment with the findings of my Cultural Theory study, which showed egalitarian impulses expressed in many different social games. See my May 2019 paper, "A Study of the Social Games of the Eden Community," submitted to Dr. Chris Flanders as a part of the "Culture, Context, and Community" course.

22. For a fuller treatment of this cultural component and many subsequent ones, see my October 2019 paper, "Articulating the Core Identity of the Eden Community: Reflections on an Appreciative Inquiry," submitted to Dr. Andrew Menzies as a part of the "Leading Change in Christian Organizations" course.

both pragmatic needs as well as longings to build up deep and lasting relationships and to encourage joyfulness.

The initial ARC Pathways already had significant strengths regarding connection and togetherness. Connection and joy are prominently mentioned in the overarching metanarrative of The Story that is portrayed in the pathways. And Our Story and the section on rhythms both contained a strong emphasis on viewpoints and practices that lead toward assembly in community. Likely for this reason, the PT did not intentionally select this cultural component for focused development in our project.

However, in this project, students did identify two specific aspects of connection and togetherness as being particularly important: intergenerationality and play. I will explore intergenerationality in depth shortly. For now, suffice it to say that the PT found great joy and blessing in intergenerational relationships and thus particularly wanted to emphasize practices of connection and togetherness across generations.

Regarding the second aspect, play, the PT did not originally choose this as something to refine in the pathways. Rather, the theme came to our attention almost accidentally as an area needing development, with one PT member pointing both directly and indirectly throughout the PT process to the importance of play and its conspicuous lack in the pathways.²³ Play is a good in and of itself, preventing us from becoming one-dimensionally solemn and helping us imitate the God of joy. It is also an important tool, opening up relationship possibilities in ways that more serious engagements cannot. The

23. AV. As I mention in my concluding notes about Session 5 in chapter 3, the lack of an emphasis on play in the initial ARC Pathways is likely largely due to the fact that I, as the primary shaper of the pathways and ARC experience, do not have a strong emphasis on play in my own personality and life. I am grateful for the corrective influence that the PT and this particular member provided.

ARC Pathways needed greater emphasis on play, and the team strengthened the pathways' emphasis on this cultural component even though it was not one of our four primary chosen themes.

Connection and Togetherness in the Refined Pathways

Although the theme of connection and togetherness was one of the less frequently coded themes in the data, it was nevertheless consistently present. Furthermore, it was not noted by anyone as an area in need of further additions. While not receiving extensive attention, then, it seems this feature of the Eden Community's subculture is present enough in the pathways that it was noted either directly or indirectly by a large percentage of the research participants.

In my own analysis of the ARC Pathways, I highlighted this cultural component more than anyone else. In addition, four of the eight PT members, one of the FG participants, and one of two OEs mentioned related features in their evaluation of the refined pathways. The remaining two FG participants, neither of whom directly mentioned the presence of connection and togetherness in the ARC Pathways, did prominently highlight the theme in their initial appreciative reflections about their own ARC experiences. And all current and past ARC participants commented at some point about something related to this theme, with silences coming from ARC leadership and people who were, to varying degrees, on the periphery of ARC.²⁴

Play, once notably absent in the pathways, is now included as a consistent rhythm of ARC at every level. The pathways do not describe modes of play in great specificity,

24. Though I certainly could be wrong, my guess is that the silence regarding this theme from my fellow ARC leadership team members is because they assumed it normative enough that it did not warrant comment.

however, for, as one participant pointed out, joyful play differs from person to person. This results in a need for exploration and intentionality as each iteration of community finds its own unique ways of fostering playful connection and togetherness.²⁵

Finally, the ARC Pathways, in both their initial and refined versions, also included an emphasis on connection and togetherness in that they set forth regular rhythms meant to draw people into community. These rhythms vary in frequency and depth, leading toward increased and deeper participation over the course of time. I noted this relationship most prominently in my own coding of the ARC Pathways, where, among other things, the PT added an “invitation into deeper, unstructured experiences of intergenerationality with Eden Community members in everyday life (on and off campus)” as part of Our Story, giving greater emphasis to this theme of connection and togetherness in ways that students seemed eager to embrace. Three PT members and one FG participant, all current or former ARC students, also highlighted specific rhythms, correlating them to connection and togetherness.²⁶

Transmitting Connection and Togetherness

When it comes to the ARC Pathways’ effectiveness at transmitting the value of connection and togetherness to ACU students, the reviews are somewhat mixed. Certain research participants did indicate, as explored above, that they saw strengths in the pathways regarding this cultural component. One PT member also wrote at length about

25. AV, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response. This is in accordance with the Eden Community’s insistence that creative contextualization leads to different expressions of ecclesial life.

26. IW, DM, and AV, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses, as well as MK, Focus Group Questionnaire response. Specific elements that these individuals and I highlighted as contributing toward greater connection and togetherness included checking in, church of two, chapel, COFFEE church, participation in personal and communal spiritual disciplines, celebration, worship, play, mentoring, partnering to lead gatherings, and covenanting to listen for and follow God’s guidance together.

her hopes that the pathways might lead ACU students to “form social clubs of regenerative culture” that imitate the Eden Community’s “intentionality in doing life on the small with one another.”²⁷ Another PT member indicated that by working through these pathways, students “would really start to grasp how ‘living together’ would really work.”²⁸ This is in so many ways exactly the Eden Community’s hope for ARC!

It seems that if ARC is to successfully transmit this value for connection and togetherness, it will need to be through experience. Even something as intensive and intimidating as a highly focused eight-session PT project apparently creates opportunities for students to experience connection in ways that bring them joy.²⁹ Overall, though, it is regular participation in rhythms and relationships of deep community that will allow students to “‘catch’ the ARC vision through the backdoor.”³⁰ Given the high ratio of indirect (versus direct) comments about the presence of connection and togetherness in the ARC experience, it seems this is exactly what is happening for those who invest in ARC.

However, it is in part precisely because some value for connection and togetherness already exists in ACU student subculture that it can be hard to draw students into transformative community through ARC. Play matters to students, and there are many occasions for it in their lives. Relational connection matters to students, and they are bombarded with a seemingly endless number of opportunities to interact with others.

27. MS, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

28. AV, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

29. MS and DM, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

30. CM, Outside Expert Evaluation.

However, students do not always have experiences of deep, thick community that would allow them to understand its power and value. Thus, amid copious opportunities, it can be difficult to sustain students' attention for the length, breadth, and depth of connection that are necessary to build intimate community. If ARC is to transmit this cultural component effectively, we will "need to find ways beyond conceptual description and systematization to depict (via various media and hands-on experiences) how a thicker life together of friendship, camaraderie, community, etc., matters," as well as find ways to reassure students that investing deeply in the ARC community "will not rob them of having 'fun.'"³¹

Summation

These findings are, of course, consistent with the concepts of LPP and apprenticeship that form the foundation for ARC. There may be a difference in the degree to which the Eden Community and ACU students emphasize connection and togetherness, but even within students' more individualistic culture, this cultural component is generally held up as a good. By starting with an observation as elementary as "being part of deep community will not prevent you from having fun!" and subsequently inviting students into increasingly deep levels of practice and relationship, ARC can guide them to grasp in a deeper way the significance of connection and togetherness for their lives and faith. As they grow in that understanding, students will realize that ARC can "help them form the kinds of relationships they are actually looking for."³²

31. CM, Outside Expert Evaluation.

32. CM, Outside Expert Evaluation.

Vulnerability with and Reliance on Each Other

Vulnerability with and reliance on each other is another significant component of the Eden Community's subculture that egalitarianism and connection and togetherness frequently set the stage for. Well-known social researcher Brené Brown, who has spent decades studying vulnerability, reminds us that "Vulnerability is the birthplace of connection."³³ The Eden Community regularly engages in practices that cultivate vulnerability—purposeful, uncommonly deep self-disclosure; listening; and mutual support—fostering a sense of closeness among its members akin to that found in healthy egalitarian families, with safety and good boundaries always in mind.

The PT did not choose this theme as a specific area of focus as it refined the ARC Pathways. It did, however, choose two strongly connected themes: intergenerationality and interdependent co-creators. In my data analysis, I separated out items that were best coded to only intergenerationality or interdependent co-creators, though there were some instances in which the ideas were so strongly intertwined that they will arise here too. While the refined pathways contain significant developments regarding those two themes (which I will set forth separately shortly), they did not include many changes best classified as pertaining primarily to vulnerability with and reliance on each other. The one addition to the refined pathways that most connects is an opportunity for cohort members to share their life and faith stories with each other at Level 2 of My Story.

33. Brené Brown, "Interview with Brené Brown about Embracing Our Vulnerability and Imperfections," interview by Martha Rosenberg, *OpEdNews.com*, 14 October 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/2p8nfy2d>. Brown's extensive work on vulnerability is well summarized in *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (New York: Avery Books, 2012), as well as in her TED Talk, "The Power of Vulnerability," *TED.com*, June 2010, https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability?language=en.

Vulnerability with and Reliance on Each Other in the Refined Pathways

There were not major alterations to the ARC Pathways regarding this cultural component, perhaps because the theme is already strongly present and does come across clearly to most people. In fact, among the themes not purposefully developed by the PT in the AI process, it was the one most often coded in the data, with twelve of the fourteen individuals mentioning things connected to it. Only one participant (who also affirmed the presence of the theme) mentioned a desire for greater emphasis on items potentially related to this theme: accountability and setting boundaries.³⁴

My own analysis of the ARC Pathways noted this cultural component most frequently. Items connected to vulnerability with and reliance on each other appear in variety of places in the pathways. The theme is most strongly emphasized in Our Story, but some components of My Story and even This Story are connected. It also appears in the sections on covenant, communication, and rhythms. Many central ARC and Eden Community practices stress this theme: checking in, soul friendship, self-disclosure, communal discernment, conflict resolution, confession, and reconciliation. In addition, it shows up in references to setting boundaries, establishing covenant together, and the four stages that lead toward true community.

The presence of the theme was commonly engaged by other research participants too. All three FG members commented on it, being readily able to surmise this component of the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture from their initial exposure to the ARC Pathways. What is more, for two of these three FG participants, roughly one-

34. CN, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

third of their total responses involved this theme!³⁵ And seven out of eight PT members mentioned it. Although only one of the two OEs noted this theme, and then only in passing, it does seem that the overall outsider angle (which included the FG members) was well represented.

The most significant determining factor in frequency of engagement with this theme seems to have been age or, more likely, the depth of investment in both the theory and practice of intentional community that age typically correlates to among these specific research participants. Interestingly, younger participants all noted something connected to vulnerability with and reliance on each other, whereas the connections were less frequent and less reflective among older participants (the two OEs and two ARC leaders besides me). Knowing the people involved, I suspect that radical vulnerability with and reliance on others in community has been normalized for these older participants, who have immersed themselves in intentional community more extensively than the younger participants, to the point that this cultural component may not stand out as much for them, just as may be true with the earlier theme of connection and togetherness.

Transmitting Vulnerability with and Reliance on Each Other

There is a great deal of consistency regarding how research participants see this theme present in the ARC Pathways, as well as how they see ARC transmitting it to ACU students. Questionnaire responses speak of developing trusting relationships of openness

35. SH and MK, Focus Group Questionnaire responses and conversation transcript. Both of these respondents had, whether by choice or through circumstances outside of their control, experienced engaging deeply in vulnerability with and reliance on others in their ARC encounters. The level to which they commented on this cultural component so affirmingly indicates that they have seen its power.

and gracious honesty, listening well to one another, and joyfully serving one another. Building these kinds of connections does take some intentionality and practice, respondents note, and it must be chosen, not forced.³⁶ By choosing to put themselves in a vulnerable position with others, though, students open themselves up to the blessings that come with such closeness and interdependence. When embedded in these kinds of safe, life-giving relationships, they are valued for who they are.³⁷ As a result, they can also grow in confidence about their own identity and worth and can more readily find their way forward in life with a healthy balance between individual and communal aspects of their identities.³⁸

Research participants who engaged with this theme were also consistent in indicating that vulnerability with and reliance on each other in community is different enough from ACU students' cultural norm that emphasizing it through ARC will enhance students' spiritual formation and lead to the development of more regenerative culture among students.³⁹ As one PT member observed, "Eden Community formation really dives deep into the heart of intentionality, which ACU formation by definition cannot

36. LR, SH, and MK, Focus Group Questionnaire responses. AV, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

37. BY, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response, and MK, Focus Group Questionnaire response. What I have laid out in this paragraph aligns well with M. Scott Peck's observations about the four stages of development that communities go through: pseudocommunity, chaos, emptiness, true community. See chapter 5 of M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* (New York: Touchstone, 1987). It is later in this same book that Peck articulates thoughts on vulnerability that are well worth sharing here: "There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community." (Peck, *The Different Drum*, 233.)

38. MK, Focus Group Questionnaire response, and HL, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

39. Eight of the fourteen participants commented on this in response to one or more of the questions aimed in this direction.

with its focus on such a large student body.”⁴⁰ As part of the ARC experience, students can engage in relationships that help them learn how to connect deeply, and especially when intergenerational relationships of vulnerability and mutual reliance are sustained over time, students learn how to navigate the challenges and opportunities of everyday adult life without becoming overwhelmed.⁴¹ Another PT member said that “especially the intentionality in trying to get to know people on a deeper level and understanding ... is what I think would separate ARC students from other students and would drive a cultural shift.”⁴²

Transmitting this cultural component to students will likely happen through lived experience, with students coming to understand the power of vulnerability as they experience its blessings through things such as checking in, sharing the stories of their faith journeys, engaging courageously in conflict resolution and confession, and choosing interdependence in assorted aspects of their lives. Along these lines, one OE suggested that we “offer and invite [students] into a set of practices that speak ‘community,’ ‘vulnerability,’ ‘authenticity,’ ‘purpose,’ ‘joy,’ and ‘mission.’ In this context they will obtain new linguistic skills that will empower them to see their lives and world differently.”⁴³ Others seem to agree, indicating that when students choose to open themselves up they “actually see these values of vulnerability and love play out between a group of people ... [and] they reflect this culture by being sold out to the idea that this

40. MS, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

41. MS, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

42. AV, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

43. CM, Outside Expert Evaluation.

is truly the best way to live.”⁴⁴ This will likely happen in progressive stages, but as students experience the power of vulnerability with one another, it seems they may also begin to invite others into that aspect of the Eden Community’s subculture, causing it to spread.⁴⁵

Summation

There are many things that ARC does well. Helping students grasp the importance and power of radical vulnerability with and reliance on each other seems to be one of the things it does best. While older members of the research team did not note this cultural component frequently, it is clearly present in the initial and refined ARC Pathways, and it is unmistakably noticed by younger people and powerfully experienced by ARC participants. As one young woman noted, “This model of ARC can be truly transformational in an individual’s life and in a society. It’s liberating to know that the community you’ve committed yourself to is just as, if not more, invested in this as you are. It’s like marriage but with friends; sharing the same sense of security, loyalty, longsuffering, openness, and dependence on each other.”⁴⁶ Praise God for the ways that ARC is serving students well in this regard!

Reliance on God

Similar to its emphasis on vulnerability with and reliance on each other, the Eden Community places a high value on purposeful, radical reliance on God. This is in stark contrast to the trends of secularity, humanism, and moralistic therapeutic deism that

44. SH, Focus Group Questionnaire response.

45. SH and MK, Focus Group Questionnaire responses.

46. SH, Focus Group Questionnaire response.

strongly influence the broader cultural narrative. In the contemporary Western world, people live in what philosopher Charles Taylor called “a secular age,” primarily framing life within the realm of the natural, non-divine, and relying much more fully on themselves and other people than on God, whom they see as removed from their daily decisions and actions.⁴⁷ With their attention directed elsewhere, they have lost their capacity to see and respond to God’s presence, and they therefore exist in a state of perpetual disenchantment.⁴⁸ They may verbally acknowledge the possibility of God’s involvement in their lives, but they often essentially function as though God is distant, uninterested, and disengaged. Sociologists Denton and Flory describe such trends in the spiritual lives of emerging adults, telling us that

Emerging adults are increasingly personalizing, customizing, and compartmentalizing religion in ways that suit their individual needs and desires. The God of emerging adults has become increasingly remote from their everyday concerns and rarely enters their thinking or occupies any real place in their lives. Instead, emerging adults have personalized God to serve their idiosyncratic needs and desires. In the process, they have transformed their conception of God from a powerful being or force that exists ‘out there’ to their own personal *pocket God*—a God that they can carry around with them, but that exerts little power or influence in their daily lives.⁴⁹

Granted, these authors focus primarily on populations at least slightly older than current ACU students, and exceptions to these broad findings surely exist. Nevertheless,

47. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007). I have not had the opportunity to read Taylor’s lengthy *magnum opus*, but James K.A. Smith does provide a highly accessible guide to it in *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

48. This sentence sums up the overall claim of Richard Beck’s *Hunting Magic Eels: Recovering an Enchanted Faith in a Skeptical Age* (Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2021).

49. Melinda Lundquist Denton and Richard Flory, *Back-Pocket God: Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 7. This book is the culmination of the ten-year National Study of Youth and Religion, an undertaking that involved four waves of data collection and four corresponding books.

this is the general religious landscape that many ACU students exist within and are shaped by. If they are to recover a more orthodox Christian perspective, one that affirms the reality of an engaged God on whom we can rely, these students need to be reembedded within a people, a narrative, and a relationship with the living and active God whose actions do have implications for their lives. They need someone to extend to them “an alternative story that offers a more robust, complex understanding of the Christian faith ... [an] invitation to historic, sacramental Christianity.”⁵⁰

Telling this alternative story of God’s loving involvement in our lives is exactly what the Eden Community aims to do, and the correlative emphasis on radical reliance on God shows up in its subculture in a variety forms. The community purposefully builds in opportunities to listen attentively for the Spirit’s voice, both in its governance practices and as people practice discernment together. The group and its individual members frequently step out in faith into experiments and opportunities that require risk and vulnerability. And the community’s membership covenant most clearly articulates its aspiration to rely on God, declaring, “Because we affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord, the Eden Community is committed to a life of shared purpose and practice under the leadership of Jesus Christ as we discern the guidance of his Spirit together.”⁵¹ In all the Eden Community does, it seeks to thoroughly attend to and depend on God, who we believe is dynamically engaged in the world. Such a stance of radical reliance on God does require courage, but it is also liberating, as the community chooses to trust in God’s strength and wisdom more than its own. One community member even described lived

50. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 77.

51. Eden Community Statement of Grace. A copy of this document is available upon request.

belief in the leadership of the Holy Spirit as the “core, key, and vital differentiator of what we’re up to.”⁵²

Reliance on God in the Refined Pathways

The PT did not actively develop this cultural component in the ARC Pathways, so my own comparison of the initial and refined pathways showed little shift in its frequency of occurrence between versions. The Eden Community intends to emphasize reliance on God throughout the entire ARC experience. The pathways highlight this from the very beginning, indicating in Level 1 of The Story that our presence with and attention to God are the foremost elements of our participation in what God is doing. And many of the rhythms contained in the pathways point to this indispensable foundation of attentiveness to God: listening prayer, communal discernment, the OFFER model of conflict transformation, the generally Spirit-led nature of ARC gatherings (including as instantiated in the AGAPE process), and, of course, “Divine Governance” as a modification of Dynamic Governance that purposefully makes space for the Spirit’s input.

Connections exist between this cultural component and two additional areas of note: missional paradigm shift and covenant. Here I will make only two brief observations. First, ARC hopes to help students align their missional paradigm with a paramount commitment to humble, vulnerable attentiveness and submission to God. The Luke 10:2b prayer is one indicator of this, reminding us that we must rely on God, who is

52. See my October 2019 paper, “Articulating the Core Identity of the Eden Community: Reflections on an Appreciative Inquiry,” submitted to Dr. Andrew Menzies as a part of the “Leading Change in Christian Organizations” course.

the Lord of the Harvest, to send out workers and to provide for our needs.⁵³ Second, the refined ARC Pathways connected covenant more fully to reliance on God by giving greater specificity about attending to God's leadership as we enter into covenant with God and one another.

As the primary researcher in this project, and as the person who has spent the most time developing ARC and its pathways, it is easy for me to see all of this. Apparently, however, others do not perceive this attribute of the Eden Community's subculture in the ARC Pathways nearly as readily. In fact, only five out of the thirteen research participants other than myself noted things related to reliance on God. Furthermore, those comments indicated a significant need for additional strengthening of the pathways regarding this cultural component.

Neither of the OEs noticed the theme of reliance on God. More strikingly, only two of the seven current and former ARC participants made any comment about it. The two FG members who mentioned reliance on God only did so in a cursory way, and only immediately after hearing a summary of the Eden Community's subculture.⁵⁴ One PT member perhaps commented indirectly on the theme, indicating that participating in ARC could lead students toward an increased reliance on God because it entails "a strong likelihood that [students] could enter a tough season that is natural with people taking a fine tooth comb to their own beliefs."⁵⁵ The remaining two individuals who noted the

53. Though it is not specifically mentioned in the pathways, ARC also frequently engages with the larger text of Luke 10, where Jesus sends out his disciples into an experience of vulnerable mission.

54. SH and LR, Focus Group Questionnaire responses.

55. BY, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response. BY's thoughts here likely reflected her own recent personal experiences of this kind of vulnerable encounter with God.

theme were members of the ARC leadership team, and the extensive comments that one of them made primarily indicated that he, much like myself, felt the ARC Pathways needed further refinement to strengthen this theme.⁵⁶

Transmitting Reliance on God

Clearly, the ARC leadership team desires that purposeful, radical reliance on God be conveyed to ARC participants as a central component of the Eden Community's subculture that it hopes they will adopt. The ARC Pathways themselves contain elements that are intended to cultivate this as a cultural norm among ACU students. Evidently, however, ARC does not yet emphasize this cultural component to the degree it needs to if it is to successfully transmit it. Only one or two research participants indicated that deeper attentiveness to God was emphasized in the pathways or would appear as an indicator of student growth through the pathways, with students learning "how to listen to God and to other people more attentively."⁵⁷ There was an incredible amount of silence in regard to the theme from every stakeholder group but the ARC leadership, two of whom indicated that they did *not* see an emphasis on reliance on God in the refined ARC Pathways.

Interestingly, though, two PT members did specifically comment on the way that reliance on God was emphasized in the AI process itself. One said that the project's format "was a very effective approach because of the acknowledgement of how God is

56. RK, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

57. HL, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response. BY's indirect comments, mentioned previously, about ARC potentially leading toward vulnerability and reliance on God might also be included. BY, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

working in and through the process.”⁵⁸ Another said it was “inherently good to notice where God is already at work” and commented on the “value of naming where we see what God is doing, which points us as well toward what we need to be doing next to join in that reality.”⁵⁹ Apparently this cultural component was at some level highlighted through the PT’s experience together, even if it is not clearly transmitted through the ARC Pathways themselves.

Summation

These findings are sobering. They also offer helpful guidance, however. Reliance on God is seen by ARC leadership as a foundational, all-permeating commitment. It is an important countercultural contrast that the Eden Community offers, one of the ways it is attempting to tell and invite others into a different, life-giving story that emphasizes God’s presence and beneficent, interactive nature. Vulnerable, Spirit-led, experimental mission is at the core of the community’s identity and culture. Choosing a stance of faith and courage, the Eden Community and its members venture out of the safe and ordinary to follow God’s call, trusting that God will prove faithful and provide all that they need. If ARC is to be successful at inculcating this stance of radical reliance on God in ACU students, it needs to strengthen its emphasis on this cultural component, incorporating more clear and creative opportunities for students to step into it so that they, too, can experience the blessings of a life imbued with reliance on God.

58. BY, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

59. RK, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

Sacrifice

Discipleship and life in Christian community both regularly require sacrifice. This is an element of the Eden Community's subculture that is not frequently referenced directly, but it is a significant cultural component nonetheless, undergirding the community's entire life together. Community members regularly sacrifice on behalf of one another, the community and its vision, and their shared life and work as followers of Jesus. Sometimes this sacrifice is readily visible in the ways people use their time, attention, and resources. Sometimes it is perceptible only to God and the one who is choosing an attitude of humility and submission, relinquishing their personal preferences for the good of the whole. Healthy sacrifice is a necessary component of life together in intentional community, helping the group achieve harmony and live into its vocation.

Once again, the PT did not select this cultural element as an area for focused refinement in the ARC Pathways. The team made only one adjustment to the pathways that fits well with this theme: a reminder to purposefully attend to "areas of my life that have remained unexamined regarding participation in communities of God's love and purpose," a pursuit that encourages us to submit all we are and do to God's guidance.⁶⁰ This particular addition also indicates the holistic nature of faith and mission, an emphasis that I identified in the data underneath the broader theme of missional paradigm shift. Clearly, since discipleship to Jesus is meant to be all-encompassing, it will involve a significant amount of sacrifice and submission. The themes are closely tied. And of course, since sacrifice is an essential element of so many aspects of Christian community,

60. This element is currently contained in My Story Level 3, but I believe it might fit better in the covenant section, with both individuals and communities engaging in this kind of reflection as they covenant with God and one another.

in some ways it permeates the entire ARC Pathways without always being directly stated, much as is true in the Eden Community's lived experience. What elements of this cultural component can be clearly seen in the ARC Pathways, however?

Sacrifice in the Refined Pathways

In short, the data indicate that this theme, while somewhat present in the refined ARC Pathways, certainly needs to be reinforced. The pathways are meant to lead ACU students into experiences that entail sacrifice and build their capacity to sacrifice healthily: serving others, submitting and stewarding their various resources (often in countercultural ways), and examining themselves closely to see how they might need to release their own preferences and privileges to make space for other people with different perspectives and needs.⁶¹ As the researcher, I can see how the refined ARC Pathways intend to invite students to step more deeply into the practice of sacrificing for and submitting to God and other people.

Even I see room for growth regarding this theme's presence in the pathways, however, and other research respondents confirm this perspective. Ten out of fourteen participants mentioned sacrifice, with findings that were rather consistent across the different angles of evaluation, the various stakeholder groups, and between different demographic clusters. Unfortunately, though, only five of those respondents indicated that the refined ARC Pathways contain any elements positively correlated to sacrifice,

61. See Refined ARC Pathways (Appendix G), especially references to things like kingdom stewardship, communal discernment, conflict resolution, confession and reconciliation, and ways of life that contrast with American norms. In their Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses, MS and BY also included elements related to this theme as indicators of growth for students who work through the pathways.

and typically in roundabout ways.⁶² What is more, five participants clearly indicated that there were both small and large ways in which the pathways failed to emphasize or acknowledge sacrifice.⁶³ One PT member adeptly summarized the situation, saying, “I did not see sacrifice and submission represented as well. These may be implied or what naturally entails in the pathways as we pray and seek God’s guidance together, but I think specifically the sacrifice portion could be focused on a little more.”⁶⁴ It seems this cultural component is not as strongly represented in the ARC Pathways as the ARC leadership team would desire.

Transmitting Sacrifice

One additional striking facet of ARC’s emphasis on sacrifice was prominent in the data, reflecting our lived experience in ARC over time. ARC asks a great deal from its participants. It offers them much in return, too. But because the way of whole-life discipleship that ARC attempts to cultivate among ACU students is intended to be comprehensive as well as rather countercultural, this heightens the level of sacrifice that is required for students to step into ARC in the first place. While we do not intend to entirely monopolize students’ attention, we do need a substantial amount of buy-in for effective formation. As one recent ARC student said, “Only those involved and who

62. The five individuals who mentioned positive correlations were me, three PT participants (AV, MS, and BY), and one FG member (SH). Only one participant out of fourteen, SH, specifically saw this theme as being emphasized in the pathways, and even she did not speak that perspective aloud in the FG meeting, simply noting it on her questionnaire alongside other things that she did speak about more fully. (SH, Focus Group Questionnaire response and conversation transcript.)

63. The six who mentioned a need for further refinements related to sacrifice were me, three PT participants (RK, CN, IW), and one FG member (LR).

64. IW, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

invest into ARC” will be significantly shaped toward regenerative culture.⁶⁵ Gaining that level of commitment from students is a persistent challenge, however, especially since they tend to live hectic lives, where focused attention is not the norm. In many instances, then, ACU students never step deeply enough into ARC to experience the blessings it has to offer. Of all the research participants, I commented most extensively on this challenge, but three other research participants also noted it.⁶⁶ One OE summarized the dynamic incredibly well in his observations about the suitability of the ARC Pathways for inviting students to experience the Eden Community’s subculture:

The pathways seem very much like the scattering seeds parable in Luke 8. The Introduction scatters the seeds broadly, Forming Community includes those in rocky soil, and Launching and Nurturing requires that fertile ground. However, the seeds sown in the first two [levels] are not lost. Many students will simply not be ready to pursue the in-depth work that the pathways require, but as they grow and mature, they may look back on the ideas they will be exposed to and allow them to germinate later in life. Deep spiritual and cultural self-examination is hard work, and it is harder for some students when combined with their educational and social responsibilities. The pathways are clear—following them to their conclusions is difficult.⁶⁷

Transmitting a value for sacrifice is hard. Sacrifice asks a lot of us, and it does not typically directly or immediately benefit us. That is its nature. It is only in pursuit of a good greater than ourselves—such as Christlike engagement in community and mission—that sacrifice truly makes sense. Conveying the importance of sacrifice to young people is especially difficult, for they generally do not have as much length, breadth, and depth of experience to help them understand the capacity sacrifice has to

65. AV, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

66. In addition to the previous quote from AV and the one that follows from LD, see LC, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses, and LR, Focus Group Questionnaire response.

67. LD, Outside Expert Evaluation.

yield important blessings. The ARC Pathways invite students to step more deeply into sacrifice, but they do not do so incredibly clearly or effectively, it seems.

Summation

The ARC leadership team has generally accepted that ARC may never draw a crowd. We simply hope that it will draw the *right* crowd. Discipleship to Jesus is supposed to entail sacrifice in a wide variety of ways. We do not want to obscure this reality. And, in fact, if the feedback on this topic is a reliable indicator, we may need to refine the ARC Pathways for even further clarity. At the same time, however, it is important that we thoughtfully consider the level of sacrifice we are asking of students, ascertaining that we are not foolishly creating an unnecessary stumbling block for them in their pursuit of Christ and community. While we should deliberate more about how to creatively invite students to step further into a sacrificial way of life, then, we should also make sure we honor the sacrifice they are making simply by participating in ARC.

Intergenerationality

The presence of intergenerationality in the Eden Community's lived experience and its training emphases is far from coincidental. In fact, a desire to draw students into intergenerational community was one of the elements that gave rise to the Eden Community in the first place. Intergenerationality is a such a significant component of the Eden Community's understanding of regenerative culture that we include it in our description of what a vibrant family of Jesus entails: "a joyful, interdependent, intergenerational community of God's love and purpose." While opportunities for intergenerational connection certainly do exist in the Eden Community's North American cultural context, most people default to the kind of peer-level community that has been

their norm since entering preschool. Recognizing the immense blessings of intergenerational community, in which people of all life stages can exist together in joyful, mutually supportive relationships, the Eden Community aims to strengthen people's imagination for and experience of relationships across generations.

Intergenerationality was already a strong element of the ARC experience before this project. And the PT chose this component of the Eden Community's subculture as one it wished to further hone so that it might shine through even more in the ARC Pathways. The group spent the first half of Session 6 developing this theme using the 5D model of AI, and a team of two participants refined our proposals in Session 7.⁶⁸ Additional themes that intergenerationality relates well to include connection and togetherness, as well as unity in diversity, with intergenerationality being one specific form of diversity that the PT specifically wished to highlight.

Intergenerationality in the Refined Pathways

In the initial ARC Pathways, intergenerationality was present but in a somewhat implicit way. There were some references to intergenerational relationships, mentoring opportunities, and the integration of ARC students into shared life with the Eden Community. Our Story, This Story, and the System categories particularly emphasized these things. The refined pathways built on this foundation, making intergenerational experiences much more overt. The team emphasized more clearly defined opportunities for cross-generational conversation and growth, in both structured and informal ways.

68. For more details on these conversations, refer back to chapter 4 (particularly the description of Theme 3 in Session 6), as well as to Appendix F, Session 7 Theme Documents and Proposals. RK and BY were the two PT members primarily tasked in Session 7 with helping us shape a proposal around this cultural component.

While intergenerationality was not one of the themes most frequently coded in the data, its presence was nonetheless unmistakable, with a large portion of research participants observing it. Seven out of eight PT members, all three FG participants, and I as the researcher all noted things related to this cultural component in questionnaire responses or in the connected conversations. Thus, despite the lack of comment from either OE, the theme was well represented from all research angles. There were possible differences in frequency of observations across ethnicity and age, with a lower percentage of white participants noting it and only one of the four oldest participants (age 55 and above) mentioning it.⁶⁹ Perhaps most surprising, though, the ARC leader who helped found the Eden Community in large part because of his desire to nurture intergenerational community did not make any comments on the matter, despite having also been one of the two PT members who helped shape the proposal around this theme!⁷⁰ That being said, no one indicated in their responses that intergenerationality needed further emphasis in the pathways.

69. These two groups do overlap significantly, as both OEs and the two ARC leaders besides myself all fall into the above 55 and white demographics. Thus, particularly with a small number of participants overall, a failure of even one of them to mention the component would strongly affect both demographic analyses. It is notable, however, that only one of these four older white men mentioned intergenerationality, when every other research participant did.

70. I can see three potential reasons for this disconnect between this person's questionnaire responses and his obvious value for intergenerationality. For one, it is plausible that intergenerationality is so much an assumed norm for him that he did not focus on it, choosing to highlight other elements instead. Secondly, it is possible that he, as an older community member, does not feel the benefits of intergenerationality as strikingly as younger people might, as they are often on the receiving end of the more conspicuous aspects of intergenerational blessing. (These two reasons might also help explain why neither of the OEs commented on intergenerationality either.) In addition, however, this person is also the PT member I referred to in chapter 4 who used an audio recording of Session 6 to reconstruct his questionnaire responses several months after the fact. Although his resulting questionnaire responses seem to be a solid reflection of the perspectives he shared aloud in Session 6, it is possible that the time delay resulted in him not including insights on the written response that he might have previously had in mind but not spoken aloud.

Many of the replies simply mentioned the term *intergenerationality*, but when respondents made specific comments about the theme, two areas came to the forefront. Responses mentioned mentoring as one particularly important form of intergenerational interaction between Eden Community members and ARC students. This can happen in structured ways, and the refined ARC Pathways include some specific suggestions about making space for such intergenerational relationships and conversations: cross-generational checking in, coaching, spiritual direction, learning about older members' experiences with spiritual disciplines. In addition, however, the PT wanted to emphasize practices of intergenerationality that lead to the integration of students into the everyday life and relationships of the Eden Community, especially in ways that get students outside of the "ACU bubble." This was framed as an "invitation into deeper, unstructured experiences of intergenerationality with Eden Community members in everyday life (on and off campus)."⁷¹

Transmitting Intergenerationality

In addition to myself, several of the PT members also noted the presence of intergenerationality as a significant differentiator between ARC and ACU norms of spiritual formation or specified that it was an indicator of student spiritual growth and the formation of regenerative culture among students.⁷² One FG member reflected extensively about intergenerationality as he verbally processed his surmised understanding of the Eden Community's subculture, especially emphasizing how

71. See Refined ARC Pathways, Appendix G.

72. LC, DM, and AV, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses (regarding differing from ACU norms), and LC, DM, HL, and IW, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses (regarding student spiritual growth and the formation of regenerative culture).

interacting with older people has helped him discern his own path for spiritual growth.⁷³ Two other participants, both of whom had invested themselves deeply in intergenerational relationships during their time in ARC, also shared about the formative capacity of those bonds. One FG member's immediate and enthusiastic answer when asked to recount a life-giving experience in ARC was "Getting to hang out with babies and old people!" She spoke more about how she had experienced intergenerational relationships in ARC, concluding by saying, "I like that we have that range of ages to engage with."⁷⁴ Another respondent, this time a PT member, said it is in the kind of intergenerational "life on the small" that ARC encourages that participants "learn how to navigate the nitty-gritty so that things like sickness, death, funerals, weddings, marriage, and just generally adult life things do not appear as overwhelming and lonely."⁷⁵

Summation

In the Eden Community, intergenerationality "is seen as a characteristic of blessedness when living on mission with God."⁷⁶ The data indicate that the ARC Pathways have a strong, if subtle, emphasis on this cultural component. In addition, ARC is clearly successful at transmitting an experience of and value for intergenerationality to a younger generation of Christian leaders, setting itself apart in this way from typical spiritual formation opportunities that students have access to. We can celebrate this

73. MK, Focus Group Questionnaire response.

74. SH, Focus Group conversation transcript.

75. MS, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

76. DM, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

reality as one indicator that we are building toward forming vibrant families of Jesus and regenerative culture among ACU students.

Interdependent Co-Creators

The Eden Community places a high value on its members existing in dynamic, interdependent relationships that generatively employ everyone's gifts toward a common aim. Every individual has something meaningful to offer and can contribute constructively! ARC attempts to nurture the practice of interdependent co-creation between the Eden Community, ARC leaders, and ARC students, drawing each person toward greater proficiency in symbiotic, shared leadership. This theme is strongly linked to many central aspects of the Eden Community's subculture and training methods. Much like intergenerationality, interdependence is central enough to the community's understanding of vibrant families of Jesus that it, too, is specifically named in the community's explication of what such communities entail. Other especially evident connections to interdependent co-creation include egalitarianism, vulnerability with and reliance on each other, shared mission-centric work, unity in diversity, and LPP.

The ARC leadership team intends ARC to be an overall experience of interdependent co-creation, with leaders and students working together to discern helpful ways forward, both in short-term, experimental opportunities for connection and growth and in longer-term plans for student investment in community and mission. However, we have at times erred in two opposite directions regarding how we embody this cultural component in ARC. Sometimes we have relied too much on student initiative and perspective, not offering enough structure and guidance to ensure stability and growth. In other times, we have not offered enough clear opportunities for leadership within

established rhythms. This cultural component, then, while central to ARC in theory, needed some refinement in practice. The PT chose this as one of its four focal themes for the project. It then spent the second half of Session 6 developing this theme using the 5D model of AI, and a team of two participants refined proposals regarding the theme in Session 7.⁷⁷

Interdependent Co-Creators in the Refined Pathways

Because of the ways interdependent co-creation serves as a significant framework for ARC overall, the initial ARC Pathways already contained a strong emphasis on this cultural component. It was the second most prominent theme overall in the initial pathways, behind missional paradigm shift.⁷⁸ The PT also made some significant additions related to this cultural component—the most overall additions, and proportionally more additions than any other theme when compared to initial references.⁷⁹ Most prominently, the PT added gift assessments and gift affirmations at every level of ARC. Because of these additions, in the end, the theme was tied for being the most commonly coded cultural component in the refined ARC Pathways, infused throughout most of its foci and all of its levels.⁸⁰ Level 4 can even be viewed in its

77. For more details on these conversations, refer back to chapter 4 (particularly the description of Theme 4 in Session 6), as well as to Appendix F, Session 7 Theme Documents and Proposals. MS and LC (me) were the two PT members who helped form a proposal around this cultural component in Session 7.

78. Interdependent co-creators had 28 references in the initial ARC Pathways, versus 38 references for missional paradigm shift. The next greatest number was 26, for inclusive diversity.

79. The refined ARC Pathways included 17 additional references for interdependent co-creators; compared to the original number, this is a ratio of 1.65. The next greatest ratio of additions was for connection and togetherness, at 1.6, representing an increase from 8 to 13 references between versions.

80. Missional paradigm shift and interdependent co-creators both had a total of 45 references in the refined pathways.

entirety as an instantiation of interdependent co-creation, as its explicit focus is helping equip students to lead and nurture community.

The research participants confirmed the saturation of the refined ARC Pathways with this theme. All but one of the responses noted something related to interdependent co-creation, and most of those comments were somewhat detailed.⁸¹ Given the prevalence of this theme in the data, all demographic groups, stakeholder groups, project roles, and research angles were equally well represented, and they shared very similar perspectives.

I noticed two major emphases within this theme. Most prominently, the data highlighted that ARC seeks to honor the diversity of gifts present among participants. “Drawing out and affirming spiritual gifts” was the most common subcode and the only one coded to every stakeholder group. ARC seeks to help students discover and employ their unique gifts, fostering an environment from the start that leads toward interdependent co-creation. As one FG participant noted, “There’s no requirement who can show up at a Level One. It’s like you just show up ... and you realize, ‘What I have to bring to this is community is actually of value to those around me!’”⁸²

Secondly and relatedly, stepping into interdependent co-creation is a process—essentially the process of LPP. Various respondents spoke about different components of growth into interdependent co-creation. Seeing others demonstrate this practice can help

81. LD, one of the OEs, was the only person whose response was not coded with this theme. (See LD, Outside Expert Evaluation.) HL and BY provided the shortest responses, simply noting “interdependence” and “gifts assessment/affirmation of gifts” as areas emphasized in the refined ARC Pathways. (See HL and BY, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.)

82. MK, Focus Group conversation transcript.

people begin to grasp what ARC and the Eden Community are about.⁸³ ARC is clearly participatory, inviting students from the beginning to co-create their experience. As they do so, they have their presence and gifts affirmed, leading them to consider how they might step into deeper participation and even leadership. One student indicated this, saying, “When I am there, not only am I renewed, but hopefully the goal is that I can help someone else too and pour out. Because you’ve filled up my cup, and I’ve been here long enough that I could probably take some responsibility as well.”⁸⁴ The refined ARC Pathways offer an increasing number of opportunities for student leadership as participants progress through the levels of training.

There are also ways in which the responses suggested room for improvement, however. Several people made small recommendations. One noted a lack of clear accountability in the refined pathways.⁸⁵ Others suggested partnering with outside experts when appropriate, watching for God’s initiative in bringing people together, and considering how to invite students to give back to ARC and the Eden Community with their various resources (time, talent, funds, etc.).⁸⁶ The primary notable silence was that the Setting table contains no clear or strong co-creational emphasis, even though its contents are particularly well suited to it, providing a rich opportunity for exploration and

83. MK, Focus Group conversation transcript.

84. MK, Focus Group conversation transcript.

85. CN, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

86. Respectively, see LR, Focus Group Questionnaire response, and RK and LC, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

experimentation together.⁸⁷ Despite the ways that interdependent co-creation permeates the refined ARC Pathways, then, it seems there is still room for growth.

Transmitting Interdependent Co-Creators

Given the strong emphasis that the refined ARC Pathways place on inviting people to be interdependent co-creators, it is not surprising that research respondents generally affirmed the pathways' capacity to transmit this cultural component to ACU students. Six of the eight PT participants made comments to this effect. One of them noted the emphasis on this theme—particularly honoring students as proactive participants and “attentive, effective agents of God’s inbreaking Kingdom”—as an element that differentiates ARC from other spiritual formation opportunities available to students.⁸⁸ A few people mentioned the theme as an indicator of student growth with the pathways, saying that ARC leads students to seek interdependent ways of engaging in community and mission and that it creates in them “a stronger desire to participate in joyful co-creation with others in the body.”⁸⁹ Several others connected the theme to ways in which ARC enhances the formation of regenerative culture among ACU students, with one of them saying that “it will provide a place and life-giving network or family of

87. DM made a comment that connects to this observation, discussing a desire for ARC students to engage elements of creation care alongside Eden Community members on the community’s land. DM, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

88. RK, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

89. DM and MS, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses, respectively. HL also noted interdependence as an indicator of student growth. See HL, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

friends and mentors to exemplify, guide, and become practice partners for the Christian communal values imparted.”⁹⁰

What is more, the PT process itself exhibited a great deal of interdependent co-creation. A large portion of the PT participants highlighted this element (as well as the connected value for diversity) as a significant component of the PT process, one that blessed them while also shaping the project and its outcomes significantly.⁹¹ Two people called the co-creative experience “life-giving.”⁹² And three people specifically mentioned the ways that the process affirmed diversity of thought, allowing “various perspectives to speak into all the components.”⁹³ I specifically noted that interdependent co-creation is an important way to go about cultural transmission through the process of LPP, saying, “The Appreciative Inquiry process was successful not only at refining the pathways but at actually transmitting and shaping regenerative culture among the PT participants. It was clear to me that participants grew significantly in their understanding of and appreciation for the Eden Community’s culture and aims by their participation in this project.”⁹⁴ The ARC leadership team will want to build on these insights, considering how to invite students into comparable, if less intensive, opportunities for shared reflection and design in the future.

90. IW, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response. AV and LC also noted this theme in connection to the refined pathways’ capacity to enhance the shaping of regenerative culture among ACU students. See AV and LC, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

91. Five out of eight PT participants, plus myself as the researcher, commented on this.

92. MS and AV, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

93. AV, IW, and CN, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

94. LC, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

Summation

Although we could make some small improvements to the ARC Pathways so they more fully reflect this cultural component, the practice of interdependent co-creation is clearly well represented, both in theory and in practice, in the pathways and the overall ARC experience. ARC does well at providing opportunities for “co-discovery, co-creation, and co-sustaining.”⁹⁵ In wide-ranging and prominent ways, the refined pathways invite ACU students and Eden Community members to share insights, initiative, and leadership, successfully inculcating a value for interdependent co-creation through ARC.

Unity in Diversity

The theme of unity in diversity is notable in this research project in several related ways. First, among the cultural components included in the summary of the Eden Community’s subculture that I offered the PT in Session 2, it is the only one that the team selected as an area of focused development in the ARC Pathways. However, the team did modify its angle on the cultural component somewhat, framing its attention to diversity more through the lens of inclusivity. For that reason, in my initial coding of the data, I left the two themes separate, coding data to either or both as appropriate. Not surprisingly, doing so resulted in a great deal of overlap between the two codes, which then also posed a challenge in the task of quantitatively comparing data across themes (the task of content analysis, as I described in chapter 4). Toward the end of my data analysis, then, I nested the code “inclusive diversity” under the broader code of “unity in diversity.” I did not lose any data by merging the themes, nor did consolidating them alter my findings. It merely simplified my number-crunching. This is, however, one of only

95. MS, in Pathways Team Session 6.

two cultural components for which this kind of shift occurred, thus its second area of distinction. Finally, I identified several new subcodes in my inductive analysis of this theme, something that did not happen for other themes.

While the two original codes clearly connect, there do seem to be subtle differences between what I meant by “unity in diversity” in my original portrayal of the Eden Community’s subculture and what the team focused on with “inclusive diversity.” In its original emphasis, “unity in diversity” was primarily about navigating everyday life within a committed community, whereas “inclusive diversity” focused on navigating origins, identities, and fundamental commitments in ways that allow people to step into community together. This is in part because of the two different settings in which the themes originated. As I studied the subculture of the Eden Community, the emphasis was on maintaining unity amid the community’s existing diversity, not allowing our differences to cause discord and division. Thus, the theme included stresses on things like recognizing and healthily engaging interpersonal differences, functioning as an ecosystem that both benefits from and is challenged by its diverse members, and fostering love and peace amid dissimilarities and conflict. The PT, however, considered specifically how to refine the ARC Pathways so that they might effectively connect with ACU students, a much more broadly diverse group overall, and one with no covenant concerning shared life. Regarding “inclusive diversity,” then, the team considered those previous areas of focus but also wrestled with how to engage this wider, more individualistic audience. We deliberated how to create a safe space in ARC for people of diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and spiritual journeys (among other things), inviting

students to experience and celebrate diversity in its various forms. The new subcodes that I identified as I coded the data related most strongly to this emphasis on inclusivity.⁹⁶

The PT spent the second half of Session 5 developing the theme of inclusive diversity using the 5D model of AI, and a group of two participants refined our proposals in Session 7.⁹⁷ According to my later analysis, both “unity in diversity” and “inclusive diversity” were already emphasized in the initial ARC Pathways, and the PT’s contributions strengthened both themes, though there was a slightly greater emphasis on the latter.⁹⁸ Clearly, the themes are complementary. They are simply two different lenses through which to view diversity. Therefore, while I will at times make distinctions between the emphases in this analysis, I will on the whole address them together under the comprehensive heading of “unity in diversity.”

Unity in Diversity in the Refined Pathways

As the person most familiar with the ARC Pathways, I can see how they emphasize unity in diversity in several ways, in both their initial and refined forms. In fact, it is the third most prominent theme that I coded overall in the refined pathways, after interdependent co-creators and missional paradigm shift.⁹⁹ First, the pathways begin

96. Those three subcodes were about unity in diversity regarding backgrounds, perspectives, and spiritual styles and faith journeys. For the full list of codes, see Appendix M.

97. For more details on these conversations, refer back to chapter 4 (particularly the description of Theme 2 in Session 5), as well as to Appendix F, Session 7 Theme Documents and Proposals. CN and AV were the two PT members primarily tasked with helping us form a proposal around this cultural component in Session 7.

98. The initial pathways contained 16 references coded to unity in diversity and 17 coded to inclusive diversity. The refined pathways entailed the addition of 5 and 8 references, respectively. Again, some of these references overlap, coded to both emphases. That being the case, between versions of the pathways, the overall theme began at 26 references and added 8, resulting in 34 references total.

99. Unity in diversity had 34 references in the refined ARC Pathways; missional paradigm shift and interdependent co-creators both had 45.

with The Story, which depicts a diversely unified God who calls diverse people into unified communion. My Story then leads students into the kind of deep self-knowledge that subsequently allows for close-knit community and constructive relationships amongst diversity as part of Our Story. Students discover more about themselves and how they differ from others, and they grow in their capacity to share deeply, listen empathetically, and build loving relationships. They practice engaging genuinely and working through conflict, navigating the transition from pseudocommunity—beyond chaos and through emptiness—into true community.¹⁰⁰ The pathways also expose students to Dynamic Governance and diverse expressions of kingdom life, both of which stretch their imaginations and help them grow in hospitality toward diversity.

The additions that the PT made reinforced this emphasis on unity in diversity. The team recommended defining diversity early on, as well as calling attention to it and celebrating it as an opportunity for learning and growth. We proposed connecting this theme to the missional paradigm shift that the Eden Community is attempting to facilitate through ARC. We added suggestions to capitalize on the presence of intergenerationality, an important form of diversity that the Eden Community strongly emphasizes, as well as to explore the challenges it can present.¹⁰¹ And in regard to maintaining unity in the midst of theological diversity, we added the framework of “in essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, in all things charity” as a way of approaching Our Story and covenant.¹⁰²

100. For more on these four stages of community, see chapter 5 of Peck, *The Different Drum*.

101. Because intergenerationality was a prominent enough cultural component, specifically named by the Eden Community and specifically chosen by the PT for development, I have treated it as a separate theme in the data analysis process. Because it is a particular kind of diversity, though, there were some instances in which I coded it to both themes, depending on the emphasis in the data.

102. This catchphrase is common in the Stone-Campbell Movement, which is the background for all the Eden Community’s current members. [Rupertus Melendius is often credited as creating the slogan;

When it comes to the observable presence of unity in diversity in the refined ARC Pathways, though, the reviews are mixed. As the researcher, I see this cultural component in the pathways very clearly. However, while every research participant commented on the theme in one way or another, the data revealed that only about half of the participants affirmed the presence of unity in diversity in the refined ARC Pathways, either directly or as indicated by student growth.¹⁰³ There were no discernable deviations in either frequency of comments or stance on this theme across any of the demographic or research groupings.

What is more, one third of the research participants had suggestions, some of them lengthy, about ways to continue improving the pathways in regard to this theme.¹⁰⁴ At least one PT member indicated a desire for greater clarity about the Eden Community's theological stances, hoping that might help students feel more comfortable stepping into ARC.¹⁰⁵ Three people wanted to see the pathways attend more purposefully

this name was likely a pseudonym for one of forefathers of the Stone-Campbell Movement, Peter Meiderlin. See David I. McWhirter, "Pseudonyms," in Douglas A. Foster et al., eds. *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 614.]

Clearly, there are challenges to living by such a standard. (How do we define the essentials, for instance? This is basically the question that arose for several younger PT participants as we discussed this theme in Session 5. The Eden Community would point here toward its covenantal commitment to discern the Spirit's guidance together.) However, the fundamental commitment to explore differences charitably while allowing for a great deal of liberty is a helpful starting place for maintaining unity in diversity.

103. This is one of only two themes (the other being missional paradigm shift) that every single research participant commented on. In addition to me, three of eight PT members, all three FG participants, and one of the two OEs included comments indicating the direct presence of this theme in the refined ARC Pathways. Regarding student growth as a result of the pathways, two additional PT members are represented, but two others (a FG member and an OE) who had mentioned correlations *in* the pathways did not note student growth in this area *through* the pathways.

104. See CN, AV, MS, and RK, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses, as well as LD, Outside Expert Evaluation.

105. Only one PT member, AV, indicated this on his Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response. However, I also know that this was important to at least two additional PT members, MS and IW, who discussed it at some length in Session 5.

and affirmingly to diverse faith journeys, whether that is in different stages of the Christian faith, different expressions of church, or different religions.¹⁰⁶ And one OE hoped the pathways would focus more on helping students navigate different, often polarizing, perspectives on what the good and moral life looks like.¹⁰⁷

Transmitting Unity in Diversity

When it comes to how the refined ARC Pathways transmit the cultural component of unity in diversity to ACU students, the information gathered proves even more perplexing. When I asked them to speculate about the Eden Community's subculture before hearing a description of it, several participants made comments that might be connected to unity in diversity, indicating that a value for unity in diversity is apparent in the ARC experience and the refined ARC Pathways.¹⁰⁸ However, the data also contained a massive silence and revealed a significant correlated slippage.

Roughly half of the research participants did comment on aspects of this theme when they named ways in which they foresaw student growth when the pathways were implemented. By providing students with an open, safe space to be themselves and to feel welcomed for who they are, the ARC Pathways nurture students' growth as individuals, helping them become more confident and giving them practice at existing well amid diversity.¹⁰⁹ This experience fosters in them the desire and capacity to participate in and

106. See CN and MS, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses, as well as LD, Outside Expert Evaluation.

107. See LD, Outside Expert Evaluation.

108. Two of three FG members and one OE made comments of this nature. See MK and SH, Focus Group Questionnaire responses, and CM, Outside Expert Evaluation.

109. HL and BY, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses, as well as MK and LR, Focus Group Questionnaire responses.

even create this kind of diverse yet unified community in their lives outside of ARC. By walking through the ARC Pathways, then, students “may have a greater understanding of and appreciation for diverse communities of God embedded in a place intentionally,” and they may grow into “a greater sense of graciousness with others, more intentional interactions with regards to arguments, problem-solving, etc.”¹¹⁰

However, questions that I posed regarding the effectiveness of the ARC Pathways—would they contribute to the shaping of regenerative culture, would they enhance student spiritual formation, were they suitable for cultural transmission—were all met with a deafening silence. Not a single person, including myself, responded to these questions with anything coded to unity in diversity! When I asked if and how ARC differs from the ACU norm, there were only two comments—both from insiders to the Eden Community—regarding this cultural component, and one of them was better categorized to the diversity of intergenerationality.¹¹¹

If the data and my analysis of it are dependable, the research respondents care about unity in diversity (as indicated by comments about it from every participant), and they do see having a capacity to cultivate unity in diversity as an indicator of student growth with the ARC Pathways. However, they did not see the pathways themselves as particularly effective or different from the ACU norm in regard to this theme. What does this slippage mean? While I cannot say for sure, I will speculate based on the data and my

110. DM and MS, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses, respectively. AV also made comments of a similar nature.

111. See HL and LC, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses. HL said that ARC differed from the norm by helping students gain a “greater appreciation for a diversity of ‘my stories’ as they fit together in the other three metanarratives.” My own comment was primarily about the diversity of intergenerationality.

knowledge of the participants. Of course, it is plausible that unity in diversity was simply not one of the most notable themes for respondents, and thus they did not mention it in connection to the ARC Pathways' effectiveness. Or it is possible that some respondents had unity in diversity in mind when they offered broad references to ARC's values and ARC's emphasis on community as things they thought would enhance the formation of regenerative culture among ACU students.¹¹² Only a direct inquiry to participants about this theme would help me gain clarity. Even if these conceivable explanations prove false, however, I do not believe the silence about the effectiveness of the ARC Pathways regarding unity in diversity means that research participants think that the pathways will be totally *ineffective*. Clearly, at least a large portion of respondents see the pathways as leading toward student growth. However, it may very well be that when it comes to this specific cultural component, ARC is not leading the way in spiritual formation among ACU students.

Interestingly, most of the responses, both affirming and critiquing the degree to which unity in diversity was present in the ARC Pathways, leaned more heavily into the focus on inclusivity than into the focus on navigating everyday interactions in community. This was true regardless of demographic or research group. It seems, then, that though the original emphases of "unity in diversity" and "inclusive diversity" are closely connected enough that I can treat them as one theme for the sake of this general analysis, there is enough of a divergence in their content and their discernability to research participants that we should attend further to the dynamic relationship between these two similar but distinct themes.

112. DM and CN, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

Inclusive diversity, in particular, may be enough of a core value and practice in ACU students' lives that the Eden Community and ARC do not have anything new to contribute to students' spiritual formation in that regard.¹¹³ ACU students, coming from a more individualistic culture, tend to place a higher value on affirming the *diversity of individuals* and would thus desire and emphasize *inclusive* diversity more. While not negating this stance, the Eden Community, being more egalitarian and thus having a stronger Group emphasis, tends to focus more on preserving the *unity of a community*. The two principles are not mutually exclusive, but they do present different approaches to unity in diversity that result in a polarity we will need to manage well if we are to effectively engage students.

Summation

The PT did good work, strengthening the presence of unity in diversity in the refined ARC Pathways. Nevertheless, a significant portion of research participants did indicate a desire for further refinements connected to this theme. As the researcher, I can see that this cultural component is infused all throughout the pathways. However, its presence may not be concrete enough to make it as readily discernable to others. Alternatively or in addition, the data lead to two other potential inferences. First, it may be that the ARC Pathways present a solid picture of what unity in diversity means to the Eden Community, but that this perspective does not resonate strongly with the paradigms and values of those outside of the community. Second, it may be that ARC is simply not leading the way in the ACU context regarding the advancement of a value for unity in

113. One respondent even specifically commented on valuing the presence of unity in diversity in all the groups he was involved in, including but not limited to ARC. MK, Focus Group Questionnaire response.

diversity (especially *inclusive* diversity), causing the theme not to stand out as a way that ARC is contributing effectively toward shaping students regeneratively. The ARC leadership team should attend further to this matter, determining if and how to make any further adjustments to the ARC Pathways so that they more thoroughly reflect and transmit the Eden Community's value for unity in diversity, including in the inclusive ways that the data indicated were important to the research participants.

Missional Paradigm Shift

ARC seeks to challenge the framework for mission that ACU students tend to operate with, which has at its core the idea of human action on behalf of God. This paradigm's focus is almost exclusively outward and doing-oriented. It is also frequently individualistic rather than communally oriented. Furthermore, the model generally divorces mission from the everyday lives of everyday people, seeing it as a specialized task for a certain time or a dedicated subgroup of people. Getting outside of the daily routines of normal life and doing good things for God and others—that is considered mission. While not unsalvageable, this conception of mission is incomplete, an underdeveloped paradigm that ARC seeks to expand. The Eden Community pushes back on this perspective, maintaining that mission is, fundamentally, attentive participation in communities of God's love and purpose.¹¹⁴

Community is central to this shifted paradigm. Mission is something that the church embodies together. As I argued in chapter 2, it is by inhabiting a powerful, life-giving counterstory that the church will best manifest and witness to God's good news.

114. For a good summary of the Eden Community's perspective on mission, with a short overview of the ten components of the Regenerative Culture Portfolio also included, see Smith, "Love, Joy, and Grace."

To return to Bryan Stone's helpful summation, "the most evangelistic thing the church can do today is to be the church—to be formed imaginatively by the Holy Spirit through core practices such as worship, forgiveness, hospitality, and economic sharing into a distinctive people in the world, a new social option, the body of Christ."¹¹⁵ The vibrancy that this kind of life with God and God's people engenders is contagious.

Attention is also pivotal in this paradigm, which insists that all our pursuits must emerge from the foundational practice of seeking to hear and subsequently follow God's current invitation, whatever that might look like. Mission is about immersing ourselves deeply in the life of God and through that relationship being equipped, as God leads, to instantiate good news that will draw others toward God's presence. According to the Eden Community's paradigm, then, mission is about transformative communion with God and other people, as well as about the purposeful participation in God's life and love that such communion entails.

Far from being a circumscribed set of tasks for certain times or a group of experts, this paradigm claims that mission is a whole-life posture for all Christians. Thus, the ARC Pathways do not necessarily denigrate or exclude the kinds of outward and doing-oriented tasks that ACU students typically understand as mission, but they do decenter, reframe, and expand upon them, incorporating all of life into a missional stance. In response to challengers of such an all-inclusive missional paradigm, Christopher J. H. Wright firmly declares, "If everything is mission ... everything is mission.' Clearly, not everything is *cross-cultural evangelistic* mission, but everything a Christian and a Christian church is, says, and does should be missional in its conscious participation in

115. Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom*, 15.

the mission of God in the world.”¹¹⁶ And when disciples of Jesus orient their entire lives around attentive and intentional participation in communities of God’s love and purpose, surprising expressions of mission will inevitably emerge, each of them shaped strongly by God’s ongoing revelation, the unique gifts of individuals and communities, and the practice of creative contextualization.¹¹⁷

This is certainly a change in perspective for most people that the Eden Community encounters in its context, including ACU students. The PT chose to work toward making this missional paradigm shift, a central part of the Eden Community’s subculture, more evident in the refined ARC Pathways. We spent the first half of Session 5 developing this theme using the 5D model of AI, and a team of two participants refined our proposals in Session 7.¹¹⁸ In connection with the ideas touched on above, we attended to redefining mission, challenging students’ imaginations, and helping students come to see mission as being “awake and alive to God and the world.”¹¹⁹

Given the extensive nature of this theme, I tried several different ways of framing the data to see if that could yield a better understanding of the theme overall. Three

116. Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission*, Biblical Theology for Life Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 26. Here, Wright is arguing against those who would say that “if everything is mission, nothing is mission.” In ways that correlate some with Stone’s point and the Eden Community’s emphasis on both being and doing elements of mission, Wright goes on throughout this book to indicate that mission should include “the embodiment of the message in life and action.” Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 30.

117. Or, in the language used in the Regenerative Culture Portfolio: The Story, My Story, Our Story, and This Story.

118. For more details on these conversations, refer back to chapter 4 (particularly the description of Theme 1 in Session 5), as well as to Appendix F, Session 7 Theme Documents and Proposals. HL and DM were the two PT members who worked together in Session 7 to shape a proposal around this cultural component.

119. This phrase developed from a comment that DM made in Session 5.

notable and related developments occurred. First, my interpretation identified two new subcodes under this code: service and the holistic nature of faith and mission. I integrated these subcodes into the theme. Second, I experimented with various ways to organize the data, settling on three main subthemes—attention, definition of mission, and participation—each of which has underlying codes connected to it.¹²⁰ Third and most significantly, this theme caused me to wrestle with how best to engage the cultural component of shared mission-centric work, one of the elements that I noted in my 2019 AI study of the Eden Community’s subculture. In the end, even after having completed extensive data analysis and writing about both shared mission-centric work and missional paradigm shift as entirely separate codes, I determined that shared mission-centric work (much like service) fit most naturally as a code nested under the participation subtheme of missional paradigm shift. Since shared mission-centric work was one of my original top-level codes, I will discuss it briefly before moving on to analyze the missional paradigm shift that it is nested under.

Shared Mission-Centric Work

The missional paradigm that ARC encourages entails a whole-life orientation toward attentive, communal discipleship, with shared mission-centric work and service emerging in a derivative way as forms of attention- and context-driven participation in communities of God’s love and purpose. According to this paradigm, both being- and doing-oriented practices can be categorized as part of shared mission-centric work, for all of them have the potential to lead people deeper into God’s love and purpose. In all its expressions, however, shared mission-centric work arises in uniquely contextualized

120. Once again, for the full list of codes, see Appendix M.

ways as followers of Jesus choose to both be and do whatever God calls them to as communities of God's love and purpose.

It was in large part a dedication to nurturing vibrant families of Jesus that drew Eden Community members toward each other in the first place. It is not surprising, then, that engaging in this specific form of shared mission-centric work is a significant element of the community's subculture. Because the ARC Pathways developed directly from and broadly summarize the Eden Community's own mission-centric work, they are thoroughly infused with a value for nurturing vibrant families of Jesus.

The pathways do not offer great specificity, however, regarding what shared mission-centric work might look like among ARC students or the communities they may form and lead in the future. Certainly, the Eden Community does not assume that every community should step into the exact same work it does. After all, that would not befit the nature of creative contextualization. The Eden Community's unique design, context, and calling engendered its specific form of shared work. The same should be true for ARC students, both now and in the future.

What the ARC Pathways entail, then, is not so much a prescription for the kind of mission-centric work students should participate in. It is, rather, more of an invitation into a process through which they might discern God's call into mission-centric work in their own unique lives and communities. As one PT member said, ARC offers "a large toolkit to enact that vision wherever God calls them."¹²¹ Notably, the PT did not give any

121. RK, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

specific attention to developing the topic of shared mission-centric work, focusing instead on how to shift the overarching paradigm of which such work is a subcomponent.¹²²

Missional Paradigm Shift in the Refined Pathways

Missional paradigm shift was the most strongly represented theme in the initial ARC Pathways.¹²³ And while it tied with interdependent co-creators for number of total references in the refined ARC Pathways, when considering the entire collection of data produced by this project, it far exceeded every other theme in its representation.¹²⁴ It was one of only two themes in the data that every research participant mentioned, and many of them discussed it extensively, with it entailing rather high percentages of coverage in their responses.¹²⁵ Some of these references indicated areas for growth, but affirming observations strongly outnumbered constructive critique.

The theme was well represented among all the various demographic and research groupings. Insider and outsider angles noted it at similar average rates per person.¹²⁶ There was no significant difference across demographic groupings regarding frequency

122. Shared mission-centric work also has strong connections to the theme of interdependent co-creators, as this kind of work thrives most when a community is functioning in interdependent, co-creative ways. I believe it fits best here, however.

123. Interdependent co-creators and unity in diversity followed slightly behind it in the initial ARC Pathways.

124. See Appendix N, Data Analysis Tables, for more detail.

125. The other theme mentioned by every participant was unity in diversity. Percentages of data coverage regarding missional paradigm shift ranged from 9.5% to 70.2%, but for eleven of out of the total fourteen participants, over one quarter of their responses were connected to this theme! This level of representation is unparalleled among the other themes.

126. Among project roles aside from my own, the FG members commented on it most frequently on average, followed by the PT participants, and then the OEs. When I removed my coding of the ARC Pathways from the data set in order to make the comparisons equivalent, ARC leaders mentioned the theme most on average, followed by alumni, current students, the spiritual formation practitioner, the OEs, and the team mission participant.

of noting this cultural component, indicating that the emphasis on missional paradigm shift is perceptible to a variety of people.

My own analysis of the ARC Pathways shows generally strong representation of this theme, in both initial and refined versions of the pathways. The introductory depictions of The Story, My Story, Our Story, and This Story all point to a shifted paradigm. Likewise, the components of the correlated Story table lead toward this paradigm shift, attempting to incorporate all that students are and do (both individually and together), into vibrant, Spirit-led community in ways that inform and lead to purposeful engagement in context. Several additional components also clearly highlight this theme. Missional paradigm shift is now prominently featured as early as Level 1 of The Story—possibly the first thing that students encounter about ARC! The System table contains a stronger emphasis on the kind of covenantal community this shift entails. There are frequent forms of attention-paying all throughout the pathways: the Revelation/Attention/Participation model, listening prayer, self-discovery and mutual self-disclosure practices, observation of setting and context, and numerous opportunities to grow in awareness of different creatively contextualized instantiations of missional community. Furthermore, the pathways also contain several paradigm-shifting questions, helping students challenge their understandings of the church and mission, as well as what these mean practically for their own lives. In addition, the pathways contain several elements, especially the Statement of Grace and the concept of Vision/Mission/Aim, that are intended to help students discern and frame their own participation in shared mission-centric work.

Other research participants generally confirmed my own findings. Seven of the eight PT participants and both OEs noted the presence of things related to missional paradigm shift in the pathways. Initial comments that all three FG members made, before they had been informed by my summary of the Eden Community's subculture, demonstrated the transmission of this cultural component through ARC, thus also indirectly indicating its effective presence in the ARC Pathways. There was some variation in which subthemes different research angles and stakeholder groups noted most often, but both definition of mission and participation were well represented.¹²⁷

Every research respondent but one commented on the definition of mission.¹²⁸ One FG member summarized mission as participation in communities of God's love and purpose especially well, saying, "the core beliefs of Eden Community are attempting to replicate Christ's ministry of community while renewing the culture and the world around those involved at all levels of the process."¹²⁹ Respondents commented most on aspects of the ARC Pathways that challenge people's imaginations for what mission entails. This often happens when people engage in experiences outside of their norm, such as when visiting the Eden Center or joining in ARC's Missional Imagination Trip.¹³⁰ Seeing mission instantiated in unconventional ways makes it seem plausible for people to

127. I and those in the outsider angle focused more heavily on definition of mission, while insiders emphasized participation slightly more.

128. BY was the lone exception.

129. MK, Focus Group Questionnaire response. What makes this comment particularly striking is that it came toward the beginning of the focus group meeting, in response to question 1a, which asked the person to surmise the Eden Community's subculture before I had supplied him (at least in that session) with any clear description of it!

130. MK and LR, Focus Group Questionnaire responses.

consider their own participation in mission, believing that “this is doable” and “it’s not something that’s a pipe dream.”¹³¹

Every respondent also mentioned elements of the ARC Pathways that emphasize the participation component of mission, with each of them commenting on the holistic nature of faith and mission.¹³² According to the OEs, the systemic matrix format of the ARC Pathways “visually encourages people to understand both the progressive and interrelated nature of the topics.”¹³³ One student noticed how the Regenerative Culture Portfolio framework “forces students to look at things and life with multiple perspectives and allows them to start really thinking about how they can serve and worship God with their lives, instead of separating the two,” though he also suggested tying everything back to the Four Stories in an even more systematic way.¹³⁴

Notably, however, the subtheme of attention to God was not well represented in the data, except as a noted area for growth. In fact, aside from a few references in my coding of the ARC Pathways, only three people mentioned it at all, two of them ARC leaders.¹³⁵ What is more, the most extensive of these comments indicated that the ARC Pathways needed a greater focus on attention as a key component of the missional paradigm shift. Clearly, the silence from most other research participants about this

131. MK, Focus Group Questionnaire response.

132. This emphasis was equal to that on challenging imaginations. These two emphases were surpassed only by a focus on shared mission-centric work, and they were followed closely by emphases on communities of God’s love and purpose and purposeful participation in what God is up to.

133. LD, Outside Expert Evaluation. CM also noted the systematic nature of the tables in CM, Outside Expert Evaluation.

134. AV, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

135. See RK, HL, and IW, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

subtheme confirms that perspective. The shifted missional paradigm that ARC is attempting to foster locates attention-paying as the first step toward mission: “naming where we see what God is doing, which points us as well toward what we need to be doing next to join in that reality.”¹³⁶ Unfortunately, it seems this emphasis is not clearly represented in the ARC Pathways to people besides ARC leaders.

Similarly, an aspect of holistic mission that the Eden Community often underscores, creation care, was notably missing in the ARC Pathways. Some of ARC’s longest-term student participants were able to surmise the importance of creation care to the Eden Community even though it was not brought up in conversation.¹³⁷ It seems a value for this component is at some level being transmitted, then, even if it is not strongly represented in the ARC Pathways. However, the Setting table, which addresses interactions with natural and built environments, is the least developed of the tables. And the most prominent comments in the data regarding creation care were about its absence from the pathways. One of the respondents captured well the connection between creation care and the holistic nature of faith and mission, saying, “I do think it would be worthwhile to add some specific content related to creation care, nature-related spiritual practices, and ecological justice. This is important partly because every human being is

136. RK, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response. RK made this comment in response to my inquiry about the effectiveness of the AI process itself, but the sentiment correlates to other things that RK said about attention-paying in the ARC Pathways.

137. SH, Focus Group Questionnaire response, as well as MS and DM, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

continually interacting with our physical environment, and it is essential that this aspect of our lives also is fully engaged theologically and spiritually.”¹³⁸

Transmitting Missional Paradigm Shift

When examining the degree of ARC’s effectiveness at transmitting this cultural component, the responses are generally affirming, though there is also clearly room for growth. At least according to PT members, ARC is seen as successful and different from the ACU norm when it comes to this “shift from a somewhat narrow religiously focused understanding and practice of mission to a relational understanding of mission (in community with God and with other people of whatever kind, as well as with creation as a whole).”¹³⁹ Every PT member mentioned its uniqueness in this way, as did I.

Furthermore, six out of eight PT members, in addition to myself as the researcher, also commented on how this missional paradigm shift is part of the way in which ARC will enhance the formation of regenerative culture among ACU students.¹⁴⁰ Respondents noted that the ARC Pathways lead to “a new understanding of a way of life” and that they lead to a shift in students’ “foundational understanding of what Christianity essentially is—that it integrates fully into every aspect of life, rather than being a siloed set of practices.”¹⁴¹ Clearly, the insider angle is very well represented when it comes to seeing

138. HL, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response. See also DM and LC, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

139. HL, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

140. See DM, CN, AV, RK, HL, and MS, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

141. Respectively, these comments came from CN and HL, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

and affirming the effectiveness of this missional paradigm shift as part of the ARC Pathways.

The outsider angle is slightly more complicated. All three FG members and one of the OEs mentioned things related to missional paradigm shift in their appreciative reflections on their ARC experiences or their surmised understanding of the Eden Community's subculture, indicating that ARC is at least somewhat effective at transmitting this cultural component.¹⁴² And the second OE could clearly see that the ARC Pathways "redefine the way that we live and the priorities we hold dear."¹⁴³ Furthermore, each of the three FG participants extensively noted elements of missional paradigm shift when reflecting on how students might grow in their understanding and reflection of the Eden Community's subculture when working through the ARC Pathways. However, none of the OEs or FG participants mentioned components of missional paradigm shift when they reflected on ways in which the ARC Pathways might enhance student spiritual formation or be effective at inviting ACU students to experience the Eden Community's subculture.

And while both OEs offered feedback that affirmed the "life-transforming" nature of ARC, they also indicated that transmitting a value for such all-encompassing faith may be a significant challenge.¹⁴⁴ Anecdotal evidence from the FG confirms to some degree the difficulty of shifting this paradigm. Two of the three FG participants, when asked to offer suggested additions to the refined ARC Pathways, explicitly mentioned community

142. See CM, Outside Expert Evaluation and SH, MK, and LR, Focus Group Questionnaire responses, as well as the FG conversation transcript.

143. LD, Outside Expert Evaluation.

144. CM and LD, Outside Expert Evaluations, with the quote coming from CM.

service.¹⁴⁵ Again, ARC certainly does not negate serving meaningfully in one's context. It does, however, see service as a secondary goal, a task discerned attentively as we purposefully participate in communities of God's love and purpose. While the FG members in question may have had this larger framework in mind when they mentioned community service, it is just as likely that their comments stemmed from the entrenchment of the doing-oriented paradigm for mission that is generally operative in their context.

On this last point regarding the challenges of helping ACU students shift their missional paradigm, responses from all the research angles are agreed. There is great potential in the ARC Pathways. Speaking about things related to this theme, one PT member said, "It seems in my experience to take a Bible major curriculum and a special student to get this across to people to a fraction of the degree that the pathways may have the potential to."¹⁴⁶ That is high praise for the ARC Pathways, indeed! However, success at helping students shift their missional paradigm will require time, investment, and creativity, from both students and ARC leaders. Several PT members commented on this, saying that ARC entails "an incremental pathway that enables [students] to embrace and comprehend what God is calling us to" but that the pathways will only be effective for "those involved and who invest into ARC," or, in other words, "for those who really commit to it and give it the time and effort it deserves to really be transformative in their lives."¹⁴⁷ I agreed, noting that "probably only those who stuck with things all the way

145. SH and LR, Focus Group Questionnaire responses.

146. IW, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

147. RK, CN, and AV, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses, respectively.

through would really begin to truly live the missional paradigm shift.”¹⁴⁸ It seems that this missional paradigm shift is, indeed, a hard one to effectively transmit to students.

Summation

According to one ARC leader, the “express purpose” of ARC is to help students “become attentive, effective agents of God’s inbreaking Kingdom wherever they are.”¹⁴⁹ Overall, the feedback from the research participants is encouraging in this regard. It indicates that, at least to those who are rather familiar with ARC and its pathways, the theme of missional paradigm shift is clearly present. Furthermore, the responses suggest that students could grow significantly in regard to this theme when the ARC Pathways are implemented, particularly as their imaginations are challenged, leading them to become more thoughtfully analytical about the fundamental and complex nature of mission as the ARC Pathways frame it.¹⁵⁰ This would result in an increased appreciation for participation in communities of God’s love and purpose, even in ways that lead students to “become community analyzers, redefiners, and creators on campus.”¹⁵¹

That being said, it seems there are areas for further improvement, as well as a need for patience with a growth process that is potentially long and complex. The ARC Pathways obviously need greater stress on attention to God as the first and foremost element of mission. Something so fundamental to ARC’s paradigm must be clearly

148. LC, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

149. RK, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

150. See LR, Focus Group Questionnaire response, as well as DM, RK, CN, and LC, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

151. LR, Focus Group Questionnaire response. See also IW and HL, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses.

articulated and thoroughly inculcated! Also in need of some additional focus is creation care, an emphasis of the Eden Community that is apparently being transmitted through ARC to some degree even though it is not explicit in the pathways. Finally, and not surprisingly, transmitting a rather distinct, all-encompassing paradigm for mission requires a great deal of patient nurturing. Thus, ARC will likely only be effective at conveying a shifted paradigm for mission if it is able to garner students' long-term investment, challenging them to rethink and reorient their perspectives on what mission is all about.

Additional Themes of Note

This project aimed to examine the degree to which already known components of the Eden Community's subculture were present in and transmitted through the ARC Pathways. For that reason, I drew all the themes that I have examined thus far in this chapter from my own studies of the Eden Community's subculture or the PT's selection of topics for its work together. I coded deductively for these elements, with only a few notable alterations to my own understanding of the themes occurring as I evaluated the data.

In addition to these themes, however, I inductively identified a variety of other areas of interest as I worked through the data. While I did not primarily focus on these elements, neither is their presence or prominence surprising to me. Although it is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this project to examine any of these additional themes in depth, I will at least briefly name and describe a few of them. They do, after all, provide potential insights into the subculture of the Eden Community that merit further consideration.

Two of the themes that I discerned are already represented in this chapter, as I incorporated them into my data analysis in obviously linked places. The first was a desire from some students for greater clarity about the Eden Community's beliefs. I integrated this theme into the larger emphasis on unity in diversity, because that is functionally the framework the Eden Community uses to engage this concern. The second was an emphasis on the holistic nature of faith and mission. I discussed this as part of missional paradigm shift, which redefines mission as all-encompassing participation in communities of God's love and purpose. Knowing that both of these topics occurred frequently in the data will allow the ARC leadership team to address them in more purposeful ways in the future.

In addition, the data indicated that the concept of discipleship in community was an area of strength in the ARC Pathways. Given the Eden Community's emphases on the strong *Group* aspect of egalitarian culture, vibrant *families* of Jesus, and *communities* of God's love and purpose, this was to be anticipated. Still, though, it is a notable divergence from a surrounding culture that tends to be much more individualistic in its perspectives on faith and discipleship. Though none of the other deductively derived themes is exactly equivalent to this one, most of them do connect closely to the idea of discipleship in community, so this communal emphasis can also be found throughout the analysis I have already done.

Similarly, countercultural shift was another recurring theme in the data. Every single research participant observed in one way or another that the Eden Community and the ARC Pathways lead students into ways of thinking and living that are "quite foreign,"

“totally different” and “challenging [to] the status quo.”¹⁵² ARC is based on a “fundamentally different vision for what the good life is.”¹⁵³ We must take care to frame countercultural shifts positively and humbly, as opportunities to step into the life-giving power of another story. Furthermore, this kind of countercultural invitation can come with some difficulties, as students “might be resistant/challenged by some of the beliefs/practices” and “may wrestle with it.”¹⁵⁴ The ARC leadership team must discern how best to serve students as they walk through this extensive, momentous process.

Suggested Alterations

In their responses to the questionnaires, research participants also suggested alterations to the ARC Pathways that they thought would be beneficial. I have already discussed many of these, correlating them with the appropriate cultural components as I explored those throughout this chapter. One further suggestion, concerning accessibility, deserves at least a brief mention, however.

As I noted to the research participants early on, the ARC Pathways as laid out in this project are a kind of internal shorthand for the ARC leadership team. Thus, they assume significant levels of background information and contain a high degree of jargon, intended to be fleshed out significantly when put into practice with students. Still, I did note to myself several times throughout the project’s sessions that even I struggled to settle on language that was readily accessible to others as I attempted to articulate certain core concepts. How much more difficult it must be for students, who are not as deeply

152. These quotes come from BY, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response; CM, Outside Expert Evaluation; and LR, Focus Group Questionnaire response, respectively.

153. RK, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

154. CN, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

steeped in the paradigms and language of ARC, to understand and be able to express what ARC is all about! Both OEs and one PT member also noted the importance of comprehensible, inviting language and experiences, with one of them reminding me, “The ideas, goals, language you use are quite foreign to the average student’s linguistic universe. In other words, there is a wide gap between your vision and their lived experience. So, whatever you do, you will need to find creative, concrete ways to translate your vision that is both understandable and inviting.”¹⁵⁵

The PT did make some small alterations to language and frameworks contained in the ARC Pathways, intending to increase their accessibility. And this entire project was for me, in some important if unintended ways, a learning process regarding how to translate the central concepts of ARC to students more intelligibly. However, that experience and the data both confirm my long-held suspicion that there is still significant room for growth toward greater accessibility in ARC’s language and conceptual framing.

AI Process

My final point of inquiry when conducting evaluations for this project was regarding the AI process that the PT walked through to refine the ARC Pathways. I inquired about the effectiveness of the process, also asking team members to note what specifically about the process was life-giving that we should carry forward into the future.

The PT was unanimous in affirming both the effectiveness of the AI process and its life-giving nature overall. Respondents saw the process as highly effective and

155. CM, Outside Expert Evaluation. See also LD, Outside Expert Evaluation, and MS, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

efficient, particularly in its capacity to keep us from getting caught up in critique, to draw out diverse perspectives, and to recognize where God is already at work. As one PT member noted, “Recognizing God's goodness bring hope that God will do it again.”¹⁵⁶ Several people also commented on the compelling power of this kind of attentive gratitude as a framework for the project, with one person drawing together strands mentioned in various responses by saying,

On a mental and physiological level, I generally feel increasingly joyful and connected with myself and others when I start the project with gratitude rather than just what I think is lacking. On a theological level, I learn that it's good practice, generally speaking, to avoid a savior complex by asking, “What's wrong here?” Rather, the greater approach is recognizing where God is at work and praying for opportunities to develop that further with others.¹⁵⁷

Interestingly, nearly every team member's response regarding the AI process also intersected with the elements of the Eden Community's subculture under consideration in this chapter.¹⁵⁸ Aspects of interdependent co-creators and missional paradigm shift—especially as the shared mission-centric work of the team highlighted those—showed up most frequently, followed closely by unity in diversity. Sacrifice was the only cultural component that was not mentioned, though the scope of the project clearly required some sacrifice from its participants. Not surprisingly, it seems that AI, in addition to being seen by the team as highly effective and enjoyable, is a process that resonates strongly with the Eden Community's subculture, making it an excellent fit for our endeavors.

156. BY, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

157. DM, Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire response.

158. Only one person, HL, whose comments focused exclusively on the power of appreciation, did not connect the AI process to any of the cultural components explored in this chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the findings of this project, looking extensively at the degree to which the ARC Pathways reflect and transmit central components of the Eden Community's subculture. As I conclude, I will summarize those findings briefly, grouping themes together according to their overall representation in the ARC Pathways.

Four themes seem to need some further development if the ARC Pathways are to effectively reflect and transmit them. First, reliance on God was perceptible in the AI process itself, but it was not as prominent in the ARC Pathways. It is the area in greatest need of strengthening. Second, sacrifice may also need some reinforcement, though an important element of this is being sure to honor the sacrifice that students are already making in order to participate in ARC. Third, unity in diversity was clearly an emphasis in the ARC Pathways, but not necessarily in ways that differentiate ARC from ACU norms. This may be an area in which the Eden Community, while certainly having something to offer, also has things to learn, especially about inclusive diversity, from those in its context. Fourth, missional paradigm shift was the theme most thoroughly emphasized in the ARC Pathways, in part, at least, because of its expansive nature. Because old paradigms are deeply engrained, however, as well as because the aspect of attention—also connected to reliance on God—needs additional development, this cultural component can be difficult to transmit.

Five themes were generally well represented in and transmitted through the ARC Pathways, particularly through sustained engagement. First, egalitarianism, though not incredibly prominent in the pathways, was readily recognizable to and affirmed by research participants. Second, intergenerationality had a strong, if subtle, presence in the

pathways, which differentiates ARC in positive ways from the norms of its context. Third, the theme of connection and togetherness was consistently noticed as expressed in and transmitted through the ARC Pathways, and it was further strengthened through greater emphasis on play. Fourth, the Eden Community's value for vulnerability with and reliance on each other was noted as different from the ACU norm, with younger people, who seem less prone to take this cultural component for granted, especially noticing and affirming it. Finally, the element of interdependent co-creators seems to saturate the ARC Pathways as well as the AI process. Though there is some minor room for growth, the research participants overall affirmed its presence and effective transmission.

In addition to examining these themes in depth throughout this chapter, I noted one further suggested alteration to the pathways, meant to ensure that their contents are readily accessible to students in the ACU context. Lastly, I summarized the consensus of PT members that the AI process was both effective and life-giving. In my final chapter, I will interpret the significance of these findings and consider areas for further exploration that this project has brought to the forefront.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Eden Community seeks to live as a vibrant family of Jesus, pursuing its communal vocation to equip others for lives permeated by God's love and purpose in diversely contextualized communities. Such communities can serve as counterstories, enriching the church's imagination about how to live in regenerative, reinvigorating ways that reflect God's own creative, redemptive nature. In ARC, the Eden Community aims to shape regenerative Christian culture among students at ACU through an extended process of experiential learning. The community's hope is that, having experienced regenerative Christian culture in this way, these students may go on to reflect and transmit it in diversely contextualized ways throughout their lives. In chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis, I described these impulses in great depth, exploring the context of ARC and the theological foundations that undergird the Eden Community's life and work.

At the outset of this project, I identified an area for growth in the Eden Community's efforts in ARC: refining the pathways we use for shaping regenerative Christian culture among students at ACU so that they more fully reflect and transmit central aspects of the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture. In chapter 3, I discussed the primary theoretical frameworks that shaped this project: AI and the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture (as seen through the lenses of AI and Cultural Theory). Chapter 4 outlined the methodological commitments and procedures I followed when implementing this project. In short, I guided a team of stakeholders in a series of eight

sessions shaped by the principles of AI in order to refine the ARC Pathways. Building off the insights of my own prior research about the ecclesial subculture of the Eden Community, this Pathways Team chose four themes around which it focused its refinements to the ARC Pathways. In chapter 5, I extensively analyzed the findings of the project, examining the degree to which certain elements of the Eden Community's subculture are present in and successfully transmitted through the ARC Pathways.

In this final chapter, I will draw on all that has come before to reflect on the project overall. I will present my interpretations of the project's findings. I will consider the trustworthiness of the project through the lenses of applicability, credibility, and reflexivity. I will discuss the significance and implications of this project for its participants, for ARC, for the Eden Community and the church more broadly, for theology, and even for myself. And I will make note of potential areas for further research and reflection before concluding.

Interpretations

My analysis of the data that this project produced leads to four primary insights that I explored in depth in chapter 5. First, five components of the Eden Community's subculture are strongly represented in and effectively transmitted through the ARC Pathways: egalitarianism, intergenerationality, connection and togetherness, vulnerability with and reliance on each other, and interdependent co-creators. Second, four cultural components need further development to be more satisfactorily reflected and transmitted: reliance on God, sacrifice, unity in diversity, and missional paradigm shift. Third, if the contents of the ARC Pathways are to be readily comprehensible to ACU students, the ARC leadership team will need to take care to translate them with accessible language,

imagery, and experiences. Finally, Pathways Team members, including myself, all found the AI process to be both effective and incredibly life-giving.

Clearly, there are some ways in which the Eden Community can continue to develop the ARC Pathways so that they more fully reflect and transmit the understanding of regenerative Christian culture that is inherent in its own ecclesial subculture. In addition, the community may need to purposefully attend to certain aspects of ACU student subculture that have the potential to enhance both the Eden Community and the ARC Pathways. After all, we in the Eden Community are not excluded from the task of learning from the life-giving power of a story other than our own! Furthermore, my analysis revealed some new ways in which to conceive of the relationships between certain themes in the data. It may be beneficial to further engage my coding structure to see if there are more helpful ways to arrange and articulate these themes, leading ARC one step further toward more accessible frameworks and language.

Areas for potential growth notwithstanding, this project indicated to me that, overall, the ARC Pathways do a good job of leading ACU students into regenerative Christian culture. More than likely, we will not be able to see the full effects of the pathways for years to come, as students continue life changed—or not—by what they have experienced in ARC. The feedback from this project is promising, however. The work of incubating regenerative Christian culture is hard, especially when it challenges prevailing cultural norms. But the Eden Community is doing well with ARC, with the potential for even more success to come. While imperfect, the ARC Pathways are a good representation of central components of the Eden Community's own subculture. And students have been blessed by their ARC experiences, including the Pathways Team

project itself. The ARC Pathways have the potential to positively impact ACU students, influencing their theological frameworks and lives in ways that lead them deeper into vibrant communities of God’s love and purpose.

Trustworthiness

In the field of qualitative research to which this project belongs, the trustworthiness of a project is established by attending to its generalizability, validity, and reliability.¹ As Sensing says, “If those to whom it was presented judge the research useful, relevant, and significant, then the research is deemed valid.”² I will demonstrate the trustworthiness of my project by examining matters of applicability, credibility, and reflexivity.

Applicability

Qualitative research is inherently context-dependent, and thus processes and findings developed in one setting will not necessarily translate exactly to any other setting. That being the case, I have delimited my research in this project to the Eden Community’s work among ACU students through ARC. Even within that delimited context, time will eventually shift structures and cultural elements that are central to the project’s findings, meaning that the ARC leadership team will need to occasionally reconsider the applicability of the data.³ Nevertheless, the findings of this project are clearly relevant to the current iteration of ARC, indicating that this project meets the goal of applicability in that context.

1. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 214.

2. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 215.

3. This reality was even evidenced over the course of this project’s extended timeline, with the development and launch of Eden Fellows entailing potential changes for ARC.

Even with this delimitation in place, there are ways in which the project and its findings might also prove useful in other contexts. Sensing defines generalizability as “the degree to which findings derived from one context or under one set of conditions may be assumed to apply in other settings or under other conditions.”⁴ Any such applications to contexts other than ARC will have to be uniquely adapted to those situations, of course. But I can easily see ways in which both the project’s structure and its results might be appropriately and helpfully translated into other contexts. Most obviously, the insights derived from this study could be applied to the Eden Community’s training work in other settings and among other audiences. In addition, however, there may be implications for the wider church. I will discuss these possibilities in more depth shortly when I address significance and implications.

Credibility

Qualitative research does not produce the kind of readily measurable and verifiable data that is the norm for quantitative research. Standards for credibility in qualitative research are instead related to the researcher’s own expertise and the ways in which the researcher structured and engaged the project according to methodological commitments that invite confidence in its findings.⁵ If a project’s findings are reasonable, and it seems likely that another researcher, presented with the same data, would reach similar conclusions, then a study is deemed credible.

4. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 215.

5. See Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 220–24, for a discussion of some methods used to increase and demonstrate credibility in qualitative research.

In this project, I have primarily employed triangulation to demonstrate credibility. As I described in chapter 4, I engaged in multi-methods analysis triangulation, utilizing several instruments to collect data from four different audiences, which I then examined using aspects of both content analysis and thematic analysis. By collecting insights from research, insider, and two outsider angles, I was able to compare perspectives, discerning patterns, silences, and slippages among them. When challenging perspectives or rival explanations appeared in the data, I did not hesitate to articulate those findings, another indicator of this study's credibility.

Throughout the entire project, I also engaged frequently in the process of member checking. Informally, I regularly offered participants the opportunity to affirm or correct my own understanding of their responses. Pathways Team members also had a strong influence on how the project's themes developed. And before publishing this thesis, I offered all project participants an opportunity to review the data and my interpretations of it. All this, especially when paired with my own long-term familiarity with the Eden Community, ARC, and the ARC Pathways, lends credibility to this project.

Reflexivity

Due to its focus on human systems, social structures, and lived experience, as well as its use of a human researcher as the primary data collector and analyzer, qualitative research has an inherent and unavoidable element of subjectivity. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to practice reflexivity to examine their impact on the research. Swinton and Mowat define reflexivity as “the process of critical self-reflection

carried out by the researcher throughout the research process that enables her to monitor and respond to her contribution to the proceedings.”⁶

It almost goes without saying that as the primary researcher in this project, I had an incredible amount of influence on the project at every level: choosing a focus, doing preliminary background research, designing the project, setting agendas, facilitating sessions, distilling findings and proposals from sessions, analyzing and interpreting data, and choosing how to articulate frameworks and findings in this thesis. My influence even extends further back since I am one of three influential creators of the initial ARC Pathways and the primary leader in the ARC context. My fingerprints are all over this project, in ways that might strengthen or weaken it, or both. While this is not abnormal in the field of participatory action research, it is important to admit and attend to well. After all, while I am deeply informed by these experiences, my insights are also conditioned and limited by them. Looking back, I can see several ways in which I might have influenced the project. Even though I do not believe these elements in any way undermined the project’s trustworthiness, I want to be up front about naming them.

First, my relationships may have influenced the project, particularly through the presence of the Hawthorne Effect. Research participants frequently expressed their care for me and their desire to see this project succeed. It is possible that their relationships with me influenced their input and attitudes. Since I have already discussed this dynamic and the ways I sought to address it, I will not say anything more here other than that I believe I was successful in responding well and that no significant issues related to the Hawthorne Effect seem to have emerged in this project.

6. Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 59.

Second, my own personality, life, and emotions may have influenced the group's dynamics at times. Again, in participatory action research, this is to be expected and is not inherently negative. I can perceive three ways, however, in which I may have impacted the Pathways Team's experience adversely. One was regarding my tendency to try accomplishing too much in too little time. The team certainly would have benefited from some additional time at several stages of the process. Some early sessions were content-heavy, not allowing as much opportunity for interaction as would have been ideal. And later sessions, when it was time to shape proposals, would have flowed better if we had not been attempting to accomplish so much in the limited timeframe I had already laid out. Another way in which I may have affected the team's experience was through the occasional presence of my young children in the background of our online interactions. This was at some level unavoidable given the parameters of my own life during the COVID-19 pandemic. And the children's periodic appearances, while somewhat distracting in the moment, were not necessarily detrimental to the project's aims. In fact, they served as a good reminder of the dynamics of intergenerationality, a central component of the Eden Community's subculture and a topic the team focused on extensively, regularly affirming a desire for more interactions that involved children. Finally, I noticed at times that my own physical and emotional weariness caused me to start some sessions with low levels of energy and, toward the end of Session 7, even led me to frame a question non-appreciatively, noticeably changing the mood of the Pathways Team. While it is important to reflect on and learn from these instances, I do not believe that they significantly or negatively impacted the overall experience of the Pathways Team or the trustworthiness of this project.

Third, I can also see reflexively that I used my complex knowledge of the Eden Community and the ARC Pathways as I developed and implemented the data coding system that was central to this project. While this is fitting for a principal investigator's role, it is also a notable way in which I influenced the data analysis and therefore also the conclusions of this project. The pathways are a kind of internal shorthand for the ARC leadership team, so I see background content and connections in them that are not obvious to others. Additionally, though, because this project developed over a protracted timeframe, coding data at its conclusion required melding language and frameworks that had shifted over time, in an attempt to achieve integration and cohesion. I believe I engaged the coding task responsibly and that my takeaways are trustworthy, but it is nonetheless plausible that someone else coming from another perspective would choose to code the data differently and thus draw different conclusions.

Finally, my own theological convictions played a significant role in shaping this project. I did not come to ministerial leadership in a long-term committed intentional Christian community without strongly held theological viewpoints. And, as is often the case, there is a story of both joy and pain behind those perspectives and commitments. One of the potential weaknesses of undertaking research into ecclesial subcultures from a position of such deep conviction and investment is that my personal biases might unduly skew the project and its results. To mitigate against this possibility, I chose at every step in the process to submit my plans and findings to the scrutiny of others who do not hold the same biases so that they might confirm, challenge, or refine my own viewpoints. As described above, triangulation and member checking were significant parts of this effort. Receiving both affirmation and pushback from my professors and advisors was another

important element. I also took field notes throughout the project as a way of examining my own influence on and reactions to the project. And I generally tried to hold everything about this project lightly, making meaningful space for contrasting viewpoints, the generative work of the Pathways Team, data with challenging implications, and the Holy's Spirit's guidance in the moment. That being the case, I trust that the process and results of this project, while certainly demonstrating my own involvement, influence, and theological convictions, also honored the contributions of the various participants and were used by the Spirit to shape an experience and product that were meaningful to ARC, the project participants, and me.

Significance and Implications

It is fitting, at the completion of this project and the culmination of this thesis, to explore the overall significance and implications of the project. In the pages that follow, I will reflect on the project's impact, both realized and potential, examining what it might mean for those in ARC's context, for the Eden Community and the broader church, for theology, and for me personally.

Contextual Significance

Implications for Participants

The group that this project most immediately impacted was its participants, particularly the Pathways Team members, who sacrificially dedicated an incredible amount of time, attention, and energy to complete it. The project had two noticeable influences on those who contributed.

First, sharing in such a lengthy, participatory, and relationally engaged process generated new relationships and strengthened existing relationships in a wide variety of

ways for the Pathways Team members. It reconnected alumni who had moved away. It linked students who had participated in ARC at differing levels and at different times. It drew in a spiritual formation practitioner at ACU who had never been directly involved in ARC. It nurtured students' relationships with members of the Eden Community. It deepened my familiarity with all the Pathways Team members and the things they have to offer. Feedback that team members offered indicated that participating in the project was a joyful experience that helped them feel more connected to each other.⁷ Especially coming on the heels of a lengthy period of disconnect due to the pandemic, that was good news, indeed!

Second, this project contributed in significant ways to the effective acculturation of its participants to the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture. This was noticeable to a slight degree among the focus group members, who, having seen the comprehensive set of refined ARC Pathways, were able to more clearly grasp how and why elements of ARC related and contributed toward the formation of regenerative culture. The impact on Pathways Team members was much more significant, however, due to their concerted investment in learning about the Eden Community's subculture, practicing elements of it, and shaping the ways in which it might be effectively transmitted to ACU students. The team's work was a co-learning process that drew its participants into the interdependent co-creation of the ARC Pathways, leading novices into increasing levels of expertise and influence. It was, in short, a form of LPP. And it was effective. Pathways Team

7. Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire responses. Certainly, the Hawthorne Effect could have come into play, influencing feedback that the Pathways Team members offered. I do hope and believe that my efforts to create safe space for honesty were effective, though. In addition, my own observations about participants' joyful attitudes and relational connectedness confirm their direct feedback about the experience.

participants who were not already members of the Eden Community came away from the project with a drastically increased level of familiarity and resonance with the Eden Community's subculture.⁸

Implications for ARC

The most pertinent implications of this project are for the future of the ARC program. That was, after all, the project's purpose. The revised set of ARC Pathways will serve ARC well in the future, contributing to the more effective formation of regenerative culture among ACU students. There are, of course, areas of weakness and limitation that the project revealed in the ARC Pathways, and I will discuss those shortly when I address the sustainability of this project. First, though, I want to note two additional insights regarding the future of ARC that this project highlighted.

The project strongly emphasized, in both pragmatic and theological ways, the importance of student involvement in the development and implementation of ARC and its pathways. The ARC Pathways are better because of the contributions that the Pathways Team made. Those who participated in the process of refining the pathways are more deeply attuned to and proficient in the Eden Community's subculture. What is more, because of their increased familiarity and sense of ownership, students seem more eagerly invested in what ARC has to offer. And, according to the principles of LPP, by participating in ARC with ever-increasing levels of autonomy and responsibility, these students will be equipped to someday step into the role of experts themselves. The impetus for emphasizing interdependent co-creation between ARC leadership and

8. I did not specifically collect data that prove this claim. I am basing it off my own experienced observations as well as general feedback from Pathways Team members.

students is more than merely practical, however. Creative contextualization requires that we “translate the gospel so that the surrounding culture can understand it,” and so that it may be “lived out in culturally appropriate idioms.”⁹ There is no group better suited to continually adapt the ARC Pathways to an ACU student context than these students themselves. They are far greater experts in their subculture than the older, more removed members of the ARC leadership team. We would do well to remember that, partnering with them in the kind of ways that both LPP and the practice of creative contextualization encourage.

Second, the project has potential implications for the future structure of ARC, particularly in relation to Eden Fellows. Since this project is delimited to ARC, I have not extensively discussed Eden Fellows, mentioning it only briefly as I described the larger context in which ARC exists or in relevant footnotes. Although I did not directly inquire into the relationship between ARC and Eden Fellows in this project, several takeaways point in the direction of a possible change in the relationship between them. The data from this project underscores, among other things: the challenge of gaining sustained attention from students amidst a plethora of possibilities vying for their participation, the extensive care that must be taken over time to shift missional paradigms, and the difficulty in reaching younger students with such complex, countercultural messages. It very well may be that with undergraduate students ARC needs to focus more exclusively on Levels 1 and 2 of the pathways, preparing them over the course of several years for a differently structured, if similarly intentioned, experience of Levels 3 and 4 in Eden

9. Respectively, these quotes are from Guder, *Missional Church*, 114, and Franke, *Missional Theology*, 161.

Fellows and beyond. I cannot single-handedly make this decision, but it is one that the ARC leadership team and a group of students need to prayerfully discern.¹⁰

Sustainability

The purpose of this project—to use the findings of my prior research and the wisdom of community to refine the ARC Pathways—has been fulfilled. The suggestions of the Pathways Team have already been incorporated into the refined ARC Pathways, increasing their capacity to reflect and transmit the Eden Community’s understanding of regenerative Christian culture to ACU students. In that sense, then, the project does not need any further follow-up.

Successfully implementing the refined pathways, as well as continuing to improve them in context, however, will require attention. The areas of weakness or limitation that I identified in chapter 5—cultural components that need strengthening, and adjustments toward more accessible language—are ripe for further development. It would be ideal for the ARC leadership team to take on this task soon, while we still have a sense of clarity and urgency about the project and its results. ARC has at some points in the past employed an advisory team. It may be time to reinstate this group. Regardless of whether or not we ever convene an advisory team or another group like the Pathways Team, however, I do believe that at least a few people who served in this project might be

10. I want to reflexively confess that the challenges ARC encountered with the COVID-19 pandemic were discouraging for me, particularly because it seemed that as the pandemic eased, we had to essentially start over with even less energy and almost no momentum. That being the case, it has been hard at times for me to engage ARC, as well as this project and thesis, with a hope-filled outlook about ARC’s future. However, feedback from more objective research participants, particularly the outside experts, indicates that my own intuition—that ARC may be most effective when simplified and paired with Eden Fellows—is not solely a product of my own emotions.

willing to consult again in a limited fashion, providing further input to the ARC leadership team as it explores possibilities for moving forward.

Finally, if the overall intent of this project and ARC are to be realized sustainably over time, we will need to revisit the ARC Pathways on a regular basis, continually refining them so that they reflect the changing subcultures of the Eden Community and ACU students. For—as I stated in my basic assumptions, and as I argued more thoroughly in chapter 2—culture is continually shifting, and God’s people are to be always involved in “the constant discovery of the gospel’s ‘infinite translatability’ and missionary intention.”¹¹ The process for periodically reexamining the ARC Pathways may be similar to that outlined in this project, or it may look completely different. What matters is that it happens as part of the Eden Community’s ongoing work of creative contextualization.

Ecclesial Significance

The significance of this project is not restricted to the project participants or the ARC program. There are important implications for the Eden Community as well. These fall into two primary categories, aligning with the community’s twofold mission “to be a vibrant family of Jesus ourselves and to equip others to cultivate these regenerative ecosystems of God’s love in their own lives.”

Regarding the first facet—being a vibrant family of Jesus ourselves—this project provided an important opportunity to actively reflect on and articulate the Eden Community’s ecclesial subculture. The research and reflection that happened before, during, and after the project highlighted important components of the community’s

11. Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 2.

subculture, its “whole social practice of meaningful action, and more specifically ... the meaning dimension of such action—the beliefs, values, and orienting symbols that suffuse a whole way of life.”¹² The process has been enriching, helping me, especially, understand more thoroughly who the community is and what is critically important to us. And its findings could continue to prove generative if we use them as a focal point for further reflection and action.

This project can also serve the Eden Community well in respect to the second facet of its mission: to equip others for regenerative culture. The experience has helped the training team refine its overall training framework. While no other scenario coincides exactly with the ARC context, much about the pathways is nonetheless translatable for other audiences and scenarios. We can readily employ the refined pathways in other circumstances as long as we adapt them to any unique aspects of those contexts or participants that might differ from ARC. Possibilities for further creative contextualization of our own pathways abound!

In addition to successfully refining the ARC Pathways, which the Eden Community employs selectively in various other training contexts too, the completion of this project provides an important opportunity for reflective learning. ARC is the most fully developed instantiation of the community’s training work. As the Eden Community moves into future opportunities to undertake similar training work, then, it can benefit greatly from understanding what this project has revealed. When collective attention allows, I intend to discuss the project and its major findings with the whole community, discerning together what the Spirit might be teaching us.

12. Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 70.

Furthermore, the data produced by this project might be applicable to the larger church. Among other things, this study provides an indicator of things that students in the ARC and ACU contexts (and possibly also in other settings) value. It very well may be that this project provides helpful insights—about young people, missional formation, discipleship, intentional Christian community, or various other topics that the study engaged—that the church in its varied contexts may benefit from. Those insights may be especially helpful for ministries that focus on the missional formation of young people, but they could also pertain more expansively. While the specifics of each scenario will shape what applies and how, as Sensing reminds, us, “there are degrees of similarity between situations. Practical theologians have been navigating the waters of recontextualization and the hermeneutical issues of interpretation for centuries.”¹³ I pray that believers from a variety of contexts will be able to glean, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, something from this project that equips them for greater vibrancy as families of Jesus. After all, as I discussed in chapter 2, one of the great joys of ecclesial diversity is that it demonstrates, through comparison and contrast, the life-giving power of another story.

Even when the specific findings of the project may not apply, leaders in other contexts could readily employ the same basic methodology to accomplish similar purposes. The specifics would certainly vary, even widely, from what I have presented here, but the framework and processes I have implemented in this project—the 5D model of AI, listening prayer, appreciative conversation, and proposal shaping—could prove helpful tools for a leader hoping to guide their own organization to refine its “pathways”

13. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 215.

so that those more fully reflect the organization's background or aspirational subculture. Moreover, as this project indicated, such an endeavor has potentially great implications not only for the pathways themselves, but also for the participants. Thus, the process might even be employed as a form of onboarding or acculturation that, in addition to providing space for the further refinement of a group's pathways based on the input of project participants, helps more firmly envelop those participants in an already established subculture. This project, then, serves as a test case for how to go about such a feat. I can imagine a broad spectrum of churches and organizations implementing analogous processes with great success as they seek to improve their capacity to convey their own cultural commitments.

Theological Significance

Several elements central to this project have incredible theological import. First, the project highlighted the importance of appreciation. Working from a stance of gratitude is powerful, making "us available to see more of God, to know ourselves more fully."¹⁴ Practicing appreciation, especially in narrative form, drastically heightens our capacity to engage well, imagine creatively, and venture forth courageously. These are desirable qualities for all people, but particularly for God's people, who also have innumerable reasons to practice thanksgiving. Centering ourselves in appreciation and permeating our pursuits with gratitude should be a fundamental commitment for disciples of Jesus.

Second, elements of the project demonstrated the compelling potential of LPP for Christian spiritual formation and the inculcation of ecclesial subcultures. Incredible

14. Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*, 61.

growth and transformation can happen as people learn through practice, over time, from those who are further ahead on the journey of life and faith. Real, enduring change can happen as people step, with guidance and in increasingly complex ways, into mastery of Christian discipleship and leadership. As I explored in chapter 1, if we hope to form disciples who are wholly dedicated to life in communities of God's love and purpose, we must give a more central role in the church to extensive belonging- and behavior-based conversion and formation practices.

Third, the project emphasized the value of bringing together diverse individuals as a dynamic, interdependent team. The Pathways Team especially showcased the blessings that arise when pairing together people of diverse ages, genders, ethnicities, personalities, perspectives, and life experiences. The process was more creative, constructive, and enjoyable because of the diversity present and the ways that it was purposefully honored. Certainly, working together as a diverse, interdependent team may at times be difficult or inefficient. Sometimes, though, that is exactly what we need, for we are made better by the process. Slowing down, attending well to those who are present, confronting challenges that arise, ensuring that we have not placed anyone or anything other than God at the center—all this refines us and reorients us toward what is truly important.

This last point proves true on a larger scale, too. The church worldwide is also designed as body, an organism that exists in differentiated integration—unity in diversity, under the headship of Christ (1 Cor 12:4–27; Col 1:18). Each part of that body has something of great value to offer, and its contributions are important for the whole. We *must* honor the diversity of the church, celebrating that God's people take shape in a wide assortment of communal expressions that reflect our multifaceted God and the

kaleidoscope of creation. It is only through this diversity, after all, that the church can “become responsive within and adaptive to every context in which it finds itself.”¹⁵ We must confidently own our unique locatedness, practicing creative contextualization under the guidance of the Holy Spirit—all while appreciating when others do the very same thing! If we can do so courageously yet humbly, learning from each other as we go, this world will find itself *teeming* with counterstories and demonstration plots that exhibit the gospel in various ways that are all truly good news. That sounds like regenerative culture!

Personal Significance

I care intensely about the church and its future. For the reasons I have just explored, then, this project has proven to be extremely meaningful and fulfilling for me. In addition, however, it also carries personal significance in the form of insights I have gleaned from the experience regarding my own personality, ministry, and convictions.

First, I learned that I am incredibly well suited to the kind of ministry and leadership that I undertook in this project, as well as in ARC generally. I flourish when engaging in situations that encourage creativity, that combine big picture vision-casting with an emphasis on detailed implementation, and that elicit cooperative input and involvement from diversely gifted people. I am an excellent facilitator of conversations and relationships. I did well at navigating the twin responsibilities of attending to people in my pastoral role while also engaging them professionally as part of this project. And though it is not my passion, I am administratively skilled, capable of organizing people, processes, and information in effective ways. I have a great deal to contribute,

15. Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 62.

particularly when those strengths are combined with my passions for spiritual formation, community, and the creatively contextualized future of the church.¹⁶

Second, this project highlighted a tendency I have previously noticed in myself: attempting to achieve too much for the amount of time, space, and energy available. That propensity will come as no surprise to anyone who knows me or who has read this far into this lengthy thesis. On many occasions—as I conceived of the project’s goals, as I established my theological foundations, as I prepared questions for evaluations, as I set meeting agendas, as I tried to articulate central concepts—I found myself seeking to accomplish too much. Even the detailed, comprehensive nature of the ARC Pathways reflects this proclivity. And regenerative culture is, after all, all-encompassing. Yet more is not always better. Unelaborate and “good enough” have never been my strong suit, but there is a kind of beauty and even efficacy in them. On the smaller scale of the kinds of interactions this project required, as well as on the more encompassing scale of my life, I would do well to seek greater simplicity.

Finally, this project and all the research associated with it shaped me in important ways. The studies I conducted prior to the project increased my capacity to understand and articulate the Eden Community’s subculture. Similarly, the reading and writing that I did when formulating my theological foundations gave me greater clarity about and confidence in my own convictions while also anchoring me in increased health and humility. I found much needed encouragement in the degree to which research

16. I do not wish to sound conceited in describing my ministerial capacity in these ways. The reality is simply that—both because in my younger years I was formed by an ecclesial expression that did not encourage women toward ministry and because I tend to be remarkably self-critical—confidently owning and confessing my God-given strengths in ministry is an important discipline for me. This truly was an area of my personal growth through this project.

participants expressed appreciation for the project processes, ARC, and the Eden Community. In addition to serving ARC and the Eden Community, then, undertaking this project was also a constructive step toward greater expertise, leadership, and theological mastery for me. In its own way, then, it was an experience of LPP for me personally.

Frames for Further Research and Reflection

Even at its conclusion, this project introduces a great number of possibilities for further research and reflection. There are additional ways of examining already collected data, frameworks for further exploration, and questions that remain unanswered. While it is far beyond the scope of this project for me to engage these opportunities now, I will mention them here as areas of prospective future attention.

I collected copious amounts of data for this project, but I only used a portion of it in my analysis, and I primarily examined that delimited set through the lens of deductively established codes. As I determined my methodology for this project, I ruled out data analysis options that were untenable for the strictly defined purposes of this project. Still, though, so many possibilities remain for how to engage the existing data. Recordings and transcripts from each of the Pathways Team's eight sessions might yield fascinating insights if mined intensively for elements of the Eden Community's subculture that arose in those conversations or processes. By analyzing each questionnaire response in detail, we might see if and how individuals' thematic foci differed, even positing potential explanations of how their experiences with ARC and the Eden Community contributed to their perspectives. It would also be interesting to explore whether there is any correlation between how frequently cultural components were mentioned in the data and how central they are to the Eden Community's subculture.

With only moderate effort, I could also generate additional, complementary data sets that might provide further insights. I could ask research participants to directly code the refined ARC Pathways using the list of final codes I employed in this project, discovering what they see when using that lens. Or I could ask Eden Community members to engage in the same task, learning what that reveals about the community's self-understanding. I could conduct an additional focus group of ACU students who have no prior exposure to ARC or the Eden Community, discovering what the ARC Pathways communicate to students encountering them for the first time, as well as what kind of impact that has on them.

Furthermore, I think it would be profitable to reexamine the ARC Pathways from the perspective of the theological foundations I laid out in this thesis: the value of ecclesial diversity, the practice of creative contextualization, and the life-giving power of another story. These frameworks strongly informed the entire project, but I did not overtly use them as frames for data analysis. Whether on my own, with the ARC leadership team, or with another group of invested stakeholders, at some point I would like to scrutinize and further strengthen the ARC Pathways with these theological foundations explicitly in mind.

Similarly, the coding scheme that I used in this project evolved some over time. As it did, it revealed new insights and raised new questions regarding how elements of the Eden Community's subculture might interrelate. It would be good for the ARC leadership team to contemplate these developments and questions, seeing what we might discern about how to reframe the community's subculture with increased accuracy or clarity.

Despite all the insights that this project afforded, I am nonetheless left at its conclusion with some of the same, unremitting questions that prompted my research. With all that it has to offer, how can ARC capture students' attention to a degree sufficient for them to experience the life-giving power of the alternative story the Eden Community instantiates? I have seen that it is possible, but I have also seen that it is perpetually challenging. Similarly, how can the counterstory that the Eden Community embodies best be shared with the broader church in ways that inspire hope and increased vitality? Are college students and the church ready to step deeper into life as vibrant families of Jesus, communities of God's love and purpose? Are they ready to heighten their ability to practice creative contextualization in healthy, regenerative ways? I profoundly hope so. That is, after all, God's call to the church.

Conclusion

The Pathways Team did an outstanding job of refining the ARC Pathways so that they more fully reflect and transmit regenerative Christian culture in the ACU context. There are still areas for improvement and questions to consider further, but in the ongoing work of cultural incubation, this will always be the case. The model of AI that I employed was well suited to this project's aims. The Pathways Team, in addition to realizing its objectives, came away from the highly appreciative, imaginative process better informed, more relationally connected, highly encouraged, and themselves more fully acculturated to the Eden Community.

This project and thesis underscore the vital role that ecclesial diversity plays in the work of creative contextualization that God has invited the church into. So long as a commitment to follow Christ saturates them, the diverse expressions of church that we

embody can serve as life-giving counterstories to other Christians as well as to the broader world. If we engage this multiplicity humbly and appreciatively, the church will grow in health and in its capacity to make the gospel more accessible to all people. My prayer is that in some small way this project and thesis have helped illuminate the pathways the church may tread together as we journey toward the future that the Eden Community envisions—all followers of Jesus fully equipped to live regeneratively in vibrant, creatively contextualized communities of God's love and purpose. With the Spirit's guidance, may it be so!

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885



December 8, 2020

Laura Callarman
Abilene Christian University

Dear Laura,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Refining the Eden Community's Pathways for Shaping Regenerative Christian Culture in the Apprenticeship for Regenerative Culture

(IRB# 20-206) is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects as:

- Non-research, and
- Non-human research

Based on:

* Activity does not involve a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge [45 CFR 46.102(d)]

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

APPENDIX B

Pathways Team Consent Form

20-206

Date of Approval: 12/8/2020

You have the opportunity to participate in a project. This form provides important information about that project, including the risks and benefits to you, the potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions that you may have regarding the procedures, your involvement, and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people.

In this project, you will have the chance to meet with a team for ten sessions, roughly two hours in length apiece. During the course of these meetings you will be asked to give imaginative, constructive feedback on how the Eden Community can most effectively shape regenerative Christian culture among students at Abilene Christian University (ACU) through the Apprenticeship for Regenerative Culture (ARC). The Principal Investigator will analyze your feedback in an attempt to yield deeper insight and consider best practices. By consenting to participate, you agree that the Principal Investigator can anonymize your comments in related conversation and your responses to a questionnaire and include them in the data set and future reports on it.

There are potential benefits to participating in this project. Directly, this project will likely provide you with a deeper understanding of your perspectives on and place within the Eden Community, ARC, and spiritual formation efforts at ACU. Indirectly of potential benefit to you, the project aids efforts enhance ARC's effectiveness in its attempts at student spiritual formation.

There are also minimal risks involved in participation in this project. One primary risk is mental or emotional discomfort during the project's conversations, particularly given the presence of a recording device. A second primary risk is a breach of confidentiality. The Principal Investigator has taken steps to minimize these risks, as digital data will be stored in secure computer files and all reports on this project will use anonymized data.

Your participation in the project is entirely voluntary. You may decline to participate or withdraw your consent at any time and for any reason without any penalty. Any report of this project that is made public will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified. If you have questions about this project or want a copy or summary of its results, you can contact the Principal Investigator at any time:

Laura Callarman, MDiv
DMin Student
Department of Bible, Missions, and Ministry
Leb09b@acu.edu
479-466-0215

If you have are unable to contact the Principal Investigator or wish to speak to someone other than the Principal Investigator, you may contact Andrew Menzies, at afm19a@acu.edu. If you have concerns about the proposed activities, believe you may have been harmed because of these activities, or have general questions about your rights as a project participant, you may also contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research, Dr. Megan Roth, at (325) 674-2885 or megan.roth@acu.edu. Her office is in room 328 of the Hardin Administration Building on ACU's campus.

CONSENT FORM — Refining the Eden Community’s Pathways for Shaping Regenerative Culture (Pathways Team)

Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this project. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You should receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

Knowing that my responses will be kept confidential, I consent to participate in this project. (Mark the box if you agree)

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

APPENDIX C

Principal Investigator's Field Note Taking and Audiovisual Recording Protocol

1. Log in to the videoconferencing platform and set up 10 minutes prior to each session.
 - a. Begin recording field notes immediately. Record notes throughout, including during breaks.
 - b. Begin audiovisual recordings as soon as the session begins.
2. Field notes will be recorded in a three-column format using Google Docs.
 - a. Select the correct Google Doc for that session's field notes.
 - b. Record initial observations in the left column. Be as descriptive, concrete, and detailed as possible. Avoid vagueness, generalization, interpretation, or judgment.
 - c. Add further observations (in the middle column) and analysis and reflections (in the right column) immediately following the session.
3. Because audiovisual recordings of the sessions are available, notes need not be verbatim. Write down key words and phrases rather than trying to document everything. When possible, make note of the time key comments are made so they are readily found in recordings.
4. Using initials, record which participants attend each session.
 - a. In session one, be sure to note demographic observations such as age, gender, and ethnicity.
5. Note interpersonal dynamics, including:
 - a. Whom people choose to talk with.
 - b. Interactions that take on a particularly positive or negative tone.
 - c. Any distinct changes in interpersonal dynamics observable during the session.
6. Note the participation and non-participation of individuals, including:
 - a. Who speaks or acts, and what is the main idea they are communicating?
 - i. Does anyone seem especially engaged with their comments or actions?
 - ii. Who speaks often or receives a great deal of attention from others?
 - b. What can you observe about participants' non-verbal communication: tone, apparent mood or attitude, body language, etc.?
 - c. Who remains silent or does not engage? What non-verbal cues do they exhibit?
7. Note comments and attitudes regarding key words, concepts, or ideas that connect with the theme of the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture and how the community works from that foundation to shape regenerative culture through ARC. Language that participants may use includes, for example:

- a. Vibrant family of Jesus: joyful, interdependent, intergenerational, regenerative, ecosystem.
 - b. Creative contextualization, incarnation, new, creative, experiment, Spirit-led.
 - i. Discipleship, apprenticeship, legitimate peripheral participation.
 - c. Eden Community's ecclesial subculture:
 - i. Cultural Theory:
 - 1. Social games, Grid, Group, quadrant.
 - 2. Egalitarian, individualist, authoritarian, hierarchist.
 - 3. Authority, property and resources, labor and ministry, conflict, beliefs and worldview, worship.
 - ii. Communal connection and togetherness: shared life, proximity, rhythms, fellowship, joy, play, meals.
 - iii. Healthy unity in diversity: personalities, giftedness, vocation, ecosystem, peace, conflict, decisions, respect, love.
 - iv. Radical vulnerability with and reliance on each other: family, intergenerational, self-disclosure, emotions, listening, care, compassion, love, challenge, encourage, support, safety.
 - v. Radical reliance on God: direction, provision, Holy Spirit, discernment, decisions, governance, opportunities, faith, risk, simplicity, conflict, experiment.
 - vi. Shared mission-centric work: vision, cooperative, goals, permaculture/sustainability, training/equipping, influence, hospitality, openness, partnering.
 - vii. Sacrifice: relinquishment, submission, humility, togetherness, harmony, investment of time/attention/resources, personal agendas, flexibility, discernment, control, rules, shame.
8. What do you notice does *not* happen?
9. Record any other observations that seem noteworthy.
10. In the final section, reflect on your own behavior in the session, how it impacted the session, and any thoughts you have about what is occurring.

Notes Template:

Date & Time:		Location:	Event:
Attendees:			
Initial Observations	Later Observations	Analysis/Reflections	
PI Reflections			

APPENDIX D

Pathways Team Project Summary

Apprenticeship for Regenerative Culture (ARC) Pathways Team

- **Context:** The Eden Community is an intentional Christian community that, among other things, attends to the shaping of regenerative culture among students at Abilene Christian University through the Apprenticeship for Regenerative Culture, helping students experience and imagine the importance, power, and beauty of “vibrant families of Jesus” for their lives and work in the world.
- **Problem:** While the Eden Community currently has a set of training plans (“ARC Pathways”) in place for ARC that have proven effective to a certain extent, we have not yet solicited much corporate feedback/construction on them, including from the students for whom we crafted them. Furthermore, the culture of the Eden Community was tacitly assumed when these pathways were fashioned. Laura has recently engaged in research that has helped make the community’s culture more explicit, but the ARC Pathways have not yet been evaluated in light those findings. Thus, the fit of these pathways for our audience of ACU students is unknown, as are the ways they might best be improved upon in order to more fully reflect and transmit the Eden Community’s culture.
- **Purpose:** To use the findings of Laura’s prior research and the wisdom of community to refine the current set of pathways that the Eden Community uses to shape regenerative Christian culture among students at ACU through ARC.
- **Foundations and Frameworks:**
 - Apprenticeship: A form of learning-in-practice in which a novice, by coming alongside and being trained by a master (whether formally or informally), gradually comes to take on the knowledge, skills, and habitus that characterize a master of a certain trade or way of life.
 - Regenerative culture: A cultural expression that does more than just sustain, but instead goes so far as to rejuvenate, reintroducing life and vitality where their absence has caused adverse effects. A culture that reinvigorates the people and places who participate in and surround it, restoring or perhaps even building for the first time a compelling vibrancy to life. Regenerative Christian cultures will purposefully nurture their reflection of the creative, redemptive nature of God, aiming to faithfully exhibit the nature and characteristics of God in their own ways of life.
 - Diversity and creative contextualization: The nature and purposes of God affirm diversity and call Christians to incarnational living, a task that often

asks and yields surprising new things, even new and varied expressions of Christian community.

- Intentional Christian communities (ICCs) equipping the church for renewal: In living and telling another story, a variation on what has been the normative story of the church, ICCs and other alternative and experimental church forms can play an important part in the renewal of the church, inspiring and strengthening it to realize its goal of creative contextualization.
 - Appreciative Inquiry: A collaborative, narrative-based, and participatory approach to cultural change that focuses on and innovatively builds upon what is positive and life-giving in a system.
 - 5 Stages: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver
 - Eden Community's culture: Vibrant family of Jesus, joyful, interdependent, intergenerational, egalitarian, communal connection and togetherness, healthy unity in diversity, radical vulnerability with and reliance on each other, radical reliance on God, shared mission-centric work, sacrifice.
- **Participant Responsibilities:**
 - Sign and submit consent form if you intend to participate. Opt out if you desire, at any time, for any reason, without any explanation, and with no penalty.
 - Communicate clearly about your needs, particularly regarding scheduling.
 - Participate for the full extent of all sessions, barring extenuating circumstances.
 - Engage with an open heart and open mind, offering your honest perspectives and showing hospitality to others as they also do so.
 - **Tentative Schedule:**
 - Saturday, 5/22, 1–3pm—Session 1 (Define the Project)
 - Monday, 6/07, 4:30–6:30pm—Session 2 (Discover Eden Community), dinner afterward
 - Saturday, 6/26, 3–5pm—Session 3 (Discover ARC at ACU)
 - Saturday, 7/10, 3–5pm—Session 4 (Discover Themes)
 - Saturday, 7/17, 3–6pm—Session 5 (Dream/Design Themes 1 & 2)
 - Saturday, 8/07, 3–6pm—Session 6 (Dream/Design Themes 3 & 4)
 - Monday, 8/16, 4:30–6:30pm—Session 7 (Design and Deliver)
 - Saturday, 8/28, 3–5pm—Session 8 (Conclusion); dinner afterward

APPENDIX E

Initial ARC Pathways¹

Finding Regenerative Culture: A Journey Together into Four Living Stories

This table gives an overview of a four-level process that ARC participants can anticipate when journeying deeper into regenerative culture. The journey through Story, System, and Setting at these four levels is a dynamic, overlapping, iterative process. Details are open to revision.

Level	Theme	Duration	Purpose
One	Introduction	8/16 weeks: 1-2 weeks per story	Introduction and overview; welcome into deeper communal formation
Two	Forming Community	8 months: 2 months per story	Deepening understanding and proto-community formation; building and verifying readiness for Level Three
Three	Launching Community	12 months: 3 months per story	Forming a theologically and experientially grounded ecclesiology; equipping to launch into regenerative community after ARC; screening for fit in Level Four
Four	Nurturing Community	Open	Equipping to lead and nurture community

¹ The Eden Community's training team initially conceived of the ARC pathways outlined here in March 2020, and we have been developing them ever since. They build on the initial set of pathways we formed in August 2018. That first set was formatted more as a listing of ideal outcomes or competencies for various program components or participants at the progressive stages of the ARC experience. This set of pathways, which is what the Pathways Team used at the outset of this project, builds on that work by incorporating greater specificity of content as well as by adapting that content into a more structured delivery format through the Regenerative Culture Portfolio, which includes sections on Story, System, and Setting. The portfolio experience is interactive and co-creative, with students developing tangible artifacts that express and deepen what they are learning.

Four Stories

- **The Story:** God's story is, from the beginning all the way through to its culmination, intended to be one of great joy, connection, and meaning. Yet humanity was wounded. In response to this woundedness, God created a family and completely entered the world, both in the life of Jesus and also through the power of the Spirit of God present in humanity. God truly is "God with us," in the world, right here and right now. And through the Spirit of God present in the family of Jesus, God invites us to join in what God is doing in the world, right here and right now.
- **My Story:** Each person has an important part to play in the story and work of God. Thus we ask: How is God present in my life, in my personality, in my gifts, in my wounds and in my passions? How am I designed to flourish as a person made in God's image? What is God up to in my life?
- **Our Story:** As God's people, we are all members of something bigger than ourselves: a family. Thus we ask: How is God present in our life together as the family of Jesus, in the beautiful combinations and interactions of our gifts, wounds, and passions? What is God up to among us?
- **This Story:** Each family of Jesus finds itself embedded within a particular and unique set of circumstances that inform how God might use them to embody and witness to good news. Thus we ask: How is God present in this place and time in history? What is the good news in this context, and how can it be made more readily accessible? How do we together engage what God is up to in our context using our gifts?

Story²

<u>Level</u>	<u>The Story</u>	<u>My Story</u>	<u>Our Story</u>	<u>This Story</u>
One — Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/> “regenerative culture” <input type="checkbox"/> Four Stories narratives <input type="checkbox"/> attention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Revelation, Attention, Participation ○ presence and formation before mission ○ listening prayer ○ discernment <input type="checkbox"/> joy/gratitude <input type="checkbox"/> God=love (communitarian nature of Trinity)	<input type="checkbox"/> SASHET <input type="checkbox"/> checking in <input type="checkbox"/> Design Discovery “come alive” questions	<input type="checkbox"/> checking in <input type="checkbox"/> soul friendship/church of two <input type="checkbox"/> vulnerability, mutual self-disclosure <input type="checkbox"/> nuclear family as a mistake (Brooks)	<input type="checkbox"/> who is my neighbor? <input type="checkbox"/> receiving hospitality <input type="checkbox"/> visit to Eden Center, PARC, and EC celebrations <input type="checkbox"/> opportunities to join God in context (based on “come alive” possibilities)

² In many cases it makes most sense to work through the Story, Setting, and System tables horizontally, progressing through all of one level before moving on to the next. This is our general pattern in ARC. In certain situations, however, it might be more effective to primarily work vertically, moving through all of one column with great focus on the specific area it attends to.

<u>Level</u>	<u>The Story</u>	<u>My Story</u>	<u>Our Story</u>	<u>This Story</u>
Two — Forming Community	<input type="checkbox"/> styles of spirituality <input type="checkbox"/> what is mission? (vulnerable, humble...) <input type="checkbox"/> what is community? (good, bad, biblical...) <input type="checkbox"/> mission = community!	<input type="checkbox"/> basic personality awareness (MBTI, Enneagram, CliftonStrengths, DiSC) <input type="checkbox"/> individual graces <input type="checkbox"/> personal passions <input type="checkbox"/> church background/story <input type="checkbox"/> racial/ethnic/cultural identity; ways to grow in empathy and perspective <input type="checkbox"/> personal spiritual styles <input type="checkbox"/> personal spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> personal rule of life draft	<input type="checkbox"/> Peck's four stages of community <input type="checkbox"/> communal spiritual rhythms <input type="checkbox"/> Statement of Grace, Vision/Mission/Aim as concepts <input type="checkbox"/> importance of intergenerationality <input type="checkbox"/> familiar with ARC rule of life <input type="checkbox"/> can articulate ARC VMA <input type="checkbox"/> able to explain/teach basic ARC rhythms of attention to others	<input type="checkbox"/> contextual spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> attention to natural and built environmental settings <input type="checkbox"/> cultivating an attitude of hospitality <input type="checkbox"/> awareness of other intentional communities <input type="checkbox"/> regular visits to Eden Center, ARC houses and PARCs <input type="checkbox"/> articulate dream for living in ARC context

<u>Level</u>	<u>The Story</u>	<u>My Story</u>	<u>Our Story</u>	<u>This Story</u>
<p>Three — Launching Community (Application Required)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> scripture reading, theology <input type="checkbox"/> naming and processing challenges and benefits of living in community <input type="checkbox"/> kingdom stewardship of attention, gifts, and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> deeper personality reflection and processing <input type="checkbox"/> shadow side, woundedness, brokenness <input type="checkbox"/> privilege, power, oppression (personal experiences and blind spots) <input type="checkbox"/> personal spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> recognizing and living within limits <input type="checkbox"/> individual graces revision <input type="checkbox"/> personal rule of life revision (including self-care) <input type="checkbox"/> Design Discovery, personal vocation and VMA <input type="checkbox"/> communal discernment regarding next steps after ARC <input type="checkbox"/> articulate personal launch plans for after ARC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> familiarity with housemates' personalities/gifts/styles <input type="checkbox"/> how our identities (racial/ethnic/cultural/personality) converge and clash <input type="checkbox"/> conflict transformation (theology, concepts, tools) <input type="checkbox"/> boundaries in community <input type="checkbox"/> communal spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> communal rule of life draft (basic revision or fleshing out of ARC rule of life) <input type="checkbox"/> communal discernment <input type="checkbox"/> confession and reconciliation <input type="checkbox"/> explore communal launch possibilities for after ARC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> contextual spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> discerning mission in this context <input type="checkbox"/> privilege, power, oppression (areas of hurt and need in this context) <input type="checkbox"/> ethnography, asset-based community development <input type="checkbox"/> offering hospitality <input type="checkbox"/> boundaries in context <input type="checkbox"/> best practices for safety and transparency <input type="checkbox"/> CAPSTONE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> capstone celebration <input type="checkbox"/> launch into new regenerative community? <input type="checkbox"/> launch into Eden Fellows?

<u>Level</u>	<u>The Story</u>	<u>My Story</u>	<u>Our Story</u>	<u>This Story</u>
Four — Nurturing Community (Application Required)	<input type="checkbox"/> naming and processing challenges and benefits of living in community <input type="checkbox"/> become familiar with alternatives to “standard American dream” (housing, finances, food, health, resource sharing, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Appreciative Inquiry <input type="checkbox"/> kingdom economics	<input type="checkbox"/> leadership identity/narrative <input type="checkbox"/> articulate needs for personal growth <input type="checkbox"/> training in coaching <input type="checkbox"/> individual graces revision <input type="checkbox"/> articulate personal launch plans for after ARC	<input type="checkbox"/> articulate needs for ARC house communal growth <input type="checkbox"/> explore communal launch possibilities for after ARC	<input type="checkbox"/> describe opportunities, needs, and challenges of this context <input type="checkbox"/> identify context needs for gospel <input type="checkbox"/> identify and connect with helping organizations and partners in context <input type="checkbox"/> CAPSTONE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Missional ○ Immersion (longer-term experience) ○ capstone celebration ○ launch into new regenerative community? <input type="checkbox"/> launch into Eden Fellows?

Setting

<u>Level</u>	<u>Natural Environment</u>	<u>Built Environment</u>
One — Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/> observation of realities regarding natural environment and how it's typically engaged in this context <input type="checkbox"/> beginning analysis of American context and “standard American dream” (food, health, environmental stewardship, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> observation of realities regarding built environment and how it's typically engaged in this context <input type="checkbox"/> beginning analysis of American context and “standard American dream” (housing, finances, resource sharing, etc.)
Three — Launching Community	<input type="checkbox"/> deeper analysis of contextual norms <input type="checkbox"/> experiencing and reflecting on alternatives <input type="checkbox"/> naming preferred alternate ways forward	<input type="checkbox"/> deeper analysis of contextual norms <input type="checkbox"/> experiencing and reflecting on alternatives <input type="checkbox"/> naming preferred alternate ways forward
Four — Nurturing Community	<input type="checkbox"/> deeper familiarity with range of alternatives <input type="checkbox"/> (plan for) lived instantiation of alternate ways forward <input type="checkbox"/> learning to articulate alternatives to others	<input type="checkbox"/> deeper familiarity with range of alternatives <input type="checkbox"/> (plan for) lived instantiation of alternate ways forward <input type="checkbox"/> learning to articulate alternatives to others

System

<u>Level</u>	<u>Covenant</u>	<u>Communication</u>	<u>Governance</u>	<u>Rhythms</u>
One — Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/> concept of communal covenant <input type="checkbox"/> God's formation of a people <input type="checkbox"/> covenant as initiating event, as process, and as content	<input type="checkbox"/> basics of nonviolent communication <input type="checkbox"/> Speaker-Listener method	<input type="checkbox"/> unacknowledged use of basic Dynamic Governance processes (circles, rounds, picture forming, proposal shaping, consent)	<input type="checkbox"/> chapel <input type="checkbox"/> COFFEE church <input type="checkbox"/> basic ARC rhythms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> gratitude <input type="checkbox"/> checking in <input type="checkbox"/> church of two <input type="checkbox"/> listening prayer

<u>Level</u>	<u>Covenant</u>	<u>Communication</u>	<u>Governance</u>	<u>Rhythms</u>
Two — Forming Community	<input type="checkbox"/> rule of life as a personal and communal tool <input type="checkbox"/> Statement of Grace as concept/tool <input type="checkbox"/> VMA as concept/tool	<input type="checkbox"/> OFFER <input type="checkbox"/> interaction styles and warning signs	<input type="checkbox"/> deconstructing familiar governance structures <input type="checkbox"/> building familiarity with basic Dynamic Governance processes	<input type="checkbox"/> continue basic ARC rhythms <input type="checkbox"/> regular personal spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> Luke 10:2b prayer <input type="checkbox"/> AGAPE <input type="checkbox"/> cohort gatherings <input type="checkbox"/> day retreat <input type="checkbox"/> receive mentorship in community <input type="checkbox"/> Missional Imagination Trip
Three — Launching Community	<input type="checkbox"/> celebration, worship, and play as part of covenant <input type="checkbox"/> Statement of Grace/VMA draft as house covenant	<input type="checkbox"/> love languages, apology languages <input type="checkbox"/> common barriers to communication <input type="checkbox"/> conflict transformation (theology, concepts, additional tools)	<input type="checkbox"/> extended practical experience with Divine Governance processes; implementation of elections as helpful <input type="checkbox"/> systems thinking	<input type="checkbox"/> continue basic ARC rhythms <input type="checkbox"/> regular personal and communal spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> house gatherings <input type="checkbox"/> bands <input type="checkbox"/> fall and spring retreats <input type="checkbox"/> regular coaching <input type="checkbox"/> receive mentorship in context

<u>Level</u>	<u>Covenant</u>	<u>Communication</u>	<u>Governance</u>	<u>Rhythms</u>
Four — Nurturing Community	<input type="checkbox"/> equipping to guide revisions of Statement of Grace/VMA as necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> equipping to lead in conflict transformation	<input type="checkbox"/> training and experience leading Divine Governance	<input type="checkbox"/> continue basic ARC rhythms <input type="checkbox"/> regular personal and communal spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> house gatherings <input type="checkbox"/> leading bands <input type="checkbox"/> leading chapel gatherings <input type="checkbox"/> hosting ARC visitors <input type="checkbox"/> fall and spring retreats <input type="checkbox"/> EC or Training Circle gatherings as makes sense <input type="checkbox"/> experience spiritual direction <input type="checkbox"/> mentorship in nurturing community, accountability toward personal health <input type="checkbox"/> Missional Immersion

APPENDIX F

Session 7 Theme Documents and Proposals

Theme 1—Missional Paradigm Shift:

mission as participation in communities of God's love and purpose

- reflections on the theme:
 - Eden Community as a tangible expression of what's possible, gives people something to reach out
 - communion with God and people is mission in its most basic form; “mission is being awake and alive to the people around you”
 - like phrasing of “performing community,” that it's a set of actions
- ways to foster it:
 - ARC has always clearly been doing this, even if there wasn't always language for a student to understand or explain it; get them past the questioning
 - translating head knowledge into heart knowledge
 - internalizing, giving examples; how it leads to prosperity and godliness; seeing/valuing this leads to desire to be part of it more
 - framing of our activities with a more missional tone—ARC is not just preparation for eventual mission but *is* mission (checking in, sharing, service to neighbor); aspects of Eden Fellows (neighborhood, job placement) will make that all the more clear
 - trying to break circles that naturally form and make connections outside of that; does not always have to be deep
 - regularly call people back to this as the fundamental aim of ARC that frames everything we're doing
 - creating safe space for people to be who they are and think what they think without being condemned
 - new images and descriptions to help people understand; also invite people into a deep dive (throw them in the deep end) that will be overwhelming but transformative
 - people need windows into this way of living/being that connect with their reality; words are helpful with that (challenging people with their notion about what it means to be on mission with God right at the beginning)
 - what does level ½ look like? how are we inviting people into this ARC experience? invitation that is an *experience* that offers a teaser; a lot of students don't realize that community is something they need until they experience it
 - affirms the initial impulse to lean into deep cohorts rather than primarily event-based things like chapel

- reconsidering if chapel is the entry point into the ARC journey, or if it's the only entry point; dinners and other things as ways to help people enter into ARC by "performing community"
- concrete suggestions:
 - walking students through the reflective process of why they believe what they do
 - community service can be a form of chapel credit at ACU; more emphasis on opportunities for service and intentional connections with EC outside of ARC chapel
 - encourage ways to experience missional service in their own immediate contexts; creating windows of opportunity for that to naturally happen
 - centering some things on the Eden land, reminder that mission of God is the life of God that extends to all creation, even the non-human
 - something that robustly bridges introductory ARC experience with deeper cohort/residential experience; bridging experiences that people can readily access (in ARC chapel, meals at Eden Center, cup of coffee, guided experiences of community with low commitment, hour-long field trips to PARCS, dinners at people's houses, etc.)
 - state it up front—part of the advertising/literature, mentioned in chapel, elevator speech; more explicit from the beginning (conversations, chapel, etc.); make the invitation clear; bridge the familiar to the unfamiliar
 - brief mission statement that people can understand and share; brochure to put in people's hands
 - give good examples early on of other communities doing this in their own way (vision vignettes); some of the videos and things Laura did as a freshman Bible professor
 - in later stages, ask people what parts of their lives have been unexamined in regard to participation in communities of God's love and purpose
 - drawing from the description of communion in the Gospels to build language for what we're up to; imagery of the table; Jesus is at the table (The Story), Jesus is inviting me to the table (My Story), who are the people next to me at this table that I'm brushing elbows with (Our Story), where is our table at (This Story)
 - different EC members sharing (in person or virtually) about their experiences with different spiritual disciplines so they can hear about another person's way of learning to grow into that spiritual practice (including and especially if something like checking in doesn't come naturally to a student)
 - videos from current participants about their ARC experience; shared in big chapel as a way to express the experience/invitation, putting a face they know with the experience
 - inviting people deeply into personal lives; often experience structured/institutional things, don't often experience unstructured everyday life that's clearly not a show; relationship building

- final proposal:
 - state this missional paradigm shift in Level 1 (and beyond)—major component of ARC is missional paradigm shift, experiencing new ideas about what being on mission with God means
 - mission is not just going out and doing things for God; communion with God and people is mission in its most basic form
 - Greatest Commands—love God, love neighbor, love yourself
 - ask students to reflect on what they think mission is (2–3 sentences)—“When I think of mission, what comes to mind?”
 - ask students to reflect on what “being awake to God” means to them (2–3 sentences)
 - opportunities to practice
 - regularly challenge students to reflect about how a certain activity or environment within ARC causes them to be awake to God and the world around them—“is this mission?”

Theme 2—Inclusive Diversity:

helping ARC be more hospitable to and honoring of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and input

- reflections on the theme:
 - how are we defining diversity? can’t make assumptions about people but rather have to take time to get to know them
 - ARC’s existence is an expression of a value for diversity because it expresses a belief that young students have something to give to the older, family-based community
 - everyone has an identity and perspective that is worth listening to because they’re made in the image of God; the young don’t have to earn their place, and the old aren’t forgotten; from the youngest to the oldest, there’s presence and worth
 - but similarity of personalities between ARC participants (because of the identity of who ARC is) can be intimidating to someone on the outside
 - trying to understand how we can live in loving relationship with each other and with God; caring for one another despite their differences
 - in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity
 - seek out the essentials in a non-combative way in order to be charitable; have to know in order to love; provides contextual base for understanding why we’re meeting together to grow as a community
 - idea of covenant as an agreement upon the essentials
 - connects to M. Scott Peck’s stages of community
 - connecting this theme to the previous one about missional paradigm shift; Paul emphasized diversity not just because it was a good thing to do but largely because it was about demonstrating the capacity for what the life/love of God can accomplish

- Jesus spent a lot of time around meals and eating with people; a lot of times when inclusive diversity happens well, it's when food is present; a space that breaks down barriers
- prominence of play; good to emphasize in general, but also particularly important to emphasize joyfulness and play when dealing with a topic that can be so divisive
- in order for community to work, we have to find a space/way for people to hear another person's reality through *their* lens, not my own lens; we don't readily have the skills to be attentive to people who are fundamentally different from us; develop rhythms of life that create those safe spaces and an expectation that we're going to attend to each other even when it gets really hard; part of integrity in inviting people into community is telling people that it's going to be the hardest thing they've ever attempted
- ways to foster it:
 - when it comes to surface level identity markers (gender, sexual orientation, race, etc.), these carry such heavy historical weight that they need to be attended to; need to prioritize a conversation about purpose and the restorative things that God wants to do around these things
 - transparency, honesty in a way that doesn't breed condemnation or anxiety, but that aligns with where peace leads them; not being honest leads to an undermining of integrity; if a person holds back, it leaves everyone else not understanding them fully and knowing how to engage them well
 - building a foundation of strong relationship that allows for loving people even through difficult conversations, letting the Holy Spirit work in the midst of those different things
 - purposeful about having hard, intense conversations; talking about it, absorbing it, and going on about life
 - focusing on the unity in diversity that is the life of God; God is a diverse community
 - Barton Stone: only one kind of unity that works; Bible unity doesn't, religious practices unity doesn't; unity through the presence of the Holy Spirit does
 - have to get really good at the practice of attending to the present Holy Spirit (as well as to each other); takes practice!
 - invite [name removed] to help guide us in this process, particularly when it comes to any material we include in the Four Stories portfolio process
 - pairing serious and playful, purposeful and unstructured; thinking outside the box
 - releasing any defensiveness or guardedness we might have; grace toward ourselves on the journey
- concrete suggestions:
 - parties with a purpose; events where diverse groups can come together to highlight different cultural perspectives and identities; not just focusing on the differences but rather purposefully also focusing on the similarities;

don't let the differences inhibit you from trying to have a relationship with this other person

- presentation and time for reflection in chapel about how diversity is and is not present within EC, and how that shapes the EC's purposes; how does EC strive to attain diversity within the ARC community
- invite ARC students to reflect on how they understand the term "diversity" and how they feel about engaging with it
- expound on context for spiritual disciplines and how they may or may not connect well/healthily with you given your background
- purposefully spotlight the idea of "in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity"
- in ARC chapel, play out a conversation that displays the diversity between two people (theologically, ethnically, etc.); though it can produce anxiety, this is why it's important
- make space early-ish in the cohort process for people to share their life/faith stories, beginning with EC leadership members as an example of and invitation into vulnerability; not first thing because it's perhaps too intimidating, but early enough that it can serve as a foundation for deeper experience of community
- especially for later levels of ARC, be very upfront about the commitment to work through the challenges/conflicts
- inviting people to lead a gathering based on what is important to them (spiritually, culturally, etc.); a way of inviting people to participate in what is central to them
- more recreational events that can help encourage close relationship outside of sitting down serious conversations times
- adventures that get you more into people's lives in everyday situations, allowing you to see their humanity more
- drawn to [name removed]'s thoughts about food and pairing that with [name removed]'s earlier thoughts about the communion table; a banquet that pairs cuisine with elements of people sharing about themselves; regular intentional celebration of that kind of thing
- doing stuff together; not just conversation-based
- final proposal:
 - redefining diversity; reframing it as an opportunity for learning
 - calling attention to and celebrating its presence among us
 - challenging students to step outside their comfort zones and the ACU bubble to interact with people who are different from them
 - purposeful connection of this theme to missional paradigm

Theme 3—Intergenerationality:

intergenerationality—strengthening imagination for and experience of relationships across generations

- reflections on the theme:

- even people's religious experiences often divide groups out for efficiency; leaves impression that that messiness is for a different part of life; leads to disintegration of the whole; This Story includes all the players in my life
- intergenerationality is a specific kind of diversity (but one that many Americans are blind to)
- students often want to be separated from their family and redefine themselves; good to remind them that family is not something to run away from but to run towards
- ARC affirms dreams and goal (the center of things for a lot of students) but also expands perspective to the bigger picture that includes vulnerability and intergenerational connection
- the grace that goes with teaching and learning across generations
- family is healing (my own woundedness); family is challenging
- mentoring and communal discernment create space for engagement across generations in ways that display the difference of experience/perspective as well as in ways that display the sameness of experience/perspective and allow for deeper connection
- EC rhythms are equalizing across generations (a 4yo can easily check in)
- ways to foster it:
 - SASHET breaks down generational barriers
 - not just developing personal awareness of who I am, but also ways to grow in awareness of who others are (empathy, hospitality); teaching a person how to love others well, especially in terms of how they're different
 - navigating conflict as a family unit in Christ (based off of our diverse backgrounds/perspectives)
 - micro-communities of ARC students embedded in neighborhoods, interacting with intergenerational context mentors (as well as with others in the neighborhood intergenerationally)
 - finding a way for college students to see/experience life outside college more; college students have a hard time motivating themselves to get off campus; bring EC family units to ARC chapel occasionally (including kids if possible)
 - connecting with hospitality rhythms; encouraging the practice of adults and children both naming the grace they see in the other across generations
 - how powerful it can be just to do things together and play across generations; creating more opportunities for this on campus; expand our imagination for activities we can do together
 - more overlap of daily life; working together at a coffee shop; deepening open-door policy at Callarman home that people join in on
 - exposure to other intergenerational communities that do that well
- concrete suggestions:
 - lean more into integration of ARC students into EC fellowship gatherings and events
 - incorporate project for student to coordinate a gathering with EC

- bringing Callarman and Kaczmarek kids together with ARC community for a quick meal on weekends; expand these gatherings to include more EC people?
- bringing EC members to campus more often
 - game nights hosted on campus occasionally, etc.
 - have older folks (EC members or not) join in on ARC chapels when possible (less official/structured kinds of relationships, just being together as community)
 - have Danetta bring Callarman kids to chapel and/or lunch on campus afterward
 - meals on campus
- greater structure to EC members serving as mentors to ARC students; spiritual grandparents; opportunities throughout semester for regular meeting for relationship, growth, and mentoring; maybe alternating this each semester
- service projects; students partner intergenerationally for service opportunities; learning to serve together with others; helps to grasp concept of intergenerationality by experiencing it; also observing it in other contexts that provide a reference point of how intergenerationality is done well
- a “dating profile” for each student and EC member to facilitate mentoring connections that particularly make sense because of similarities (or differences); cross-cohort mentoring (Laura mentoring students in the Shelburnes’ cohort, etc.)
- encourage ARC students to do more mentoring of younger ARC students; equip them with good training, tools, and framework to make sure it’s healthy, successful, and effective
- reframing of early conversations about intergenerationality with a more explicitly positive initial framework
- continued presence of Callarman kids on Missional Imagination Trip (have questioned it in the past)
- regular (weekly, monthly?) intergenerational family blessing (“one thing I see about you that reminds me of God . . .) maybe in connection with a meal?
- after the identification of "who is my neighbor," students are given the support, tools, and accountability to do something once a week/month (depending on ARC constraints) for the positive benefit of their neighbor; have students identify how the action that they’re taking is a positive benefit for their neighbor, run it by a mentor of theirs in their cohort for feasibility, etc., and then do the thing! then report back to said mentor about how the experience was/was not successful, what they learned from their attempt, etc.
 - (the idea mainly being that we encourage students to attempt to use their gifts in God-honoring ways, with a safety net in place via ARC and Eden, while directly engaging the communities that they

feel most called to, whether that be independently or within a group setting)

- final proposal:
 - entry level
 - find ways to practice SASHET across generations—breaks down generational barriers for everyone
 - include students in Eden Community family lives—provide safe place for students by bringing EC families to campus
 - invite students off campus gatherings at Eden or with families in homes
 - intermediate level
 - invitation into one-on-one meeting with mentors—coffee, at home, walks, etc.; building relationships naturally, not in a forced way
 - informal chances to be with children, older people
 - navigating constructive conflict—opportunity to reflect, especially about different experiences of the challenges of intergenerationality
 - advanced level
 - micro-communities of ARC students embedded in neighborhoods, interacting with intergenerational context mentors (as well as with others in the neighborhood intergenerationally)

Theme 4—Interdependent Co-Creators:

interdependent co-creators—ARC/EC as two-way, symbiotic relationship; encouraging student leadership

- reflections on the theme:
 - learning by doing, ideally in increasingly competent ways; ARC as something the EC is not doing for/to/at/in front of students, but rather as a process of co-discovery and co-creation *with* students who have a great deal to contribute
 - drawing people’s gifts out; affirming and identifying gifts and strengths in others; helping each other grow in ways they’re gifted and learn how to use those things to edify that community
 - need for autonomy/freedom, as well as responsibility, and commitment to engaging conflict constructively so that it leads to growth and transformation instead of rupture of relationship
 - “come alive” questions really connect to this idea
 - Our Story rhythms of checking in, soul friendship, etc.—listening together; feels refreshing to sit in silence and share feelings and insights from the Spirit; we can hear from God together; big part of co-creating is learning the importance of these practices and learning how to do them well; asking questions and being vulnerable makes opportunity for others to engage
 - co-creating process may look different at each level and in each column of the Four Stories Portfolio, but the further we go into it, the deeper it needs to be for creating healthy communities

- already doing this well in smaller ways (setup of groups in circles, constant invitation to share feelings/perspectives)
- ways to foster it:
 - lots of ways that students are invited to participate in events/activities; greater invitation for students to try their hand at leading chapel gatherings and cohort meetings
 - discernment for Americans is often highly individual; leaning more into communal discernment for people
 - noticing and co-discovering things in one another's lives that are resonating with what God is up to; built into the regular rhythms of relationship building
 - being around people who have a genuine interest in others and care to get to know them; really refreshing to see the sincerity, and it's contagious
 - helping people become aware of and learn to embrace their gifts (and to see/do that in others); inviting people to step into practical needs (and making them aware of what they are)
 - the cohort rhythm of having a facilitator but allowing the Spirit to guide means at some level that co-creation is central
 - later stages of ARC (off-campus missional engagement) intended as *very* co-creative experiences based on the gifts and desires of students for missional engagement
 - Four Stories portfolio and contextual living experiences are two things we're already planning on that will be highly interdependent/co-creative
 - more intentionally and clearly help students begin to have the conversations around the purposes for ARC and for their envisioned shared life together off campus: "Jesus is Lord, and we together will follow his voice as we discern the leading of his Spirit together." helping students do the one thing (listen to Jesus's guidance) and have clarity that this is what they're invited into and agreeing to
 - inviting students into "an experiment in following Jesus in community together"
 - leave room in the co-creating for the Spirit to lead the group
 - have a mentor helping each group of students ask the questions that can help lead them to healthy community (My Story and Our Story, especially); greater clarity and communication about what co-creating looks like at each level
 - co-discovery and co-creation within the context of spiritual disciplines; affirm/grow in spiritual giftedness through shared spiritual disciplines/practices
- concrete suggestions:
 - more hands-on approach to decisions about students living together; help in initial process of deciding who'd live together
 - adding phrasing of "co-discovery, co-creation, and co-sustaining" into ARC description; ARC as "participatory journey"; indicates movement beyond just head knowledge into implementation of head and heart knowledge

- chapel and cohort meetings purposefully spaces that students are asked to (co)lead, sharing what they've learned and stepping into more active leadership with newer students; if things move well from there, there's a lot of potential from growth and intergenerational mentorship
- students identifying needs they see and want to lead in guiding others into
- ask students to contribute resources to Four Stories Portfolio, maybe taking it box by box
- do gifts assessments early on, even if they're not terribly accurate or change over time; allows us to invite students into leadership roles that make sense for them; refer back to this info regularly as a way to involve each person innovatively in co-creative activities
- more opportunities for students to name gifts in others and to have their gifts named and called into practice
- lean into metaphor of body/parts as we help students understand their gifting and their connection to the whole
- purposefully invite students to step into needs/gaps
- ARC Advisory Team as one way the Pathways Team members in particular could be part of co-creating ARC; ARC Advisory Team as main shapers/contributors of 4SP content?
- challenge students, as they are beginning to think about team formation, to pray 10:2b for others who are committed to following Jesus as Lord as they discern the leading of his Spirit together
- invite students to be prayerfully involved in the development and execution of rhythms like retreat and cohort gatherings, based on each student's individual giftings
- final proposal:
 - purposeful framing of ARC with phrasing of co-creation, co-discovery (in flyers, in descriptions)
 - regular use of question about how students are helping co-create (the ARC experience with ARC leadership, as well as co-creating life/ARC with God!)
 - reframing Christian life/mission as co-creation with God
 - gift assessments
 - do gift assessment with students at the beginning of each level of ARC; helps see how their gifts have changed and helps facilitate use of those for ARC
 - follow this up with some one-on-one conversation with a mentor (ideally with similar gifting) about how they're investing/developing their gifts
 - toward end of each level of ARC, spend time in gift naming/affirmation; is a form of Spirit-led discernment
 - have students pair up with EC people to help lead conversations about Four Stories content that they're passionate about
 - continue ARC Advisory Team
 - invite Pathways Team members into it
 - have quarterly meetings

- incorporate ARC students at later levels, particularly those who are planning to stay in Abilene, along with Eden Community members; discuss ways to help ARC/EC serve each other well

APPENDIX G

Refined ARC Pathways¹

Finding Regenerative Culture: A Journey Together into Four Living Stories

This table gives an overview of a four-level process that ARC participants can anticipate when journeying deeper into regenerative culture. The journey through Story, System, and Setting at these four levels is a dynamic, overlapping, iterative process. Details are open to revision.

Level	Theme	Duration	Purpose
One	Introduction	8/16 weeks: 1-2 weeks per story	Introduction and overview; welcome into deeper communal formation
Two	Forming Community	8 months: 2 months per story	Deepening understanding and proto-community formation; building and verifying readiness for Level Three
Three	Launching Community	12 months: 3 months per story	Forming a theologically and experientially grounded ecclesiology; equipping to launch into regenerative community after ARC; screening for fit in Level Four
Four	Nurturing Community	Open	Equipping to lead and nurture community

¹ Changes made to the ARC Pathways by the Pathways Team are indicated with strikethrough and bolding. Strikethrough indicates things that were removed. Bolding indicates things that were added or adjusted. (Some bolding already existed in the headings; this formatting remained.) Relocated items are depicted in both strikethrough and bolding, indicating their original and final positions, respectively.

Four Stories

- **The Story:** God’s story is, from the beginning all the way through to its culmination, intended to be one of great joy, connection, and meaning. Yet humanity was wounded. In response to this woundedness, God created a family and completely entered the world, both in the life of Jesus and also through the power of the Spirit of God present in humanity. God truly is “God with us,” in the world, right here and right now. And through the Spirit of God present in the family of Jesus, God invites us to join in what God is doing in the world, right here and right now.
- **My Story:** Each person has an important part to play in the story and work of God. Thus we ask: How is God present in my life, in my personality, in my gifts, in my wounds and in my passions? How am I designed to flourish as a person made in God’s image? What is God up to in my life?
- **Our Story:** As God’s people, we are all members of something bigger than ourselves: a family. Thus we ask: How is God present in our life together as the family of Jesus, in the beautiful combinations and interactions of our gifts, wounds, and passions? What is God up to among us?
- **This Story:** Each family of Jesus finds itself embedded within a particular and unique set of circumstances that inform how God might use them to embody and witness to good news. Thus we ask: How is God present in this place and time in history? What is the good news in this context, and how can it be made more readily accessible? How do we together engage what God is up to in our context using our gifts?

Story

<u>Level</u>	<u>The Story</u>	<u>My Story</u>	<u>Our Story</u>	<u>This Story</u>
One — Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/> what does “Apprenticeship in Regenerative Culture” mean, and what is it about/like (co-creation, discovery, etc.)? <input type="checkbox"/> Four Stories narratives <input type="checkbox"/> missional paradigm shift — what is mission? mission as communion with God and God’s people (Greatest Commands, vulnerable, humble, to all creation, co-creation with God, etc.); asking regularly “is this mission?” <input type="checkbox"/> attention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Revelation, Attention, Participation ○ presence and formation before mission ○ listening prayer ○ discernment <input type="checkbox"/> joy/gratitude <input type="checkbox"/> God=love (communitarian nature of Trinity)	<input type="checkbox"/> SASHET <input type="checkbox"/> checking in <input type="checkbox"/> gifts assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Design Discovery “come alive” questions	<input type="checkbox"/> checking in <input type="checkbox"/> soul friendship/church of two <input type="checkbox"/> vulnerability, mutual self-disclosure <input type="checkbox"/> nuclear family-as-a mistake (Brooks) importance of intergenerationality <input type="checkbox"/> gifts affirmations	<input type="checkbox"/> who is my neighbor? <input type="checkbox"/> how is God inviting me to serve in my current context? <input type="checkbox"/> Luke 10:2b prayer <input type="checkbox"/> receiving hospitality <input type="checkbox"/> visit to Eden Center, PARC, and EC celebrations <input type="checkbox"/> opportunities to join God in context (based on “come alive” possibilities)

<u>Level</u>	<u>The Story</u>	<u>My Story</u>	<u>Our Story</u>	<u>This Story</u>
Two — Forming Community	<input type="checkbox"/> styles of spirituality <input type="checkbox"/> what is mission? (vulnerable, humble...) <input type="checkbox"/> what is community? (good, bad, biblical...) <input type="checkbox"/> mission = community!	<input type="checkbox"/> gifts assessment <input type="checkbox"/> basic personality awareness (MBTI, Enneagram, CliftonStrengths, DiSC) <input type="checkbox"/> individual graces <input type="checkbox"/> personal passions <input type="checkbox"/> church background/story <input type="checkbox"/> racial/ethnic/cultural identity; ways to grow in empathy and perspective <input type="checkbox"/> personal spiritual styles <input type="checkbox"/> personal spiritual disciplines; hear from EC members about their experiences with various spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> personal rule of life draft <input type="checkbox"/> share life and faith stories in cohorts	<input type="checkbox"/> defining diversity, seeing it and celebrating it (in EC, ARC, at ACU) as an opportunity for learning, fostering unity amidst it <input type="checkbox"/> how diverse community connects with ARC's missional paradigm <input type="checkbox"/> in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity <input type="checkbox"/> Peck's four stages of community <input type="checkbox"/> communal spiritual rhythms <input type="checkbox"/> importance of intergenerationality <input type="checkbox"/> Statement of Grace, Vision/Mission/Aim as concepts <input type="checkbox"/> invitation into deeper, unstructured experiences of intergenerationality with EC members in everyday life (on and off campus) <input type="checkbox"/> familiar with ARC rule of life <input type="checkbox"/> can articulate ARC VMA <input type="checkbox"/> able to explain/teach basic ARC rhythms of attention to others <input type="checkbox"/> gift affirmations	<input type="checkbox"/> vision vignettes and visits to ARC communities <input type="checkbox"/> analysis of American context and "standard American dream" <input type="checkbox"/> contextual spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> attention to natural and built environmental settings <input type="checkbox"/> cultivating an attitude of hospitality <input type="checkbox"/> awareness of other intentional communities <input type="checkbox"/> regular visits to Eden Center, ARC houses and PARCs <input type="checkbox"/> articulate dream for living in ARC context

<u>Level</u>	<u>The Story</u>	<u>My Story</u>	<u>Our Story</u>	<u>This Story</u>
<p>Three — Launching Community (Application Required)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> scripture reading, theology <input type="checkbox"/> naming and processing challenges and benefits of living in community <input type="checkbox"/> kingdom stewardship of attention, gifts, and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> gifts assessment <input type="checkbox"/> deeper personality reflection and processing <input type="checkbox"/> shadow side, woundedness, brokenness <input type="checkbox"/> privilege, power, oppression (personal experiences and blind spots) <input type="checkbox"/> personal spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> recognizing and living within limits <input type="checkbox"/> individual graces revision <input type="checkbox"/> personal rule of life revision (including self-care) <input type="checkbox"/> Design Discovery, personal vocation and VMA <input type="checkbox"/> communal discernment regarding next steps after ARC <input type="checkbox"/> articulate personal launch plans for after ARC <input type="checkbox"/> areas of my life that have remained unexamined regarding participation in communities of God’s love and purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> familiarity with housemates’ personalities/gifts/styles <input type="checkbox"/> how our identities (racial/ethnic/cultural/personality) converge and clash <input type="checkbox"/> conflict transformation (theology, concepts, practice, tools) <input type="checkbox"/> boundaries in community <input type="checkbox"/> communal spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> challenges of intergenerationality <input type="checkbox"/> communal rule of life draft (basic revision or fleshing out of ARC rule of life) <input type="checkbox"/> communal discernment <input type="checkbox"/> confession and reconciliation <input type="checkbox"/> gifts affirmations <input type="checkbox"/> explore communal launch possibilities for after ARC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> contextual spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> discerning mission in this context <input type="checkbox"/> privilege, power, oppression (areas of hurt and need in this context) <input type="checkbox"/> ethnography, Asset-Based Community Development <input type="checkbox"/> offering hospitality <input type="checkbox"/> boundaries in context <input type="checkbox"/> best practices for safety and transparency <input type="checkbox"/> CAPSTONE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> capstone celebration <input type="checkbox"/> launch into new regenerative community? <input type="checkbox"/> launch into Eden Fellows?

Level	The Story	My Story	Our Story	This Story
Four — Nurturing Community (Application Required)	<input type="checkbox"/> naming and processing challenges and benefits of living in community <input type="checkbox"/> become familiar with alternatives to “standard American dream” (housing, finances, food, health, resource sharing, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Appreciative Inquiry <input type="checkbox"/> kingdom economics	<input type="checkbox"/> gifts assessment <input type="checkbox"/> leadership <input type="checkbox"/> identity/narrative <input type="checkbox"/> articulate needs for personal growth <input type="checkbox"/> training in coaching <input type="checkbox"/> individual graces revision <input type="checkbox"/> articulate personal launch plans for after ARC	<input type="checkbox"/> articulate needs for ARC house communal growth <input type="checkbox"/> gifts affirmations <input type="checkbox"/> explore communal launch possibilities for after ARC	<input type="checkbox"/> describe opportunities, needs, and challenges of this context <input type="checkbox"/> identify context needs for gospel <input type="checkbox"/> identify and connect with helping organizations and partners in context <input type="checkbox"/> CAPSTONE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Missional Immersion (longer-term experience) ○ capstone celebration ○ launch into new regenerative community? <input type="checkbox"/> launch into Eden Fellows?

Setting

<u>Level</u>	<u>Natural Environment</u>	<u>Built Environment</u>
One — Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/> observation of realities regarding natural environment and how it's typically engaged in this context <input type="checkbox"/> beginning analysis of American context and “standard American dream” (food, health, environmental stewardship, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> observation of realities regarding built environment and how it's typically engaged in this context <input type="checkbox"/> beginning analysis of American context and “standard American dream” (housing, finances, resource sharing, etc.)
Three — Launching Community	<input type="checkbox"/> deeper analysis of contextual norms <input type="checkbox"/> experiencing and reflecting on alternatives <input type="checkbox"/> naming preferred alternate ways forward	<input type="checkbox"/> deeper analysis of contextual norms <input type="checkbox"/> experiencing and reflecting on alternatives <input type="checkbox"/> naming preferred alternate ways forward
Four — Nurturing Community	<input type="checkbox"/> deeper familiarity with range of alternatives <input type="checkbox"/> (plan for) lived instantiation of alternate ways forward <input type="checkbox"/> learning to articulate alternatives to others	<input type="checkbox"/> deeper familiarity with range of alternatives <input type="checkbox"/> (plan for) lived instantiation of alternate ways forward <input type="checkbox"/> learning to articulate alternatives to others

System

<u>Level</u>	<u>Covenant</u>	<u>Communication</u>	<u>Governance</u>	<u>Rhythms</u>
One — Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/> concept of communal covenant <input type="checkbox"/> God's formation of a people <input type="checkbox"/> covenant as initiating event, as process, and as content	<input type="checkbox"/> basics of nonviolent communication <input type="checkbox"/> Speaker-Listener method	<input type="checkbox"/> unacknowledged use of basic Dynamic Governance processes (circles, rounds, picture forming, proposal shaping, consent)	<input type="checkbox"/> chapel <input type="checkbox"/> COFFEE church <input type="checkbox"/> basic ARC rhythms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ gratitude ○ checking in (across generations when possible) ○ church of two ○ listening prayer ○ Luke 10:2b prayer <input type="checkbox"/> regular opportunities for play

<u>Level</u>	<u>Covenant</u>	<u>Communication</u>	<u>Governance</u>	<u>Rhythms</u>
Two — Forming Community	<input type="checkbox"/> rule of life as a personal and communal tool <input type="checkbox"/> Statement of Grace as concept/tool <input type="checkbox"/> covenant as initiating event, as process, and as content <input type="checkbox"/> covenant: listening for and following God’s guidance together; an agreement on how we pursue “in essentials unity...” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VMA as concept/tool	<input type="checkbox"/> OFFER <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> interaction styles and warning signs <input type="checkbox"/> receive mentoring focused on relationship, gift development, and vocation	<input type="checkbox"/> deconstructing familiar governance structures <input type="checkbox"/> building familiarity with basic Dynamic Governance processes <input type="checkbox"/> Vision/Mission/Aim as concept/tool <input type="checkbox"/> partnering to lead chapel gatherings	<input type="checkbox"/> continue basic ARC rhythms <input type="checkbox"/> regular personal spiritual disciplines <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Luke 10:2b prayer <input type="checkbox"/> AGAPE <input type="checkbox"/> cohort gatherings <input type="checkbox"/> day retreat <input type="checkbox"/> receive mentorship in community <input type="checkbox"/> Missional Imagination Trip <input type="checkbox"/> regular opportunities for play
Three — Launching Community	<input type="checkbox"/> celebration, worship, and play as part of covenant <input type="checkbox"/> Statement of Grace/VMA drafts as house covenant	<input type="checkbox"/> interaction styles and warning signs <input type="checkbox"/> love languages, apology languages <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> common barriers to communication <input type="checkbox"/> conflict transformation (theology, concepts, practice, additional tools) <input type="checkbox"/> receive mentoring focused on relationship and vocation	<input type="checkbox"/> extended practical experience with Divine Governance processes; <input type="checkbox"/> implementation of elections as helpful <input type="checkbox"/> systems thinking <input type="checkbox"/> partnering to lead bands <input type="checkbox"/> partnering to lead chapel gatherings	<input type="checkbox"/> continue basic ARC rhythms <input type="checkbox"/> regular personal and communal spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> house gatherings <input type="checkbox"/> bands <input type="checkbox"/> fall and spring retreats <input type="checkbox"/> regular coaching <input type="checkbox"/> receive mentorship in context <input type="checkbox"/> regular opportunities for play

<u>Level</u>	<u>Covenant</u>	<u>Communication</u>	<u>Governance</u>	<u>Rhythms</u>
Four — Nurturing Community	<input type="checkbox"/> equipping to guide revisions of Statement of Grace/VMA as necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> equipping to lead in conflict transformation <input type="checkbox"/> receive mentoring focused on relationship and vocation	<input type="checkbox"/> training and experience leading Divine Governance <input type="checkbox"/> leading VMA conversations	<input type="checkbox"/> continue basic ARC rhythms <input type="checkbox"/> regular personal and communal spiritual disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> house gatherings <input type="checkbox"/> leading bands <input type="checkbox"/> leading chapel gatherings <input type="checkbox"/> hosting ARC visitors <input type="checkbox"/> regular opportunities for play <input type="checkbox"/> fall and spring retreats <input type="checkbox"/> EC or Training Circle gatherings as makes sense invitation to participate in ARC Advisory Team <input type="checkbox"/> experience spiritual direction <input type="checkbox"/> mentorship in nurturing community, accountability toward personal health <input type="checkbox"/> Missional Immersion

APPENDIX H

Pathways Team Project Evaluation Questionnaire

Write out your responses to the following questions. We will also share our thoughts with the group.

1. What cultural components of the Eden Community (beliefs, values, practices, etc.) do you see most significantly emphasized in the refined set of pathways? Which do you not see emphasized?
2. Imagine that a group of students work through this set of pathways together over the course of their time at ACU. How might their understanding of the culture of the Eden Community grow? How might they grow in reflecting that culture? What changes might we observe in their beliefs, character, and lives?
3. In your opinion, how would the experience of formation through these pathways be different from the typical experience of formation that ACU students currently have access to?
4. Do you believe this set of pathways will significantly enhance the shaping of regenerative culture among students at ACU? Why (and in what ways) or why not?
5. Is there anything that you feel should have been added to or omitted from the set of pathways the team developed (beliefs, values, practices, process, etc.)? If so, what, and why?
6. How effective was this Appreciative Inquiry process at refining the pathways the Eden Community uses to reflect and transmit its own expression of regenerative culture among students at ACU through ARC? What was life-giving about the process that we should carry forward into the future?

APPENDIX I

Focus Group Consent Form

20-206

Date of Approval: 12/8/2020

You have the opportunity to participate in a focus group. This form provides important information about that focus group, including the risks and benefits to you, the potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions that you may have regarding the procedures, your involvement, and any risks or benefits you may experience.

The purpose of this focus group is to evaluate the effectiveness of a set of pathways that the Eden Community may use when shaping regenerative Christian culture among students at Abilene Christian University (ACU) through the Apprenticeship for Regenerative Culture (ARC). There are no right answers to the focus group questions. The Principal Investigator (PI) wants to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear from every participant. Please be honest, even when your responses may differ from the rest of the group or from what you think the PI would like to hear. In respect for each other, the PI asks that only one participant speak at a time, that individuals limit the length of their speaking to allow for feedback from all participants, and that responses made by all participants be kept confidential.

The PI will analyze your feedback in an attempt to yield deeper insight and consider best practices. By consenting to participate, you agree that the PI can anonymize your comments in related conversation and your responses to a questionnaire and include them in the data set and future reports on it.

There are potential benefits to participating in this focus group. Directly, this project may provide you with a deeper understanding of your perspectives on and place within the Eden Community and ARC. Indirectly of potential benefit to you, the project aids efforts enhance ARC's effectiveness in its attempts at student spiritual formation at ACU.

There are also minimal risks involved in participation in this focus group. One primary risk, given that the focus group is planned as an in-person gathering, is that of unintentional exposure to the COVID-19 virus. A second risk is that of mental or emotional discomfort, particularly given the presence of a recording device. A final primary risk is a breach of confidentiality. The PI has taken steps to minimize these risks. Participants will be required to follow all current ACU and CDC protocols at the time of the focus group, and, if necessary to preserve safety, the group will transition to a virtual meeting. Digital data will be stored in secure computer files. And any report of this focus group that is made public will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may decline to participate or withdraw your consent at any time and for any reason without any penalty. If you have questions about this focus group or want a copy or summary of its results, you can contact the Principal Investigator at any time:

Laura Callarman, MDiv; DMin Student
Department of Bible, Missions, and Ministry
Leb09b@acu.edu
479-466-0215

If you are unable to contact the Principal Investigator or wish to speak to someone other than the Principal Investigator, you may contact Andrew Menzies, at afm19a@acu.edu. If you have concerns about the proposed activities, believe you may have been harmed because of these activities, or have general questions about your rights as a project participant, you may also contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research, Dr. Megan Roth, at (325) 674-2885 or megan.roth@acu.edu. Her office is in room 328 of the Hardin Administration Building on ACU's campus.

CONSENT FORM — Refining the Eden Community’s Pathways for Shaping Regenerative Culture (Focus Group)

Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this focus group. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You should receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

Knowing that my responses will be kept confidential, I consent to participate in this focus group. (Mark the box if you agree)

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

APPENDIX J

Focus Group Questionnaire

Please review the ARC Pathways that I have provided. Then write out your response to question #1. I will prompt you when the time comes to address questions #2–4 later.

1. Based on what you are seeing in these pathways, what would you guess are the core beliefs, values, and practices of the Eden Community that ARC is attempting to invite ACU students into?
 - 1b. What do you see of the Eden Community's culture that is highlighted in the pathways? What do you see in the pathways that is reflecting these aspects of the Eden Community's culture?¹
2. Imagine that a group of students work through this set of pathways together over the course of their time at ACU. How might their understanding of the culture of the Eden Community grow? How might they grow in reflecting that culture? What changes might we observe in their beliefs, character, and lives?
3. Do you believe this set of pathways will enhance the spiritual formation of students at ACU? Why or why not?
4. Is there anything that you feel should have been added to or omitted from the set of pathways the team developed (beliefs, values, practices, process, etc.)? If so, what, and why?

1. I had not originally planned to include this question, but as the focus group session unfolded, I realized the oversight on my part and added it in. That being the case, I did not have an opportunity to polish the wording of the question ahead of time. I have included here the two ways I phrased the same idea in-session, stating it once and then again a second time when a participant asked for clarification.

APPENDIX K

Note-Taker's Field Note Taking and Audio Recording Protocol

1. Arrive and set up 10 minutes prior to the session.
 - a. Begin recording field notes immediately. Record notes throughout, including during breaks.
 - b. Begin audio recording immediately and verify that it is functioning correctly.
2. Field notes will be recorded in a three-column format using either the pages below or Google Docs.
 - a. If using Google Docs, select the correct Google Doc for that session's field notes.
 - b. Record your observations in the left column. Be as descriptive, concrete, and detailed as possible. Avoid vagueness, generalization, interpretation, or judgment.
 - c. I will collect your papers or download the file and will add observations (in the middle column) and analysis and reflections (in the right column) immediately following the session.
3. Because an audio recording of the sessions is available, notes need not be verbatim. Write down key words and phrases rather than trying to document everything. When possible, make note of the time key comments are made so they are readily found in recordings.
4. Using initials, record which participants attend the session.
 - a. Be sure to note demographic observations such as age, gender, and ethnicity.
 - b. Do not forget to include notes regarding the principal investigator's questions, comments, and general engagement.
5. Note interpersonal dynamics, including:
 - a. Whom people choose to talk with.
 - b. Interactions that take on a particularly positive or negative tone.
 - c. Any distinct changes in interpersonal dynamics observable during the session.
6. Note the participation and non-participation of individuals, including:
 - a. Who speaks or acts, and what is the main idea they are communicating?
 - i. Does anyone seem especially engaged with their comments or actions?
 - ii. Who speaks often or receives a great deal of attention from others?
 - b. What can you observe about participants' non-verbal communication: tone, apparent mood or attitude, body language, etc.?
 - c. Who remains silent or does not engage? What non-verbal cues do they exhibit?

7. Note comments and attitudes regarding key words, concepts, or ideas that connect with the theme of the Eden Community's ecclesial subculture and how the community works from that foundation to shape regenerative culture through ARC. Language that participants may use includes, for example:
- a. Vibrant family of Jesus: joyful, interdependent, intergenerational, regenerative, ecosystem.
 - b. Creative contextualization, incarnation, new, creative, experiment, Spirit-led.
 - i. Discipleship, apprenticeship, legitimate peripheral participation.
 - c. Eden Community's ecclesial subculture:
 - i. Cultural Theory:
 1. Social games, grid, group, quadrant.
 2. Egalitarian, individualist, authoritarian, hierarchist.
 3. Authority, property and resources, labor and ministry, conflict, beliefs and worldview, worship.
 - ii. Communal connection and togetherness: shared life, proximity, rhythms, fellowship, joy, play, meals.
 - iii. Healthy unity in diversity: personalities, giftedness, vocation, ecosystem, peace, conflict, decisions, respect, love.
 - iv. Radical vulnerability with and reliance on each other: family, intergenerational, self-disclosure, emotions, listening, care, compassion, love, challenge, encourage, support, safety.
 - v. Radical reliance on God: direction, provision, Holy Spirit, discernment, decisions, governance, opportunities, faith, risk, simplicity, conflict, experiment.
 - vi. Shared mission-centric work: vision, cooperative, goals, permaculture/sustainability, training/equipping, influence, hospitality, openness, partnering.
 - vii. Sacrifice: relinquishment, submission, humility, togetherness, harmony, investment of time/attention/resources, personal agendas, flexibility, discernment, control, rules, shame.
 - d. Themes developed in the Appreciative Inquiry Process:
 - i. Missional paradigm shift: what is mission, challenging imaginations, communion with God and people as mission, communities of God's love and purpose, purposeful participation in what God is up to, love God and love others, awake and alive to God and the world.
 - ii. Inclusive diversity: redefining diversity in its various forms, celebrating diversity, navigating differences and conflicts, unity in diversity, hospitality, safe space, opportunity for learning, getting outside comfort zones and the ACU bubble.
 - iii. Interdependent co-creators: co-creation, co-discovery, participatory, developing and doing together, drawing out and affirming spiritual gifts, partnership, student leadership and autonomy, responsibility and accountability, following God's guidance together, body of Christ.
 - iv. Intergenerationality: family, mentoring, children, older people, integration of students into Eden Community life and rhythms, overlap of life off campus and outside the ACU bubble.

- v. Play: joyfulness, lighthearted togetherness, recreation, games.
- 8. What do you notice does *not* happen?
- 9. Record any other observations that seem noteworthy.
- 10. In the final section, reflect on your own behavior in the session, how it impacted the session, and any thoughts you have about what is occurring.
- 11. Submit the field notes sheet to me at the end of the session.

Notes Template:

Date & Time:			Location:			Event:		
Attendees:								
Initial Observations			Later Observations			PI Analysis/Reflections		
Note-Taker Reflections								

APPENDIX L

Outside Expert Evaluation

- 1. Please review the introduction and the refined ARC Pathways that I have provided as attachments. Based on what you are seeing in these pathways, please answer the following two questions.**
 - a. What initial observations and feedback would you offer about the pathways themselves?
 - b. What would you surmise are the core beliefs, values, and practices of the Eden Community that ARC is attempting to invite ACU students into?
- 2. Please read the summaries of ACU student culture and the Eden Community's culture that I have provided as attachments. With that information now available to you, please answer the following questions.**
 - a. How suitable do you think the ARC Pathways are for inviting students at ACU to experience the Eden Community's culture?
 - b. Is there anything that you feel should have been added to or omitted from the set of pathways the team developed (beliefs, values, practices, process, etc.) in order to make it more effective at inviting students into the Eden Community's culture? If so, what, and why?
- 3. Based on your expertise, what additional critique and constructive feedback would you like to offer about the effectiveness of the ARC Pathways? (Please provide a 1–3 page opinion paper.)**

1. Please review the introduction and the refined ARC Pathways that I have provided as attachments. Based on what you are seeing in these pathways, please answer the following two questions.

- a. What initial observations and feedback would you offer about the pathways themselves?

I like the way you have organized the pathways in matrix format. That visually encourages people to understand both the progressive and interrelated nature of the topics.

I have a red flag coming up for me in the use of the phrase “the standard American dream” in your Setting table. I think I understand what you are getting at, but I think that is a limiting phrase from those from outside of the United States and for those within the US who are racial and/or ethnic minorities. I feel you need to give your students language to address the issues involved in “the American Dream” without triggering anti-American or “socialist” reactions from casual listeners. The same concern applies to describing management and governance structures other than democracy. Your students will have the benefit of teachings and discussions to understand what you mean, but the people they will engage after the programs will not. Giving the students good language to use without relying on words that may trigger casual listeners is very important.

- b. What would you surmise are the core beliefs, values, and practices of the Eden Community that ARC is attempting to invite ACU students into?

I am hearing a strong sense of community as a central organizing principle. I hear an emphasis on community as deeply Christian, and an emphasis the “my story” is not the only story.

2. Please read the summaries of ACU student culture and the Eden Community’s culture that I have provided as attachments. With that information now available to you, please answer the following questions.

- a. How suitable do you think the ARC Pathways are for inviting students at ACU to experience the Eden Community’s culture?

In light of the cultural documents provided, the pathways seem very much like the scattering seeds parable in Luke 8. The Introduction scatters the seeds broadly, Forming Community includes those in rocky soil, and Launching and Nurturing requires that fertile ground. However, the seeds sown in the first two pathways are not lost. Many students will simply not be ready to pursue the in-depth work that the pathways require, but as they grow and mature, they may look back on the ideas they will be exposed to and allow them to germinate later in life. Deep spiritual and cultural self-examination is hard

work, and it is harder for some students when combined with their educational and social responsibilities. The pathways are clear—following them to their conclusions is difficult.

- b. Is there anything that you feel should have been added to or omitted from the set of pathways the team developed (beliefs, values, practices, process, etc.) in order to make it more effective at inviting students into the Eden Community’s culture? If so, what, and why?

Be clear that the pathways redefine the way that we live and the priorities we hold dear. The pathways challenge the role of money, the role of personal power, and the cultural priority of the individual. The pathways echo the parable of the rich young man in Luke 18—students who go to church on Sunday and raise their hands while singing worship music may be challenged when they realize that more is required.

3. Based on your expertise, what additional critique and constructive feedback would you like to offer about the effectiveness of the ARC Pathways? (Please provide a 1–3 page opinion paper.)

This is great work. Your experience and knowledge shine through, and your spiritual stance is very clear.

I would like to see a stronger emphasis on preparing the students for life after the program. I have watched many students who have had excellent intentional community experiences fall on the faces when they graduate because they left their supportive bubble. It seems very important to take great care to help them imagine “Our Story” not just in the context of the group they are in at ACU, but as the stories of the groups they will be in as they move forward. It would be very easy for Launching and Nurturing students to emphasize the “special” community they are part of, and to get derailed when they have to move on.

I would for all three pathways to include examinations of the “Conservative” and “Liberal/Progressive” labels. To me, those are the most polarizing concepts students will face, so they should be prepared to see the benefits of each stance and to vocalize those. Tradition is often an obstacle to alternative community formation, and it need not be. In order for students to share the biblical nature of Christian community, they will need to grapple with biblical literalism and biblical interpretation. Helping them to see clearly where people are coming from will really help. The “yes-and” approach we learn from improvisation helps the student carefully listen to people with different perspective than their own and to really benefit from it.

Similarly, I would love to see the teaching of an “appreciative” stance towards other religions and cultures. Rather than an adversarial approach or an assimilative approach, the appreciative stance encourages listening and wondering how practices

and understandings might inform Christian belief. Fascination with Buddhist mindfulness and meditation can be informed by an understanding of the deep tradition of Christian meditation. Exposure to the Hindu pantheon of minor gods in nature can be viewed through the God-in-creation lens of Romans 1. It feels like “This Story” might be strengthened here.

Frankly, I feel a bit like Serena William’s tennis coach trying to tweak her swing. I love what you have done, and I see it as a wonderful illumination of spiritual formation in a deeply Protestant context, which is something we desperately need more of. Keep writing and get this out into the world!

Rev. Larry Duggins, DMin
Executive Director
Missional Wisdom Foundation

Outside Expert Evaluation: Dr. Charles Moore

1. Please review the introduction and the refined ARC Pathways that I have provided as attachments. Based on what you are seeing in these pathways, please answer the following two questions.

- a. What initial observations and feedback would you offer about the pathways themselves?
 - It took me a bit of time to wrap my mind around certain terminology.
 - Systematic in orientation.
 - Not clear about how “this story” gets fleshed out beyond the context of Eden community. It makes conceptual sense, but I’m unclear how you will make the connection experientially with students.
 - Not sure why “my story” comes before “our story.”
 - How are egalitarian, nonviolent values part of God’s story?
 - Which students are your target audience?

- b. What would you surmise are the core beliefs, values, and practices of the Eden Community that ARC is attempting to invite ACU students into?
 - We are called to be part of God’s story, which is different and often in conflict with other stories.
 - We are meant to live out God’s story with others in thick community.
 - God’s story is missional in nature—an invitation to others.
 - Each person, with all their particularity, has gifts to bring to the community to help realize God’s story.
 - “Concept” cannot be grasped apart from communal praxis.
 - Egalitarian, participatory.

2. Please read the summaries of ACU student culture and the Eden Community’s culture that I have provided as attachments. With that information now available to you, please answer the following questions.

- a. How suitable do you think the ARC Pathways are for inviting students at ACU to experience the Eden Community’s culture?
 - Only time will tell if the pathways are suitable. They definitely provide viable on-ramps, but the proof will be in testing them.
 - It will be important to establish an Eden Community culture that is itself a constant, a culture that students can “feel” and “sense” as they consider whether they want to be participants.
 - The ideas, goals, language you use are quite foreign to the average student’s linguistic universe. In other words, there is a wide gap between your vision and their lived experience. So, whatever you do you will need to find creative, concrete ways to *translate* your vision that is both understandable and inviting.

b. Is there anything that you feel should have been added to or omitted from the set of pathways the team developed (beliefs, values, practices, process, etc.) in order to make it more effective at inviting students into the Eden Community's culture? If so, what, and why?

- For pedagogical reasons, I think you may need to simplify the pathways a bit, especially for younger students. Keep terminology and categories as simple as possible. Consider using more metaphors instead of concepts.
- I'm unclear how the student's academic experience/obligations fit into what it is you are trying to do.
- You may need to stay at levels 1 and 2 for a couple of years before you are able to "sell" students on the rest. Students will be your greatest advocates.

3. Based on your expertise, what additional critique and constructive feedback would you like to offer about the effectiveness of the ARC Pathways? (Please provide a 1–3 page opinion paper.)

ARC is an incredible opportunity for students to experience something entirely different from college life as usual. It's a bold vision! It's difficult to imagine, however, how undergraduates (especially freshmen and sophomores) will gravitate toward something like this without you undertaking some powerful "marketing" efforts. You may have to provide many "appetizer" experiences that will students taste and see what it is you are doing and why. Your greatest challenge will be to find ways to bridge the gap between the narrative of hyper-individualism, and how students have already been thoroughly trained and habituated in that narrative, and the more communal vision of a regenerative culture. I suspect this will take a lot of time and creativity. Students have needs, they have desires, they have imaginative limitations, but they also are at a point where all these can be significantly shaped.

I think students will "catch" the ARC vision through the backdoor. Offer and invite them into a set of practices that speak "community," "vulnerability," "authenticity," "purpose," "joy," and "mission." In this context they will obtain new linguistic skills that will empower them to see their lives and world differently. A picture is worth a thousand words. You will therefore need to find ways beyond conceptual description and systematization to depict (via various media and hands-on experiences) how a thicker life together of friendship, camaraderie, community, etc. matters. On the one hand, students need to be convinced that ARC will not rob them of having "fun" or of being able to succeed academically. On the other, they will need to feel that ARC will existentially give them much, much more than class credits, that it will (1) provide them the opportunity of becoming who they are meant (or yearn) to be, (2) help them form the kinds of relationships they actually looking for, and (3) enable them to more meaningfully connect with God's great story—of being on mission, with purpose with others. In other words, ARC cannot just be another "program." Students need to feel that this will be a "life" and "life-transforming" experience.

As you have already alluded to, “community” and such things as a “rule of life” or “disciplines” are not only foreign ideas to students, but they may be repulsive ones or perceived as oppressive. The metaphor of team sports may be an apt one to tap into the positive facets of togetherness, self-discipline, self-denial, etc.... What I am trying to get at is that whatever you have on paper now needs to be re-translated in terms that students will understand and be attracted to. Of course, the best is that they are able to see Eden Community in real-life. “Come, taste and see....”

My comments above are rather general, so I would be happy to give you more specific feedback on any of the particulars you’ve outlined. Please don’t hesitate to get back in touch with me if you’d like more input.

APPENDIX M

Codes for Data Analysis¹

- AI Process
 - gratitude—appreciation
- church and mission
 - ARC as church
 - apprenticeship
 - legitimate peripheral participation
 - discipleship in community
 - vibrant family of Jesus
 - ecosystem
 - interdependent
 - intergenerational
 - joyful
 - regenerative
 - vocation
- creative contextualization
 - creative
 - ecclesial diversity
 - experiment
 - Four Stories
 - The Story
 - My Story
 - Our Story
 - This Story
 - incarnation
 - new
 - Setting
 - Spirit-led
 - System
 - wineskin

1. As I described in chapter 3 regarding my coding methods, this list developed throughout my data analysis to reflect adaptations that occurred during the project as well as new codes that I identified inductively. I also employed the code “not emphasized/negated” to show where respondents’ feedback indicated a lack of emphasis on one of these codes. In addition, I utilized cases for every participant and each question or iteration of the ARC Pathways so that I could run crosstab queries that correlated codes with cases as necessary.

- Cultural Theory
 - egalitarian
 - individualist
- Eden Community's ecclesial subculture
 - connection and togetherness
 - fellowship
 - joy
 - meals
 - play
 - proximity
 - rhythms
 - shared life
 - reliance on God
 - conflict
 - decisions
 - direction
 - discernment
 - experiment
 - faith
 - governance
 - Holy Spirit
 - opportunities
 - provision
 - relinquishment
 - risk
 - sacrifice
 - control
 - discernment
 - flexibility
 - harmony
 - humility
 - investment of time, attention, and resources
 - personal agendas
 - shame
 - submission
 - togetherness
 - rules
 - unity in diversity
 - inclusive diversity
 - celebrating diversity
 - getting outside comfort zones and the ACU bubble
 - hospitality
 - navigating differences and conflicts
 - opportunity for learning
 - redefining diversity in its various forms
 - safe space

- unity in diversity
 - backgrounds
 - conflict
 - decisions
 - ecosystem
 - giftedness
 - love
 - peace
 - personalities
 - perspective
 - respect
 - spiritual styles and faith journeys
 - vocation
 - vulnerability with and reliance on each other
 - care
 - challenge
 - compassion
 - emotions
 - encourage
 - family
 - intergenerational
 - listening
 - love
 - safety
 - self-disclosure
 - support
- Pathways Team foci
 - interdependent co-creators
 - body of Christ
 - co-creation
 - co-discovery
 - developing and doing together
 - drawing out and affirming spiritual gifts
 - following God's guidance together
 - participatory
 - partnership
 - responsibility and accountability
 - student leadership and autonomy
 - intergenerationality
 - children
 - family
 - integration of students into Eden Community life and rhythms
 - mentoring
 - older people
 - overlap of life off campus and outside ACU bubble
 - missional paradigm shift

- attention
 - awake and alive to God and the world
 - definition of mission
 - challenging imaginations
 - communion with God and people as mission
 - communities of God's love and purpose
 - redefining mission
 - participation
 - holistic nature of faith and mission
 - love God and love others
 - purposeful participation in what God is up to
 - service
 - shared mission-centric work
 - cooperative
 - goals
 - hospitality
 - influence
 - openness
 - partnering
 - permaculture & sustainability
 - training & equipping
 - vision
- additional codes
 - academic connections
 - accessible language
 - biblical interpretation
 - boundaries (vulnerability, connection-togetherness, or unity-diversity)
 - clarity about Eden Community beliefs
 - countercultural shifts
 - covenant (to God and each other)
 - gaining student commitment
 - godly character and maturation
 - governance
 - gratitude and appreciation
 - intentional community
 - justice
 - learning and growth
 - life after college
 - spiritual disciplines and/or rule of life
 - spread

APPENDIX N

Data Analysis Tables

This appendix contains two tables. The first lists only the nine codes that correlate with the themes I explored in Chapter 5. The second lists all the codes that I utilized in this project. Running along the top of the two tables is a list of the questions in response to which those themes were coded. In the case of the refined ARC Pathways, only *additional* instances of themes are noted. To achieve the total number of instances in which a theme was present in the refined pathways, add the numbers in the first two columns (ARC Pathways Initial and ARC Pathways Refined). Other column headers indicate the group that responded (PT, FG, or OE), as well as the question number and topic. A final column indicates the total number of instances of each theme throughout the entire collection of data. In the second table, levels of codes are indicated according to the following scheme:

- **First Level**
- Second Level
- Third Level
- *Fourth Level*
- —Fifth Level

Primary Themes Coded in Data

Codes	ARC Pathways Initial	ARC Pathways Refined	FG0&5 Intro & Exit	FG1a OE1b Surmised EC Culture	FG3 Will Pathways Enhance Spir/Form	OE 1a Initial Observations	OE2a Pathways Suitable Acculturati on	OE3 Affirm ation	OE3 Critique	PT1a FG1b Informed EC Culture	PT1b Not Emphasize d in Pathways	PT2 FG2 Student Growth w/ Pathways	PT3 Pathways Differ from ACU Norm	PT4 Will Pathways Enhance RegenC	PT5 FG4 OE2b Add-Omit in Pathways	PT6 AI Process	Total
egalitarian	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	4	1	0	0	1	14
connection and togetherness	8	5	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	6	1	1	1	2	0	3	32
reliance on God	16	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	2	2	1	3	2	38
sacrifice	15	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	4	7	6	1	2	4	0	43
unity in diversity	26	8	3	3	0	0	0	0	2	9	6	13	2	0	5	5	82
vulnerability with and reliance on each other	16	4	0	5	2	0	0	0	2	7	2	10	3	3	1	2	57
interdependent co-creators	28	17	1	4	1	0	0	0	1	12	6	3	1	3	5	7	89
intergenerational ify	16	8	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	4	3	1	0	2	45
missional paradigm shift	38	7	4	6	0	2	0	0	2	11	13	23	10	7	10	7	140

All Themes Coded in Data

Codes	ARC Pathways Initial	ARC Pathways Refined	FG0&5 Intro & Exit	FG1a OE1b Surmise d EC Culture	FG3 Will Enhance SpirForm	OE 1a Initial Observat ions	OE2a Pathways Suitable Accultura tion	OE3 Affirm ation	OE3 Criti que	PT1a FG1b Informe d EC Culture	PT1b Not Emphasiz ed in Pathways	PT2 FG2 Student Growth w/ Pathwa ys	PT3 Pathwa ys Differ from ACU Norm	PT4 Will Pathways Enhance RegenC	PT5 FG4 OE2b Add-omit in Pathway s	PT6 AI Process	Total
<u>All Process</u>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	9	12
<u>gratitude — appreciation</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
<u>church and mission</u>	25	4	1	8	0	2	0	0	2	3	6	14	5	6	6	0	82
<u>ARC as church</u>	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	0	3	3	0	12
<u>apprenticeship</u>	1	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	11
<u>legitimate peripheral participation</u>	20	4	1	3	1	0	1	0	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	4	49
<u>discipleship in community</u>	7	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	5	1	4	0	0	25
<u>vibrant family of Jesus</u>	11	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	2	2	0	0	23
<u>ecosystem</u>	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
<u>interdependent</u>	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0	0	2	2	14
<u>intergenerational</u>	2	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	3	3	0	0	2	21
<u>joyful</u>	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	5	19
<u>regenerative</u>	7	1	0	2	3	0	0	0	1	1	5	7	2	8	5	2	44
<u>vocation</u>	10	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	5	1	1	2	0	31

Codes	ARC Pathways Initial	ARC Pathways Refined	FG0&5 Intro & Exit	FG1a OE1b Surmise d EC Culture	FG3 Will Enhance SpirForm	OE 1a Initial Observations	OE2a Pathways Suitable Acculturation	OE3 Affirmation	OE3 Critique	PT1a FG1b Informed EC Culture	PT1b Not Emphasized in Pathways	PT2 FG2 Student Growth w/ Pathways	PT3 Pathways Differ from ACU Norm	PT4 Will Enhance RegenC	PT5 FG4 OE2b Add-Omit in Pathways	PT6 AI Process	Total
<u>creative contextualization</u>	32	5	2	11	1	2	0	0	5	9	14	21	5	6	10	6	129
<u>creative</u>	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
<u>ecclesial diversity</u>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<u>experiment</u>	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	10
<u>Four Stories</u>	15	2	1	6	0	1	0	0	5	4	6	8	3	1	4	0	56
<u>The Story</u>	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	9
<u>My Story</u>	4	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	3	2	5	1	0	2	0	21
<u>Our Story</u>	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	12
<u>This Story</u>	4	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	10
<u>incarnation</u>	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	8
<u>new</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<u>Setting</u>	3	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	5	4	0	0	4	0	21
<u>Spirit-led</u>	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	2	0	1	3	2	18
<u>System</u>	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	5
<u>wineskin</u>	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
<u>Cultural Theory</u>	4	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	0	4	1	0	0	1	18
<u>egalitarian</u>	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	4	1	0	0	1	14
<u>individualist</u>	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	6

Codes	ARC Pathways Initial	ARC Pathways Refined	FG0&5 Intro & Exit	FG1a OE1b Surmise d EC Culture	FG3 Will Pathways Enhance SpirForm	OE 1a Initial Observations	OE2a Pathways Suitable Acculturation	OE3 Affirmation	OE3 Critique	PT1a FG1b Informed EC Culture	PT1b Not Emphasized in Pathways	PT2 FG2 Student Growth w/ Pathways	PT3 Pathways Differ from ACU Norm	PT4 Will Pathways Enhance RegenC	PT5 FG4 OE2b Add-Omit in Pathways	PT6 AI Process	Total
<u>EC ecclesial culture</u>	52	17	4	7	3	0	1	0	5	23	18	21	8	7	11	11	188
<u>connection and togetherness</u>	8	5	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	6	1	1	1	2	0	3	32
fellowship	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
joy	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	5
meals	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
play	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	13
proximity	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
rhythms	7	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	11
shared life	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	5
<u>reliance on God</u>	16	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	2	2	1	3	2	38
conflict	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
decisions	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	6
direction	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	1	3	1	13
discernment	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	10
experiment	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
faith	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
governance	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Holy Spirit	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	9
opportunities	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	4

Codes	ARC Pathways Initial	ARC Pathways Refined	FG0&5 Intro & Exit	FG1a OE1b Surmise d EC Culture	FG3 Will Pathways Enhance SpirForm	OE 1a Initial Observat ions	OE2a Pathways Suitable Accultura tion	OE3 Affirm ation	OE3 Critique	PT1a FG1b Informe d EC Culture	PT1b Not Emphasiz ed in Pathways	PT2 FG2 Student Growth w/ Pathwa ys	PT3 Pathwa ys Differ from ACU Norm	PT4 Will Pathways Enhance RegenC	PT5 FG4 OE2b Add-Omit in Pathway s	PT6 AI Process	Total
provision	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	5
risk	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
relinquishment	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	4	0	0	1	0	10
<u>sacrifice</u>	15	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	4	7	6	1	2	4	0	43
control	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
discernment	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
flexibility	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
harmony	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
humility	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	5
investment of time, attention, & resources	4	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	0	13
personal agendas	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	7
shame	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
submission	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	1	0	0	2	0	14
togetherness	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
rules	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
unity in diversity	26	8	3	3	0	0	0	0	2	9	6	13	2	0	5	5	82
inclusive diversity	17	8	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	5	1	7	2	0	1	4	50
<i>celebrating diversity</i>	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	1	0	0	3	12

Codes	ARC Pathways Initial	ARC Pathways Refined	FG0&5 Intro & Exit	FG1a OE1b Surmise d'EC Culture	FG3 Will Pathways Enhance SpirForm	OE 1a Initial Observations	OE2a Pathways Suitable Acculturation	OE3 Affirmation	OE3 Critique	PT1a FG1b Informed EC Culture	PT1b Not Emphasized in Pathways	PT2 FG2 Student Growth w/ Pathways	PT3 Pathways Differ from ACU Norm	PT4 Will Pathways Enhance RegenC	PT5 FG4 OE2b Add-Omit in Pathways	PT6 AI Process	Total
<i>getting outside comfort zones and the ACU bubble</i>	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	6
<i>hospitality</i>	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	6
<i>navigating differences and conflicts</i>	7	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	13
<i>opportunity for learning</i>	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	11
<i>redefining diversity in its various forms</i>	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	8
<i>safe space</i>	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	2	8
<i>unity in diversity</i>	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	1	0	0	2	13
<i>u-d — backgrounds</i>	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	7
<i>u-d — conflict</i>	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	9
<i>u-d — decisions</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
<i>u-d — ecosystem</i>	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	4
<i>u-d — giftedness</i>	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	11
<i>u-d — love</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
<i>u-d — peace</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>u-d — personalities</i>	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	7

Codes	ARC Pathways Initial	ARC Pathways Refined	FG0&5 Intro & Exit	FG1a OE1b Surmise d'EC Culture	FG3 Will Pathways Enhance SpirForm	OE 1a Initial Observations	OE2a Pathways Suitable Acculturation	OE3 Affirmation	OE3 Critique	PT1a FG1b Informed EC Culture	PT1b Not Emphasized in Pathways	PT2 FG2 Student Growth w/ Pathways	PT3 Pathways Differ from ACU Norm	PT4 Will Pathways Enhance RegenC	PT5 FG4 OE2b Add-Omit in Pathways	PT6 AI Process	Total
u-d — perspective	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	1	0	0	3	10
u-d — respect	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	5
u-d — spiritual styles & faith journeys	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	4	0	0	4	0	21
u-d — vocation	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	8
vulnerability with and reliance on each other	16	4	0	5	2	0	0	0	2	7	2	10	3	3	1	2	57
care	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	5
challenge	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	5
compassion	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
emotions	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	7
encourage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
family	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
intergenerational	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
listening	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	9
safety	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	1	12
love	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
self-disclosure	5	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	13
support	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	5

Codes	ARC Pathways Initial	ARC Pathways Refined	FG0&5 Intro & Exit	FG1a OE1b Surmise d EC Culture	FG3 Will Pathways Enhance SpirForm	OE 1a Initial Observations	OE2a Pathways Suitable Acculturation	OE3 Affirmation	OE3 Critique	PT1a FG1b Informed EC Culture	PT1b Not Emphasized in Pathways	PT2 FG2 Student Growth w/ Pathways	PT3 Pathways Differ from ACU Norm	PT4 Will Pathways Enhance RegenC	PT5 FG4 OE2b Add-Omit in Pathways	PT6 AI Process	Total
<u>Pathways Team foci</u>	62	28	6	9	1	2	0	0	2	24	14	26	13	9	10	9	215
<u>interdependent co-creators</u>	28	17	1	4	1	0	0	0	1	12	6	3	1	3	5	7	89
body of Christ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
co-creation	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	2	3	16
co-discovery	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
developing and doing together	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	4	8
drawing out and affirming spiritual gifts	12	9	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	0	0	1	0	0	31
following God's guidance together	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
participatory	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	2	11
partnership	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	4	11
responsibility and accountability	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
student leadership and autonomy	11	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	2	21
intergenerational IY	16	8	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	4	3	1	0	2	45
children	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

Codes	ARC Pathways Initial	ARC Pathways Refined	FG0&5 Intro & Exit	FG1a OE1b Surmise d EC Culture	FG3 Will Pathways Enhance SpirForm	OE 1a Initial Observations	OE2a Pathways Suitable Acculturation	OE3 Affirmation	OE3 Critique	PT1a FG1b Informed EC Culture	PT1b Not Emphasized in Pathways	PT2 FG2 Student Growth w/ Pathways	PT3 Pathways Differ from ACU Norm	PT4 Will Pathways Enhance RegenC	PT5 FG4 OE2b Add-Omit in Pathways	PT6 AI Process	Total
family	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
integration of students into EC life and rhythms	7	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	16
mentoring	6	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	15
older people	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
overlap of life off campus and outside ACU bubble	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	6
missional paradigm shift	38	7	4	6	0	2	0	0	2	11	13	23	10	7	10	7	140
attention	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	1	8
awake and alive to God and the world	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
definition of mission	26	5	4	3	0	0	0	0	2	3	6	17	7	5	5	2	85
challenging imaginations	11	3	4	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	12	4	3	2	1	45
communion with God and people as mission	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	11
communities of God's love and purpose	15	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	9	1	3	0	1	36
redefining mission	8	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	3	3	0	2	0	25

Codes	ARC Pathways Initial	ARC Pathways Refined	FG0&5 Intro & Exit	FG1a OE1b Surmise d EC Culture	FG3 Will Enhance SpirForm	OE 1a Initial Observat ions	OE2a Pathways Suitable Accultura tion	OE3 Affirm ation	OE3 Critique	PT1a FG1b Informe d EC Culture	PT1b Not Emphasiz ed in Pathways	PT2 FG2 Student Growth w/ Pathwa ys	PT3 Pathwa ys Differ from ACU Norm	PT4 Will Enhance RegenC	PT5 FG4 OE2b Add-omit in Pathway s	PT6 AI Process	Total
participation	29	5	0	5	0	2	0	0	3	8	13	14	8	5	10	7	109
<i>holistic nature of faith and mission</i>	9	2	0	3	0	2	0	0	2	2	5	6	8	3	5	1	48
<i>love God and love others</i>	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
<i>purposeful participation in what God is up to</i>	10	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	5	4	2	2	2	34
<i>service</i>	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	3	0	15
<i>shared mission-centric work</i>	15	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	4	10	6	4	2	7	6	58
<i>—cooperative</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<i>—goals</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>—hospitality</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
<i>—influence</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>—openness</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>—partnering</i>	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	7
<i>—permaculture & sustainability</i>	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	6	1	0	0	3	0	18
<i>—training & equipping</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	2	0	2	11
<i>—vision</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
Emerging Codes	59	8	3	9	4	4	4	1	7	10	15	25	7	16	15	10	197

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<u>academic connections</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
<u>accessible language</u>	4	2	1	0	0	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	14
<u>biblical interpretation</u>	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
<u>boundaries (vulnerability, connection, togetherness, or unity-diversity)</u>	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	10
<u>clarity about EC beliefs</u>	5	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	3	0	0	1	2	19
<u>countercultural shifts</u>	11	2	1	3	1	2	1	1	2	0	3	8	1	9	3	1	49
<u>covenant—to God and each other</u>	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	7	0	1	0	0	14
<u>gaining student commitment</u>	0	1	0	1	3	1	4	0	4	2	2	7	3	12	5	0	45
<u>godly character & maturation</u>	9	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	18
<u>governance</u>	5	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	9
<u>gratitude – appreciation</u>	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	6	17
<u>intentional community</u>	9	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	5	1	3	1	1	27
<u>justice</u>	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	4	0	11

Codes	ARC Pathways Initial	ARC Pathways Refined	FG0&5 Intro & Exit	FG1a OE1b Surmised EC Culture	FG3 Will Pathways Enhance SpirForm	OE 1a Initial Observations	OE2a Pathways Suitable Acculturation	OE3 Affirmation	OE3 Critique	PT1a FG1b Informed EC Culture	PT1b Not Emphasized in Pathways	PT2 FG2 Student Growth w/ Pathways	PT3 Pathways Differ from ACU Norm	PT4 Will Pathways Enhance RegenC	PT5 FG4 OE2b Add-Omit in Pathways	PT6 AI Process	Total
<u>learning and growth</u>	6	1	3	4	1	0	1	0	5	2	0	10	4	5	1	3	46
<u>life after college</u>	6	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	1	1	1	1	20
<u>spiritual disciplines and- or rule of life</u>	21	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	0	0	1	0	31
<u>spread</u>	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	4	5	1	5	5	2	27

BRIEF VITA

Laura Beall Callarman was born in Springdale, Arkansas, on September 29, 1984, and she grew up in the nearby town of West Fork. In 2007, she graduated from the University of Arkansas with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and European studies. With minors in German and religious studies, she focused her undergraduate education on Christian responses to injustices committed during World War II and the Cold War. She went on to complete a Master of Divinity at Abilene Christian University, graduating in 2013. During her time there, she met Rosten Callarman, who shared her yearning for a life of transformative discipleship to Jesus in intentional Christian community. They married in 2012, made their home in Abilene, and helped establish the Eden Community in 2013. They have three children: Asher (2015), Evangeline (2017), and Genevieve (2019). In her roles as teacher, adjunct professor, consultant, and apprenticeship director, Laura's ministry has focused on the missional formation of individuals and communities. In 2017, she entered the Doctor of Ministry program at Abilene Christian University, concentrating her studies on leadership for missional renewal. She currently directs the Eden Fellows program.