

***Between Generations:
Using Narrative for Intergenerational Faith Development***

By

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Alexandria, Virginia

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To my wife Annette

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Thank you!

Introduction

I think youth could benefit from speaking with [seniors in the parish and] listening to faith and life stories because we can learn from their mistakes and learn new outlooks on some situations.

~Louise, youth participant.

Forty years ago I was on a journey of discovery that would lead me to the life changing waters of baptism and a new chapter in my life. My journey began with a deep yearning to learn more about God and Jesus, but my pursuit for answers was wrought with many challenges.

I did not grow up in a Christian home and had no access to a Bible or other Christian resources. What I did have were two men who shared their faith stories with me. These stories opened my eyes and helped me address some of the more profound questions of faith that were stirring in my heart.

Padre R.N. Jackson and Bishop Henry Hill were very different people. One was a military chaplain at the military college I attended; the other was a retired bishop of a neighboring diocese. Both men entered my life at times when I was questioning my faith and beliefs. They shared stories of how they came to faith and how their faith made a difference in their lives, especially in times of difficulty.

Listening to their faith narratives changed my life and moved me in a direction that would shape me for ministry. It also provided me with a model of formation which forms the basis for my project.

In my parish, youth participate in a weekly program that combines a meal with a time for study, discussion, prayer and contemporary worship. Most of the youth do not belong to the parish or any church, but they have a desire to understand the world around

them and to know more about God, Jesus, and the church. I can see myself in these youth who are the same age I was when I began to take a serious look at the Christian faith.

Hearing stories of faith led me to a firm belief in Jesus. Now I want to reach out to youth and let them seek answers to their questions about faith just as I had done years before. My challenge was determining what model of formation would work with this generation of youth? Could I replicate my own faith forming experience in the context of St. Paul's Anglican Church in Lindsay, Ontario, Canada?

St. Paul's is a church with a long history of faithful service and worship. The members of the parish live out their lives of faith through the church's many ministries. I believed that if I could connect the youth with older adults in the parish, there would be the opportunity for the youth to ask their own questions of faith and for the older adults to answer by sharing their perspectives and faith narratives. Out of this idea, I developed my thesis for this project: *By connecting youth and older adults, youth participants will grow in understanding and faith, and the older adults will be affirmed in their supportive role while validating their own experiences of faith, which will open doors to generational sharing and provide a model of learning that can be used for other programs in the parish and throughout the diocese.*

Chapter One begins by discussing the context of the project, with a description of the history of St. Paul's and the Diocese of Toronto. I then look at parish governance in its Canadian context, the socio-economic factors of the community that led to the development of the youth program, and the situation of our parish's older adults. Chapter One also describes the outreach ministry to local youth that was developed in 2011, as well as some of the challenges posed by the presence of youth in a parish made up

primarily of adults over the age of sixty-five. Part of the hope of the project is to break down some of the barriers to intergenerational relationships, and to develop a model for relationship building and faith formation.

Chapter Two provides a description of the participants in the project and the methodology used. This project uses the qualitative inquiry approach called narrative inquiry as described by Lynn Butler-Kisber in *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Based Perspectives* that speaks to the use of audio-visual techniques in research. The chapter continues with a detailed description of the project outline and design that includes input from authors such as Julie Anne Lytle and her book *Faith Formation 4.0*. This chapter looks at aspects of the project including the data collection process, how the questions provided by the youth were developed, how the video interviews were done, how the responses from the youth were incorporated for purposes of the qualitative inquiry and analysis, and the debriefing interview with the youth who conducted the interviews with the older adults. The chapter concludes with a detailed roadmap and timetable of the project and some hypotheses about outcomes.

Chapter Three dives into the qualitative data from thesis project itself. I describe the project as a time of Holy Listening and Holy Sharing because I could see God at work in the two very different generations. The youth listened to the older adults answer the questions they provided, and the older adults listened to the youth talk about their thoughts and hopes for the future at the final dinner gathering. Both groups obtained new insights about each other that have formed the basis for further meetings and the potential building of deeper relationships. This chapter also includes demographic information about the youth and the older adults. The key themes of *certainty of religious faith and*

relation to other faiths, faith trials, and what happens after death emerged from the questions written by the youth for the older adults. These primary themes are then broken into responses and reactions by the youth after they watched the videotaped answers provided by the older adults. The chapter concludes with a preliminary analysis of the project goals achieved, with a further discussion in the Chapter Six.

Chapter Four looks at the theoretical perspectives of the project focusing on narrative. The foundation of my project is the sharing of faith narratives for the purpose of growing and nurturing faith in the youth. I begin this chapter by sharing a personal experience of the power of narrative through a story shared by a World War I veteran when I was a chaplaincy student in 1985. This man's story opened me up to a time and world I didn't know and also changed my view of older adults. The chapter continues with theoretical perspectives of oral tradition and how they can shape a people and individuals. The role of narratives and how they can evoke emotions and stir up forgotten memories is highlighted, as is the importance of narrative as a key method of evangelism to pass on Christian traditions and faith. Narratives also move people to action and the living out of their faith in the world. In the final part of this chapter, I show how sharing narratives among different generations provides the opportunity for young and old to hear each other and discover a commonality of likes and dislikes. Youth and the older adults are joined in what I call a common lament -- a voiced concern of life, faith, and community and world issues. This common lament provides opportunities for bringing together the generations that I discuss further in the Chapter Six.

Chapter 5 provides a look at my project from a social science perspective, and is divided into four sections. The first section will look at the life and faith of two distinct

generations: the youth aged 12-20 and the older adults aged 70-91. Both generations have their own life experiences and perspectives. I will use Jean M. Twenge's work to examine the life of Generation Z or the iGeneration. The second section draws on the work of sociologist Reginald W. Bibby and educator John Roberto to examine current research into the changing trends of faith formation in different generations and over time. The third section looks at the concept of generativity as one important factor for the older adults project participants. Finally, I discuss the pedagogical reasons for the hybrid technological model my project employs.

Chapter Six is my conclusion, including an evaluation of the project. Did my project support my thesis? What worked well in the project, what could be improved, and what did not work? What are the implications and future possibilities for the results determined by the project within my parish, the diocese, and the wider church? Are there further research opportunities that could take the project to the next level?

Chapter 1

Setting and Context of Ministry

St. Paul's Anglican Church is a mid-sized parish in the town of Lindsay in Ontario, Canada. The parish has a long history of distinguished service to its community, faithful worship, and joyful fellowship. Like many parishes, the highpoint of its membership was in the 1950's and 1960's. Decline started in the 1970's as industry shut down and younger families sought employment elsewhere. Decline continued with the movement away from formal religion and the aging of the congregation.

Today, St. Paul's still enjoys social events, study groups and activities. However, aging, illness, and travel south in the winter months by many members has made it harder to continue some of these ministries. These trends have led to a loss of learning opportunities, as well as a loss of community for many parishioners who miss more frequent times of interacting and sharing.

The loss of connection and participation has also raised the concern about a diminishing base of faithful members who provide leadership and support to programs and events. Many fear for the future, with no clear answer to their question of who will continue the legacy of over 180 years of worship and ministry in the years to come. Given the too few young families, and no new younger adults getting involved, members want to know what can be implemented or changed to attract younger families. Additionally, as they have aged, many of these faithful people have lost the chance to be involved and feel needed.

Seven years ago, this mostly senior-aged congregation supported the establishment of a youth ministry that meets weekly. This ministry had a slow start, but over the last three years up to twenty middle school and high school aged youth have come together to socialize each Tuesday from 4:30 pm-8:30 pm. Only one member of the youth program belongs to the parish. All the rest have come to us through word of mouth and invitations to the local community.

Each week, the young people cook together, sometimes learning how to cook new dishes in the process, and then together eat what they have prepared. As the group met over weeks and months, we slowly introduced prayer and bible study into the evenings, as well. Now, some youth come occasionally to a bi-weekly Sunday morning program that includes participation in worship, as well.

These youth are true seekers. They are curious. They aren't interested in the dogmas of the church, but want to discover Jesus and what He teaches. What better way to learn about our faith than through people who are living the faith? Formation is about making disciples, not about memorization. It is about grappling with life issues and engaging the world through the lens of faith.

I believed there was an opportunity to connect the older adults, who feel marginalized by age and infirmity, with youth who are not yet connected with the parish other than the youth program. Such a program would allow the youth will learn faith integration through the answers and stories shared by the older adults. At the same time, our seniors would be able to revisit their stories and moments of blessings and struggle that have informed their faith lives and be affirmed in those memories.

With this idea in mind, I initiated a project that brought together youth and older adults through interviews and a concluding social event with a catered meal. The hope was for mutual benefits for the older adults and youth as each learned from the other. Such an opportunity could provide for faith development among the youth as they hear the narratives of faithful people who live the Gospel life and can share their knowledge and experience of the church, the reaffirming of faith among the seniors who shared their faith experiences, a greater appreciation between the age groups for each other, mentoring possibilities beyond the project, and the fuller inclusion of the youth within the congregation in the life and worship of the parish.

The interaction between youth and the older adults provided mutual encouragement and new understandings on theological, biblical and sociological levels. I believe a new respect and appreciation for each other is flowing out into the life of the church and the community, and can be a launching off point for further growth and development through mentoring and additional learning opportunities for both the youth and the older adults. We can now develop a model that can then be extended into other intergenerational opportunities.

The project is just the beginning of positive changes that are occurring in the life of the parish. However, the parish's long and varied history, as well as circumstances in recent years, almost made the bringing together of these two generations an impossibility. With that in mind, it is important to understand some of the history and setting of St. Paul's that contributes to its outlooks, attitudes, and sense of privilege that in the last twenty years has not always been welcoming and receptive to young families and youth.

To provide further background on the context for my ministry project, this chapter will look at a number of areas. I will start with a brief history of the parish and local community, then look at the Diocese of Toronto and the city of Lindsay. I will then discuss St. Paul's today and dive into parish governance. I will examine the socio-economic situation of Lindsay. Finally I will describe the current situation of older adults, children and youth, and the processes of change.

A Brief History of the Parish and Local Community

The parish of St. Paul's Anglican Church in the Diocese of Toronto dates back to November 25, 1836 when a service was held in Purdy's Mill, later to be called the town of Lindsay. The parish actually predates the founding of the town in 1857. St. Paul's is the only Anglican Church in the town, and historically was a center of activity drawing people from throughout the county. Several community members of rank such as a recent town mayor have been members of the parish over the years. The parish has been seen as a leader in the community and has been a voice for social justice and education, reaching out and supporting various local and diocesan wide initiatives. The unique status and presence of St. Paul's Church in Lindsay helped create an attitude of privilege in relation to the community and the Diocese.

St. Paul's has built two buildings in its history. In the early years, worship services were held in the town hall. In 1855, a wood frame church was built on the main street called Kent Street. By 1885, town growth and issues of congestion and noise on the main street location eventually led to the donation of a piece of land one block south on Russell Street West, and a new brick building was built in 1885. The building was built in a traditional Gothic style and has been compared to a mini-cathedral. This image

would characterize the expectations of how members of the parish wanted to be perceived by the local deanery and Diocese, sometimes exhibiting an air of self-importance.

Being the only Anglican Church in the town of Lindsay, past Rectors of St. Paul's were responsible for the worship in neighboring parishes throughout the local region of Kawartha Lakes. Today it is a single point parish and is the largest parish in the deanery of Victoria-Haliburton.

Until the 1960's, many families were locally born and raised, but a steady influx of Toronto and area cottagers and retirees has slowly changed the face and focus of the parish and its worship. A more business-like attitude would come to dominate the parish and the working of its Advisory Board, which is similar to a Vestry.

Historically, St. Paul's has been associated with clergy who were graduates of Wycliffe College in Toronto. Wycliffe is known as the more Protestant and evangelical seminary in the diocese in which a Low Church style of worship is taught, in contrast to Trinity College which is the more catholic and liturgical college. Up until the 1990's, St. Paul's had a tradition of Morning Prayer services most Sundays, with a monthly communion service. Today, the Eucharist is held most Sundays with Morning Prayer on a 5th Sunday of the month.

The Diocese of Toronto

The relationship of St. Paul's, Lindsay has not always been an amicable one with the administration of the Diocese of Toronto. Some of the tension and distrust is due to the geographic distance to Toronto. There is also a disconnect between the urban center

and rural communities. In recent years tension hit a flashpoint over a property issue that was not handled well at the diocesan level.

The Toronto Diocese is quite large and tends to be very political. Founded in 1839, it is the most populous of the 30 dioceses in the Anglican Church of Canada. The geographical area extends over 10,038 square miles, stretching from Mississauga in the west, to Brighton in the east, and north to Haliburton.

There are 216 congregations in 189 parishes in the Diocese. The main cluster of parishes are found in the City of Toronto, the fourth most populous municipality in North America, with a population of about 3 million. It is considered by many to be the most multicultural city in the world. The City of Toronto also has the largest population of aboriginal people in the country.

The Diocese of Toronto includes the fastest-growing suburban region in Canada called the Greater Toronto Area or GTA, and also covers a large rural area in which a large number of parishes reside. Nearly five million people live within the diocesan boundaries, 376,000 of which identify themselves as Anglicans. There are about 55,500 people on parish rolls.

The Diocese of Toronto is currently divided into four Episcopal Areas, each administered by a Suffragan Bishop. The Bishops are under the authority of the Diocesan Bishop, forming the College of Bishops for the Diocese. St. Paul's Anglican Church is approximately 85 miles northeast of Toronto in the Episcopal area of Trent-Durham. It is located towards the center of the Episcopal area. Trent-Durham consists of 43 parishes and 61 churches in small towns, rural communities, and urban areas along the Lake

Ontario lakeshore. It is the largest geographical area of the Diocese of Toronto, stretching from Pickering to Brighton and from Lake Ontario to Haliburton.

The Diocese is seen as primarily city-focused by rural churches like St. Paul's. It is this perception along with past issues that has affected the attitude of members of St. Paul's. It created an "us versus them" mentality that filtered down into relations between lay leadership and clergy. This attitude led to an inner-looking attitude, supported the idea of privilege, and allowed certain lay people to control the direction of the parish.

Lindsay Today

St. Paul's is fortunate to be in the economic center of the Kawartha Lakes. The town of Lindsay is also the administrative center of the area and the largest of the sixteen former municipalities that were amalgamated into what is now the City of Kawartha Lakes.

Lindsay's ethnic makeup is primarily white, with most residents being decedents of immigrants from England, Scotland and Ireland. Various other European countries are also present in the makeup of the population. The likely long-term growth in Lindsay and Kawartha Lakes includes a greater ethnic mix from the Toronto area. A large Asian and Caribbean community currently exists in towns 40 miles to the south and west of Lindsay. Thirty years ago, those communities were also predominately white, but urban sprawl and the desire for less expensive housing has encouraged immigrants in Toronto to move to the suburbs and beyond, including housing now being developed in Lindsay to draw people from the GTA.

Lindsay has come a long way from the lumber town of 1857 to today's cultural and commercial center. The seeds of growth are continually being sown with new housing and retail developments and the many examples of heritage architecture stand as a tribute and reminder of Lindsay's long and rich history.

St. Paul's Anglican Church

St. Paul's church is in a prime downtown location on the south side of Russell Street West, between William Street and Cambridge Street. Many parishioners own cottage properties in the area where they spend much of their time in the summer months. St. Paul's also welcomes visitors at summer services that are vacationing in the area. During the year the church is involved in a number of events geared to the greater community of Lindsay and surrounding area.

Being the only Anglican Church in town has had a positive and negative effect over the years. On the positive side, there is no competition. On the negative side, the parish is a gathering place for disaffected people and those who believe they have the right to control decisions around ministry and worship. Clergy themselves have been the targets of control, often succumbing to power plays or leaving the parish in frustration.

Over the years, the parish has aged demographically, making it harder for young families to find others of similar age and interests. Due to the strong influence of some individuals in the parish, ministry gradually shifted away from attracting young families to become a parish that focuses more on the older adults who make up the majority of the parish participants and financial contributors. One younger member once described the parish as a senior's country club.

Parish Governance

How members of a parish relate to each other, the clergy, and the Diocese, can give a clearer indication of attitude, outlook, and even spirituality. The parish Advisory Board is a microcosm of attitudes within the parish, which when analyzed can indicate the health and direction a parish is moving. This body sets the tone and pace of activities, and has determined where money is allocated.

In the Anglican Church of Canada structure, parish governance is different than in the Episcopal Church. Parishes do not have an elected Vestry, but instead have an Advisory Board, sometimes called Parish Council. Some members are elected, while others are appointments. There are no mandated terms of office for board members. The Diocese suggests two three-year terms.

The Board acts in an advisory capacity supporting the work and decisions of the “corporation” made up of the Rector, also called the Incumbent, the Rector’s Warden (Senior Warden) and the People’s warden (Junior Warden) that have the final say on financial and legal matters. The Incumbent and wardens are the legal body of the parish under Canadian and Provincial law. There is also no canonical process for an Advisory Board covenant or parish constitution that helps direct a board other than the Diocesan Canon on Advisory Boards that focuses primarily on a fiduciary role.

For many years St. Paul’s appeared to lack a clear purpose or mission and no clear set of procedures for the Advisory Board. Over the last ten years I have helped the congregation develop a new mission statement and formulate a plan for current ministry needs while working to lay a foundation for the future. I have been working to change

the governance structure from fiduciary-focused board to one that is more mission minded and generative in thinking and functioning, but that work is far from finished.

Dan Hotchkiss in his book *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership* says, “A really effective governing board is working with the pastoral leadership to formulate the big picture of a congregation’s mission and priorities...An effective governing board minds the big picture, and in doing so is a good steward of a congregations resources-human, financial, and spiritual.”² The responsibilities of the Advisory Board need to extend to human and spiritual needs of the congregation. This will be a new element in the Board’s understanding of its role and purpose. Most non-financial needs are rarely addressed by the board and are put into my hands.

A clearer understanding of the Board’s role would also allow Board members to partner with me in a way that will support my ministry, and in turn, the needs of parishioners and members of the larger community in which we do ministry and outreach. This includes fine-tuning the way we live out our stated mission, *To Know Jesus and Make Him Known*³. Hotchkiss says, “The primary measure of a governing board’s success is not the balance in the bank, the shortness of board meetings, or the happiness of congregants. A congregation’s ‘bottom line’ is the degree to which its mission is achieved.”⁴

The focus on finances as the primary purpose of the parish Board has led to a loss of a creative focus on ministry. As the parish has aged over the last two decades the

² Dan Hotchkiss, *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016) Kindle Location 75.

³ The revised mission statement was developed after I led a seminar with the Advisory Board followed by a day away with the board in the fall of 2010.

⁴ Hotchkiss, *Governance and Ministry*, Kindle Location 1404.

resultant anxieties among Board members led to a “circling the wagons” mentality, leading to a further movement away from ideas for ministry and formation. Strategic planning was less about growing the parish spiritually and more on ways to pay the bills.

There has been some positive movement away from a strict financial focus in recent years, but there is more work to be done in this area. The Advisory Board has shifted a bit and is trying to address the human and spiritual needs of the congregation. In the spring of 2017 and 2018, the parish Advisory Board supported the participation in a program called Natural Church Development (NCD) that analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of parish life, worship and ministry. The NCD process has identified the parish as strong in leadership and volunteerism, but weak on spirituality and faith formation. The process has helped the Advisory Board see the need to expand its outlook and hopefully will lead to creative input around worship and ministry. Continued Board growth would allow us to partner better in addressing the needs of parishioners and the community in response to our stated mission *To Know Jesus and Make Him Known*.

Since many key parish members on the Advisory Board and in the pews have been financially-focused over the past few decades, most initiatives for families with children and youth and young adults during those years have been ignored and money for staffing family or youth ministries has been non-existent. Instead, energy, time and money have supported senior’s ministries.

Not all parish members, however, have been against developing programs for young families, youth, and young adults. A core group within the parish would like to see changes to what the parish budget supports and staffs for growth. The challenge has been for this group to gain the trust of the other parish members who have been a roadblock to

change. As the leader of the parish, my strategy has been slowly to make the changes and gain the support of those key members. In 2011 there was a breakthrough that included enough support to find ways of funding a youth program that would six years later provide the opportunity for the project between youth and the older adults.

Socio-Economic Issues in Lindsay

The motivation for the parish youth program was born out of the socio-economic realities of the town of Lindsay. I saw a need that was not being filled by any other church in the vicinity. While there is a Boys and Girls Club in the town, it is a distance from where most youth live, as well as from the local middle school and high school.

St. Paul's had a mostly unused basement hall, and I envisioned a place for youth to come after school, have social time, do homework, and maybe, in time, be able to open the door to spiritual questions.

Although Lindsay is a small rural town, it has many big city social ills that include drug and alcohol addiction, teen pregnancies, unemployment, mental health needs, lack of affordable housing, and many divorced and single parent families. In the vicinity of St. Paul's Church, King Albert Elementary School has a student base of more than 60% whose families are on some form of social assistance. Crack houses exist within minutes of the church. A discerning eye can see the effects that addictions, unemployment and poverty have on the town.

Some members of St. Paul's have no idea what is outside the walls of the church building. They live in houses, condos and apartments away from the church property. People come to worship and then run off home or to meet friends for brunch in local restaurants. However, several socially conscious members of the parish do see the local

needs and are actively involved in the parish outreach ministries that support local initiatives such as the Women's Resource Center, a local shelter called A Place Called Home (APCH), the Boys and Girls Club, food banks, and the Pregnancy Center that helps teen moms.

A precursor to our youth program was St. Paul's involvement with the King Albert and Queen Victoria Schools. Both schools could be considered inner city schools based on the financial circumstances of families. St. Paul's has helped with Christmas food and gift hampers for many years at King Albert School, and in April 2018, the parish began working with a United Church in town to provide 180 grilled cheese sandwiches every Friday for Queen Victoria School as part of a lunch program.

For twenty years, the outreach committee has also supported the children at King Albert School by running a program at Christmas and Easter. This program has a twofold purpose. The first is to help children from grades 1-6 learn the basic Christian stories of the birth of Jesus, His death, and resurrection. The second is to provide nutritious snacks such as veggies and fruit to supplement the lunches of children that attend the program. A full lunch is provided to children who do not come with a lunch.

The relationship between the church and the school is unique in that most public school boards do not allow students to participate in a church's activities. The school allows a flyer and permission forms to go home. Parents have the choice to send their children to the seasonal programs. The school then sends Educational Assistants (EA) with the children to St. Paul's. The EA's assist church volunteers with crafts and snacks. Some of the student graduates of King Albert school are now connecting with our weekly youth program as they move on into middle school.

Children and Youth: Planting Seeds for Ministry

In 2007, a parish survey was taken to address concerns about the future of the parish. Suggestions included increased youth programming as well as providing more opportunities for young people to get involved in the life of the church community. Sadly, like many organizational reports and surveys, nothing was ever done. The will to act was not there, nor were there enough supportive voices.

Since I arrived in 2008, however, a major focus of mine has been children and youth ministry. The 2007 survey confirmed the lack of young families and the aging of the congregation, but the urgency for young families was less a desire to reach out to parents and their children than it was to reverse a trend of loss to age and infirmity, to fill the pews, and to support the finances of the parish.

While the desire for younger families in the church is an admirable goal, the motivation behind that desire still needed to be changed. I believed that until attitudes around a youth presence would improve, a youth program and reaching out to young families would not be possible. Finally, four years after I arrived, enough seeds had been planted for the parish to support a youth ministry at St. Paul's. Today, seven years after that, the youth program exists and youth are beginning to be welcomed and slowly integrated into the parish.

Cultivating change takes time, prayer, energy and the support of key members of the parish. Through intentional yet casual discussions with parishioners, I raised the topic of supporting children and youth programs. I preached sermons about our role as a church and how are we to fulfill our mission as Christians, honoring St. Paul's ancestors

and building upon, at that time, almost 175 years of worship and ministry in the town of Lindsay.

At that time youth and children made up a very small percentage of our congregation. The Church School numbered less than a dozen children, with irregular attendance. When the discussion in the parish was begun to look at what could be done to attract younger families, the question of appropriate and adequate space for children and youth was raised. Sunday school and youth space was not permanent. Tables and chairs needed to be set up weekly. If a parish event needed space for a fundraising or social event, the children lost their place. With that in mind, in 2011, and with the cautious support of the Advisory Board, the wardens applied for a Diocesan grant to renovate space to be used for Sunday school and a new nursery room.

The Diocesan grant for renovations included money to transform a large basement hall that was being used for storage and choir practice to be turned into a dedicated and permanent youth room. This space would become the home for the program that would reach out to youth in the community.

In 2012, the parish partnered with the Diocese to partially fund and train a part-time youth minister under my supervision to run an afternoon program and Sunday classes. While the Sunday part of the program was not very successful, the weekday program grew to over 50 youth and teens, necessitating an extra night being added to create two age groups; junior high and senior high. Unfortunately, the program suffered a crash and burn situation after a misconduct problem in the parish set off a chain of events that all but destroyed the youth group. The situation also caused many in the parish to stop supporting the youth program and even caused some to leave the parish.

Some parish members that were already reluctant to have a youth program turned the situation into an attack against youth in general.

After much work, prayer, and providing opportunities for people to speak their mind about the situation, I was able to convince the parish to continue with the youth outreach program. In 2015, a new youth minister was hired. He was able to develop a new program that nurtures life skills and the spiritual development of the youth and teens. Attendance has exceeded 20 participants some weeks.

Like the original program begun in 2012, the outreach continues to be to local youth in the community. Many of the youth come from the disadvantaged families in the vicinity of the church building. Some are in families struggling with financial issues, addiction, divorce, conflict, and mental health issues. All of these challenges are in addition to those normally encountered by all adolescents who are developmentally facing physical and emotional changes, self-esteem issues, the need to belong to a group or community, and continually changing relationships and friendships. Such stresses have caused some of our youth to even threaten suicide.

The Senior Generation

Adults over the age of 65 years of age make up the highest percentage of parishioners at St. Paul's. They are highly active and involved in ministries and social activities. Most are not original residents of Lindsay, but moved from urban centers because the cost of living is lower than the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Many already had a connection with Lindsay through cottage ownership, and in retirement decided to stay in the area. Some were already seasonal worshippers at St. Paul's.

The majority of the older adults who moved to Lindsay and became members of St. Paul's were active in their former churches, attending Sunday worship, and serving as leaders of groups and committees, or even as wardens. For some of the older adults, coming to St. Paul's was a reconnecting with church once they retired and had time to attend worship more regularly. For others, there a natural transition from active participation in their former parishes to participation in the life and community of St. Paul's.

Although it is not particular to older adults, many who are of an older age in the congregation have come with set ways and opinions. This has contributed to the clashes between clergy and laypeople over the years regarding running the parish, ministry initiatives and change. It is hard to push against the comfort level of those who see the church as a bulwark against the worries and changes they confront in the world. Whether it is a change to the liturgy and prayer book, or the intentional reaching out to young families and youth, change disrupts.

The older adults at St. Paul's in Lindsay have much to offer the local community in terms of time, talent, experience, and perspectives. Many are active members of the local hospital auxiliary, volunteering countless hours. Some are members of local service groups such as the Optimist Club that supports activities like the local Boys and Girls Club. They also have served in our parishes ministries to King Albert and Queen Victoria public schools.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed description of the setting and context of the project, looking at the history of the parish as well as some past issues and challenges.

One of the goals of the project was to tap into the heart the older adults have for children and use that to draw youth from the parish outreach program and parish seniors together into a relationship of mutual benefit, learning and support. Chapter Two will describe the project and methodology used to help accomplish these goals, from the planning stage through to the video interviews and the feedback processes used.

Chapter 2

The Project

This chapter will focus on the methodology and design of the ministry project and the participants involved. After an overview of the project and my project thesis, I will discuss the narrative qualitative inquiry approach I use for the project. I will provide an outline of the steps involved, the project design, the participants, the sources for data collection, and a timeline for the project from planning to completion. This will provide the framework for Chapter Three, which provides an analysis of the data collected and the different components of the project.

Project Preamble and Thesis

The intent of this project was to provide opportunities for learning, sharing, encouraging, and bonding between older members of the congregation and youth from the parish's outreach program. Through intentional interaction of the youth and older adults I hoped to bridge a generational gap that exists at St. Paul's. In recent years, young people have been mostly ignored, unless there was a need for muscle to carry boxes or stack tables and chairs in the hall. This relational distance has resulted in a mistrust of the older adults by the youth who see the adults as controlling and not supportive.

By bringing the two generations together through a common learning experience, both the young and the old can discover they have something to share and to learn from each other. The relationships formed by the project, whether social or mentoring, between some youth and the seniors they got to know can also continue to develop.

My thesis is that by connecting youth and the older adults, youth participants will grow in understanding and faith, and the seniors will be affirmed in their supportive role while validating their own experiences of faith, which will open doors to generational sharing and provide a model of learning that can be used for other programs in the parish and throughout the diocese.

While much of the focus of the learning is from senior to youth, youth can also teach the older adults how to use their computers and tablets, navigate the Internet, use Skype, and connect better with their families who may be at a distance. Such intergenerational, reciprocal learning strengthens connections and deepens relationships.

Qualitative Inquiry Approach

My thesis project included a variety of elements including discussion, a video of faith narratives, questionnaires, and a social gathering with dinner. The methodology most appropriate to this project is narrative inquiry, as described by Lynn Butler-Kisber in her book, *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Based Perspectives*.

Drawing on the work of Clandinin and Connolly, Butler-Kisber writes,

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or a series of places, and in social interactions. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000, p.20).⁵

Butler-Kisber also says a narrative tells a short or extended story about something significant, or relates a life story from its inception, which can be biographical or autobiographical.⁶

⁵ Lynn-Butler Kisber, *Qualitative Inquiry*, p. 65.

⁶ Lynn-Butler Kisber, *Qualitative Inquiry*, p. 75.

Bruce L. Berg in *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* includes the sharing of stories under Historiography and Oral Traditions. Berg says, “Oral histories allow you to escape some of the deficiencies of residual and official presentations in documentary records.”⁷ He also says that older people have many facts and memories that may be unavailable elsewhere. Berg goes on to say, “Oral histories allow researchers to investigate ordinary people as well as exceptional ones whose life and work may find their way into written documents.”⁸

Of the different qualitative inquiry traditions, narrative inquiry touches on the key element of story telling and the sharing of experience between the one sharing the story and the researcher. In this project, the youth interviewers solicit the responses and stories using open-ended questions written by the youth.

For the two youth interviewers, their efforts provided a real life opportunity to interact with the older adults sharing their stories such as a near death experience by one person to the story of one older adult as a young man who came home from work to discover his mother dead on the kitchen floor.

The mechanism used for the other youth to participate in the interview process was video. Videotaping the seniors allowed the youth participating in the project to enter into the process as secondary listeners in addition to the youth interviewers who were primary participants. The stories of the seniors provided answers to questions, but they were only the first element in the methodology that would then lead to the youth

⁷ Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 208.

⁸ Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 209.

commenting and responding to what they saw and heard. At the concluding dinner, some youth were observed talking to seniors about some of the stories they shared in the video.

The Project

This project involved the sharing of narratives by the older adults who were interviewed by two youth, with intent towards relationship development, intergenerational connections, discipleship building, and the creating of trust through the sharing of faith narratives. It is a project of mutual benefit in which both groups, youth and the older adults, learn from each other, gaining new insights and a greater appreciation for each other. For the older adults there is also the benefit of telling their story in the midst of loss.⁹ Stories relay faith, foster hope, and pass the torch to the next generation.

The youth in the program at St. Paul's want an understanding of God and Church. Authentic living and authentic faith is what youth seek. They want to hear what an adult believes, why they believe, and how they are living the faith they profess. This project allowed youth to learn about faith the way they want to learn by hearing the narratives and sharing of the seniors.

Through narrative and relationship building, seeds of faith are planted and the exercising of faith and action begins. The youth have much to learn from the older adults, and seniors have much to learn from the youth who bring their own insights and experience to this new relationship.

Project Outline

My thesis project involved these steps:

⁹ Losses are experienced in many ways as people age. This will be discussed in more detail in the chapter about the seniors.

- a) Development of questions by the youth for the older adults.
- b) Scheduling the video interviews.
- c) Encourage the sharing of faith stories and experiences between the generations through the interviews videotaped by the youth.
- d) Youth participants watching the video online.
- e) Monitoring the progress of the project, and being available to the youth.
- f) Youth writing their reactions or thoughts about what they heard in the interviews.
- g) A youth interviewer and a senior working together to edit the video.
- h) A gathering of both groups over dinner to allow for further sharing, discussion and feedback.
- i) Seniors answering a questionnaire about their dinner experience with the youth.
- j) Youth interviewers being interviewed by me.

Project Design

When I first planned this project, I expected the initial qualitative data and analysis to come from interactive dialogue, face to face interviews of parish senior citizens, and their responses to questions written by youth in the parish youth program.

As I worked with teenagers ranging from 13-17 years of age, I saw the need to be more creative in how to share the answers to their questions in a meaningful and familiar way. In collaboration with the youth, I decided to include audio-visual recording of the interviews, which was then observed on social media via YouTube. I believed going beyond a mere transcript of answers was important to allow the youth a chance to see the

faces of the people interviewed and to hear their voices. Facial expression, intonation and inflection play a key role in creating a connection between those who were interviewed and the observer. A pause, a smile, a laugh, looking down or away, and other visual cues, all have an affect on the viewer.¹⁰ Youth are keen observers of people, and I hoped that by watching and listening to the seniors and their stories, there would be additional positive impact.

The importance of capturing this visual information is seen as increasingly important in qualitative data collection. Lynn Butler-Kisber says, “There has been, since the late 1980’s, an increasing interest in the use of visual images in research because of its power to evoke emotional, embodied responses and mediate different understandings depending on its form...Photography, and film in particular, have become important dimensions of collaborative and participatory action research (PAR) initiatives.”¹¹ Butler-Kisber goes on to say that participants of any age and culture can use cameras and even cellphones easily and effectively. Butler-Kisber doesn’t speak specifically about videotaping in her chapter on visual inquiry, but she points to visual images as evoking cognitive and affective responses.¹² “This process gives rise to stories and further dialogue that deepens the understanding of insider or emic perspectives. It emphasizes the contiguous and contextual orientation to inquiry.”¹³

Julie Anne Lytle, in her book *Faith Formation 4.0*, talks about today’s needs for digital communication and different ways to share our faith. Growing faith in the twenty-

¹⁰ The challenge of today’s digital communications such as emails and texts, is that misinterpretation and miscommunication occur when expression and tone are left out. How one speaks and communicates words has an impact on the listener.

¹¹ Lynn Butler-Kisber, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 35.

¹² Lynn Butler-Kisber, *Qualitative Inquiry*, Table 7.1, 130.

¹³ Lynn Butler-Kisber, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 136.

first century has opportunities and challenges, including a shift from physical space to digital places. She also makes the claim that it is important to “blend activities in physical places with efforts in digital spaces. This is the new frontier for evangelism and faith formation.”¹⁴ The use of face-to-face interviews to produce a video accessed by the youth participants on YouTube is a blending of the traditional interacting with today’s digital connecting.

Cynthia J. Brame, Assistant Director for the *Center For Teaching* at Vanderbilt says, “Video has become an important part of higher education. It is integrated as part of traditional courses, serves as a cornerstone of many blended courses, and is often the main information delivery mechanism in MOOCs. Several meta-analyses have shown that technology can enhance learning (e.g., Schmid et al., 2014), and multiple studies have shown that video, specifically, can be a highly effective educational tool.”¹⁵

In this project, taping the videos provides physical interaction between the interviewers and the seniors, and the video produced offers the opportunity to view the interviews from home through a social media format that youth are familiar and comfortable with. The interviews can be watched one at a time or as a whole, and youth can go back and listen again if needed. Facial expressions, tone, and the way questions are answered become part of the experience of listening and reflecting.

The Participants

The participants fall into two categories, a) Youth and b) Older Adults

a) *Youth*

¹⁴ Julie Anne Lytle, *Faith Formation 4.0* (New York, Harrisburg, Denver: Morehouse Publishing, 2013).97.

¹⁵ Cynthia J. Brame, <http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/effective-educational-videos>

The youth, male and female, are members of St. Paul's youth program. All but one are from the community and are not members of the parish. The program was devised as an outreach to local teens in grades 7-12. The program was initiated in 2012, and has gone through several changes, the last one being the hiring of a new youth leader in 2015. The youth leader is a high school teacher who works for the parish half time. The youth program is scheduled every Tuesday after school from 4:30 pm until 8:30 pm. The program includes social time, games, cooking, eating dinner together, discussion, prayer, and instrumental contemporary Christian music.

The youth that participated in the project are active members of the program. Unlike a traditional youth group whose members tend to be children of parish members, St. Paul's youth program is an outreach to local teens that are impacted by the socio-economic conditions of the town of Lindsay. Several come from single parent homes or homes dealing with financial and relational issues.

The program does not advertise for membership, but instead relies on word of mouth involving friends inviting friends. This has provided the vehicle for a gradual and controlled growth that allows youth to welcome and get to know new members in a non-threatening way. Many of the youth know of each other outside the youth program. This has helped in developing internal relationships, although at times school conflicts have had an impact on the group that has needed to be addressed by the youth leader.

I am present every week with the youth program offering support to the youth leader, and helping with the weekly meal the youth enjoy. The youth knew I was in a doctoral program, but did not know my area of study. When I shared that I was interested in how people come to and grow in faith, some of the youth wanted to know more.

At one of the weekly youth bible study discussions following dinner, there was a discussion about faith and God. Some said they believed in God, while others weren't sure. One said he was an atheist. The discussion had a depth I wanted to explore. I needed a vehicle that would allow the youth to ask the questions they wanted to discuss.

After a couple of weeks, I brought forward the idea of having the youth come up with some faith based questions that could be asked of adults who have walked a faith journey for many years and perhaps have faced the same questions the youth may currently be struggling with, such as belief in God and life after death. Most of the youth thought it was an interesting idea, and said they would help me in the project when I was ready. Letters of permission to participate were sent to their parents.¹⁶

The youth participated in important ways throughout the project. Thirteen youth between ages thirteen and sixteen helped write the nine questions for the seniors. They were given two weeks to think about the questions they wanted answered, then we drafted them together during a Tuesday program evening. Two members of the youth program undertook the video interviews of the older adults. One youth with one older adult edited the video over a three-week period. Fifteen youth watched the video, and eight youth, four male and four female, between twelve and twenty years of age, answered the follow-up questions. Thirteen youth joined eight of the ten seniors for the final gathering and dinner.

b) Older Adults

At the time of the preparation for the project, I had already been at St. Paul's for eight years. I had a good relationship with many of the members of the parish and knew

¹⁶ Appendix 1

who was living their faith in an active and loving way. I also knew who were the supportive voices for our youth program and the youth, and may be potential mentors that could be partnered with youth to discuss faith and life issues.

When considering which older adults to invite in the process, I wanted a cross section of adults who I believed could share their faith stories and who had church experiences they could share. I chose some older adults based on their long time commitment to the parish and a supportive role they played in getting the youth program started. All are long time and faithful Christians that I believed would have faith narratives to share with the youth. The other criteria I looked for were personal life changes and gradual pulling back from activities in the church. Such older adults who are not as connected and active in church due to age and infirmity are sometimes forgotten by busy parishes, and need to feel wanted, loved, and supported. It is my belief that seniors dealing with change in their lives have a better understanding and empathy for youth dealing with everything from physiological and emotional changes, to family restructuring and disconnecting.¹⁷

Ten older adults participated in the project, including seven women and three men. Their former careers included a doctor, nurses, office workers, and salespersons. Their ages ranged from sixty-nine to ninety-one years of age. The male to female ratio was representative of the parish attendance. They are all long time members of the parish, and have been involved socially, supported parish events and fundraising, and some have been committee leaders or a warden. Half were still active on committees or assisting at

¹⁷ Some the youth have experienced the separation of parents, financial struggles, depression and suicidal thoughts. Several have experienced the loss of a loved one and struggle with the emotions of such loses. More will be discussed in the Sociology Chapter.

fundraisers and events. Most others were not directly involved, but attended worship and parish events. Two were mostly homebound, but tried to attend worship as health permitted.

Each person was invited to participate through direct conversation followed up by the letter of permission to be signed prior to participation. Some wanted to know the questions prior to the interview. A list of the questions was provided. It was my hope that some time would be put into considering their answers in light of the fact youth would be listening to their answers.

When the dinner date with the youth was finalized, the seniors were sent letters of invitation, and following the dinner they were sent thank you letters for participating in the entire project and questions about their experience with the youth.¹⁸

Materials/Resources

The project was multi-dimensional involving group discussion, interviews, multimedia, face-to-face engagement, writing responses and the breaking of bread with a final dinner catered by a local chef.

The material used for the video interview process was a questionnaire the youth put together through discussion and reflection. From over twenty questions, the list was reduced to nine.¹⁹

A Sony Handicam on a tripod was used for the interviews. A small room with a couch was provided for the seniors to be interviewed. Some were interviewed in the church sanctuary due to a last minute schedule change. Two were interviewed in their homes due to mobility issues.

¹⁸ Appendix 2.

¹⁹ Appendix 3

The ten interview sessions were downloaded to a computer, and editing software was used to edit and create the video. The video was put on a private YouTube site that could only be accessed through a link that was provided to the youth. A questionnaire was provided for the youth to fill out after the video was watched asking follow up questions and whether they had any further questions for the older adults.

The concluding dinner was a time to say thank you to all involved, but was also video taped from off to the side to observe interactions between youth and older adults. There was an intentional combining of older adults and youth at the tables, and a switching of seats at the dessert time to allow a greater number of interactions.

Data Collection

This project utilized five important steps in data collection. The first step was the formation of questions by our youth that were asked of the older adults. Second was the development of the video. Third, the youth responded to questions following their viewing of the video. Fourth, I conducted an interview with the two youth who interviewed our seniors for the video. Finally, the older adults answered questions after the dinner where they interacted with the youth.²⁰

Questions From the Youth

The youth attending St. Paul's Tuesday outreach youth program are genuinely trying to understand what it means to believe in God and what is church. Ranging in age from thirteen to seventeen, they are dealing with a time and culture that is moving away from church, but still have questions about faith and what faith means in their lives.

²⁰ Appendix 8.

Weekly youth gatherings include a time to talk about God, as well as times for prayer and worship. The youth have many good questions about faith and the Bible, which the youth leader addresses in the group sessions. In one of those sessions I had the idea of having the youth put together some questions they felt were important to them, and have some of the older adults of the parish respond based on their own personal experiences.

I believe that faith can be planted, stirred up, and shared through stories, whether these stories are about how one started in the church, how one understands God, or how challenges to faith are faced and worked through. Learning about faith through lived experience provides a deeper grounding and opens the door to further discussion and relationships.

David Gortner, in his book *Transforming Evangelism*, says, “People respond to people. People respond to personal stories and direct expressions of wonder and joy.”²¹ Sharing our stories are important ways to connect with others and this sharing is a tool for evangelism. “Evangelism in the twenty-first century will require us to become more comfortable naming the One who is the Source of Life within and among us. This means becoming adept at telling our own stories of transformation and at hearing others’ moments of encounter with God that they may not even recognize as holy moments.”²²

Patricia Hendricks, in *Hungry Souls, Holy Companions: Mentoring a New Generation of Believers*, says that in our postmodern times, teens and young adults are looking for *experiential faith*. They will not be satisfied sitting in a class memorizing

²¹ David Gortner, *Transforming Evangelism* (New York: Church Publishing, 2008) Kindle Locations 2375-2376. Kindle Edition.

²² *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 234-237

stories and creeds. They want to experience faith as real and life-giving. Interacting with other Christians who can share their faith and be open to discussion and interaction are ways to plant the seeds of faith and foster growth. “Today’s postmodern believers would rather experience spiritual truths than read about them...They want to feel God’s presence and are open to different ways to experience the divine.”²³

An important part of the project was to bring two generations, separated by fifty to sixty years of age, together. Intergenerational connecting will be discussed in the Chapter Five with a sociological discussion of youth and seniors, but one of the hoped for outcomes is the building of friendships and mentor relationships. Diane J. Chandler, in *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach For Personal and Relational Wholeness*, says, “Friendship connects people in a bond of love and trust where mutual affirmation, encouragement, self-giving and sharing fuel individual and shared identity, a sense of belonging and the exchange of privileged information.”²⁴

To create an opportunity for interaction and story sharing, on November 7, 2017, the youth were asked to think of some questions that they would like to ask the seniors regarding faith, church, struggles, and similar topics. They were given flexibility, but were asked to be relevant and appropriate. I asked the youth, “If you had an opportunity to talk to an older person in the church about their faith and how they live their faith, what would it be? What do you want to learn that could help you in your own faith journey?”

²³ Patricia Hendricks, *Hungry Souls, Holy Companions: Mentoring a New Generation of Believers* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 2006), 3.

²⁴ Diane J. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach For Personal and Relational Wholeness*, (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2014), 115.

After all parent permission letters were returned, on December 19, 2017, thirteen youth and the youth leader got together to talk about their questions. To ensure the integrity of the qualitative data, I did not participate in this discussion so as not to influence the questions that the youth developed to ask the seniors. Nine questions were put together to ask the seniors. These included questions about what “sparked” senior’s faith, how to know what church is right for you, what happens after death, and how to get through a situation of losing someone close to you and keeping your faith. The questions and responses will be discussed further in the next chapter. Immediately following the discussion and the choosing of the final questions, I joined the group and listened to why the specific questions were chosen. I thanked the youth for taking the time to reflect on questions important to them.

The Video

The central action in the project is the video that was developed. The video process can be broken down into three parts:

1. The interview of the seniors by the youth.
2. The editing done by a youth interviewer and an older adult working together.
3. The video uploaded to YouTube and watched by the youth.

During the youth group meeting when the questions were formulated, I asked for two volunteers to do the interviewing and filming. Getting volunteers was challenging, but eventually two stepped up, one male and one female. The female preferred to ask the questions and the male to run the camera. However, for experience purposes, I did encourage them to switch roles at least one time when they were doing the interviews.

When the idea of a video was being discussed, some youth talked about using their phones. Phones are great for spontaneous recording, but for longer interviews without stable filming, a small Sony video camera on a tripod was selected.

The next important aspect of the recording was a quiet place that was accessible to anyone with a walker or wheelchair. Privacy was a factor, since we couldn't have people within earshot or walking by and interrupting. The chosen location was a space used as the parish library. Folding doors provide privacy and quiet, and lounge chairs and a couch provide comfort. The room is on the main level of the building and fully accessible to walkers and wheelchairs. A bathroom is also close by. A initial day was selected when the youth and most of the seniors were available. The interviews were all completed in a one-week period.

The interviews ended up being done in three locations, however. The first set of interviews was done in the church sanctuary due to an unexpected use of the planned interview room. The decision was made not to cancel, but to respect the time commitment of the seniors who came at the scheduled time. Most interviews were done in the parish library. The third location was the apartment of a husband and wife that are unable to travel freely due to mobility issues. The couple was very appreciative of the accommodations made to allow them to participate.

I was present to welcome the older adults and ensure the equipment was working and set up properly. I also made sure the two youth could run the camera. For the time of the interviews, I stayed out of sight as to not influence the answers or make the interviewers nervous.

All the interviews went well. The older adults answered all the questions. The length of the interviews ranged from under ten minutes to up to twenty minutes. Some seniors had short answers, while others went into more depth. One surprise was how short the answers were from some of the older adults who are known for talking and don't tend to shy away from chatting. Looking back at the process, it could have been the fact they were being filmed that made them feel more timid. The other possibility is that they may feel uncomfortable talking to teenagers, especially ones they don't know. The two youth interviewers had never done any interviewing prior to this experience and were instructed how to encourage more depth to the answers, but when the actual interviewing was done, they tended to go to the next question instead of asking for elaboration. Later they said they wished they had asked more questions to draw out more and deeper responses, but they were nervous asking adults questions.

One interesting part of the video process was when a few of the older adults wanted to ask the two interviewers questions. It showed an interest of the older adults in the youth and a desire to get to know the youth more by listening to their answers about faith. This was an unexpected outcome and is discussed in the final chapter.

The video editing was a unique opportunity for interaction between the teen and a senior. The fifteen-year old male who did most of the videotaping was teamed up with an eighty-year old grandfather. The teen did not know the older adult other than through the video interviews. I had prearranged back in November 2017 for the older adult to help with the editing. His technological past goes as far back as hosting a teen radio show in the mid-1950's. He currently is a consultant for a local board of education and had a private business in satellite communications. He has a video-editing studio in his house

for projects he still does for organizations including the use of a drone for videotaping. The editing was done at his home. I accompanied the youth to the house, which was twenty minutes away from the church.

The editing of the ten interviews took seven hours to complete over two days. When the 15-year-old male interviewer agreed to edit the video, he was a little sceptical about working with an 80 year old. He said, “What does he know about editing?” As it turned out, the youth ended up being taught how to use video editing software the older adult uses. He mentored the youth by showing him what to do and then stepping back while providing encouragement and support as needed. Both the older adult and the youth enjoyed the time they spent together. The older adult was very impressed with how quickly the youth learned to use the editing software and the little touches he added, and the youth gained a great respect for the senior who had more technical knowledge than he had.

The final product was an hour and twenty minute video with some added special effects at the beginning of each interview. I was also videotaped for a short introduction added into the video. On February 27, 2018, the video was uploaded to a private YouTube site.

Questions to the Youth After Viewing the Video

The final part of the video process was having our youth watch the video on YouTube. For privacy reasons no one can watch or find the video without a link provided. Thirteen members of the youth program who agreed to participate were sent a link to the video and a questionnaire to fill out after they completed watching the video.²⁵

²⁵ Appendix 4

The youth were encouraged to do two or three viewings if they needed to break it up. The viewing of the video by the youth took more encouragement than anticipated. While thirteen were committed and did view the video, it took three weeks to complete. I needed to send gentle reminders. The final number of completed questionnaires was eight of the thirteen, or a 61.5% completion rate.

The questions the youth developed for the seniors touched on questions the youth were trying to address for themselves. The questions asked of the youth after they watched the video were to solicit their responses, immersions and reactions to the senior's answers. Did the youth get the answers they hoped to hear? Did the answers trigger any specific reactions? Did the answers leave more questions unanswered?

The questions for the youth were divided into two sections. The first section gathered basic demographic information. This information included name, age, siblings and their ages, grade level, length of residency in current area, and length and reasons for attending St. Paul's youth group.

Other questions focused on content and observations about the video. These questions fell into a number of categories. First, I asked questions about their attitudes toward adults and seniors, and if those attitudes changed after the video. I chose these questions knowing that I had at least one young person who had a difficult relationship with older adults. Second, I asked them to talk about the answers they heard on the video and what their initial reactions to those answers were. Third, I asked questions related to their faith, including questions that sparked them to think about their faith in relation to the seniors' answers. Finally, I asked if they had other comments. My next chapter will examine their responses.

Interview with the Interviewers

Between the times the video was being edited and being sent out, I wanted to follow up with the two youth interviewers while the process was still fresh in their minds. They had a chance to meet the seniors before anyone else and had an opportunity to talk with them before and after each interview. They said the time they spent with the seniors was a positive one. They also commented that eliminating a question that was similar to another and going into more depth on some questions would have been good. They had never done anything like this before, and were anxious about doing the videotape, but the experience helped them connect in a new and different way with adults of a much older generation. The results of this interview are also included in the next chapter as a supplemental interview.

Final Dinner

The dinner held on March 6, 2018 was to be a thank you for the youth and the older adults as well as an intentional time of interaction and discussion. In Chapter One, I included some historical information about the uneasy relationship that has existed for several years between the youth and the adults of the parish. The purpose of the catered dinner after the other elements of the project were completed was to observe how the two generations interacted. That gathering was also videotaped. The next chapter will include data from the dinner video.

Some youth still hadn't watched the video by the dinner date, but they were glad to meet the adults first. They said they then looked forward to watching the video. Originally, there was to be a short meet and greet before the interviews were done, but

time and parish funerals prevented that opportunity. The comments by some of the youth showed that an early meeting could have produced more results by generating interest.

Project Timetable

The following is an outline of the project with dates:

- October 17, 2017: Youth told of project and invited to participate. Original goal was to have a meet and greet with seniors early November followed by interviews before the end of the month and a dinner before Christmas.
- November 5, 2017: Spoke to the senior who would eventually help edit the video.
- November 7, 2017: Youth asked to think of two questions they wanted to ask the seniors.
- Mid November: Project put on hold as parish funeral took precedence. It was determined that a start in the New Year would be better but the crafting of questions for the interview would still proceed.
- December 19, 2017: During a regular youth night, an hour was put aside to discuss potential questions the youth brought to the meeting. Nine questions were selected.
- January 2-10, 2018: I personally spoke to the ten older adults who would be interviewed.
- January 14-18, 2018: Interviews were held in three locations.
- January 20 and February 8, 2018: Seven hours of editing done to create video.
- February 13, 2018: Interview of youth video interviewers.

- February 27, 2018: Thank you Letter and Video link for YouTube emailed to youth with the questionnaire.²⁶
- March 6, 2018: Catered dinner for youth and older adults. Video made of the evening interactions.
- March 18, 2018: Reminder letter sent to youth to complete questionnaire.
- March 20, 2018: Thank you letter sent to the older adults with eight follow up questions.
- April 12, 2018: Final older adult and youth questionnaires received.

Hypotheses about outcomes

I had hoped that my project would open possibilities for new relationships and mentor opportunities, and plant seeds of faith in the youth. I hoped that both generations would see each other with new eyes, have a greater appreciation of the other, break down or begin to break down barriers, and, for youth without solid family support systems, show them that there are people out there that care about them and are willing to listen to them. For the seniors who have been gradually losing their ability to be involved in the church, I hoped the interaction would also remind them of their value, their faith, and ability to contribute.

Based on general conversations with the youth over the last year, I knew there were some who would provide good input into the questions. I was not disappointed.

The older adults were chosen for their experience and commitment to the church. All have active prayer lives and care about the well-being of young people and the need, as they see it, to share their faith with young people before it is too late for them to share.

²⁶ Thank you letter, Appendix 5; Youth Questions Appendix 4

I was pleasantly surprised that the youth wanted the older adults to share more. The biggest and consistent desire was to hear more about how faith helped the seniors in difficult times. The power of narrative to connect and transform is real. The youth have just begun to see that, and the seniors need to be encouraged and coached to do more sharing. Both groups said they would be happy to come together again. This was a hope going into the project. Opportunities for further interactions will be explored in my final chapter and conclusion.

This chapter provided an in depth description of the project, the participants, timelines, and how qualitative data was collected. In the next chapter, I take a deep dive into the analysis of the qualitative data collected through the interview of the seniors, questions asked of the youth following the observation of the video, an interview of the two youth who videotaped the older adults, and questions asked of the older adults following the celebration dinner with the youth.

Chapter 3

The Data

Holy Listening. Holy Sharing

An unexpected excitement welled up inside me as I put into place an action in ministry that touches individuals' deepest heartfelt needs and spiritual desires. It felt like forever to put the parts together to make the project happen, but once executed, the personal joy resulting from observing what I call *Holy Listening, Holy Sharing* helped me to see God at work in two very different generations coming together to listen to each other and to share stories and experiences.

In Chapter Two, I described in detail the various parts of the qualitative inquiry process for this project. Chapter Three will now take the deep dive into the results of project. The chapter is divided into two sections. Section I provides demographic information about the youth and older adult participants. Section II presents key themes in the questions written by the youth and in the responses of the older adults. These themes include faith trials, certainty of their religious faith and relation to other faiths, and what happens after death. For each of these areas, I will look at what why the youth asked the questions they did in that area, what the seniors' responses were, and how the youth reacted. Through this investigation of the key themes arising in my thesis project, I will show that the project met my goals of helping the youth grow in understanding and faith, and affirming and supporting the older adults in their role.

Section I

The Youth

The thirteen youth that contributed to the questions are part of the core group of the youth program. They are consistent participants of the weekly program, which includes up to thirty members. Of these thirteen, eight filled out the survey questionnaire after watching the video. They are: Jean, aged 12; Samantha, 13; Ted, 14; Louise, 14; Phillip, 15; Chloe, 15; Paul, 17; and Bob, 20.²⁷

All the youth participants have connected with St. Paul's through our weekly outreach program.²⁸ Most started to attend through word of mouth and invitation. The members of the group also vary in their understandings of God and church. Two youth even claim to be atheists, but continue to attend because of their friendships. The group is quite eclectic with different religious backgrounds and worldviews. The core group that wrote the questions has been together between three and four years.

The questions the youth wrote come from their need to discover something important and meaningful regarding faith. As the group transitioned from more fun and games to faith formation, I had the idea of asking the youth to come up with faith based questions they wished they could ask adults who are involved in the church. I believed there were important questions they would like to ask older adults at St. Paul's that could help them in their own faith journey.

I asked the youth to take two weeks to think of one or two questions each that were important to them.²⁹ Due to pre-scheduled activities, stormy weather and illness among the youth, it actually took six weeks before the youth had time as a group to

²⁷ All names used in this thesis are pseudonyms.

²⁸ The program was started in 2011 as an outreach to local youth. The program consists of a time for homework, games, dinner preparation and communal eating, and bible discussion and worship time.

²⁹ Warren Leibovitch, Project introduction with youth, November 7, 2017.

discuss their questions. I reminded them of the purpose of my project, and let the youth leader facilitate and write down the agreed to questions to ask the older adults.³⁰

The nine questions produced are:

1. What sparked your faith?
2. Was there ever a time that you really struggled with keeping your faith and how old were you?
3. Is it hard to keep your faith when losing someone close and how do you get through that situation?
4. How do you did you know what church was right for you?
5. How do you respond to people questioning your faith?
6. Do you think there is a truly wrong religion to believe in? Or one that you have to believe in?
7. What do you believe happens after death?
8. When your faith has been shaken, how do you recover?
9. Is it wrong to not believe in anything (atheism)?³¹

Many adults in my parish discount these youth because they are not in the pews on Sunday. Yet, their questions were an attempt to get real-life answers from the seniors. The questions exhibited a maturity that showed me that God was at work in the youth, even if this same group could be quite rambunctious at times and even a little over the edge in behavior at the Tuesday youth program.

The Older Adults

Ten older adults from the congregation were chosen to participate in the project. The criteria I chose was that the seniors had to be active members of the parish who were regular worshippers, as health permitted, and currently or previously involved in church activities such as social groups, studies, committees.³³ Inability to come to the church was

³⁰ Warren Leibovitch, Discussion with youth, December 19, 2017.

³¹ These questions can also be found in Appendix 3

³³ It was important to acknowledge that many faithful and committed members of the parish may not be able to be as actively involved in the parish as they were in previous years due to age, health and mobility issues. This was taken into consideration when participants were chosen.

not a barrier for the interviews. I knew that two seniors that I considered were homebound and would welcome a visit from the youth interviewers.³⁴

The older adults I chose are faithful Christians with caring hearts and a joyful spirit. I believed it was important to find individuals who could connect with young people for the project. I was also looking to the future and the possibility of developing a mentorship program linking the older adults and youth, so I chose older adults who are open to developing a relationship with a member of the youth program, especially with youth who may need a positive and faithful adult figure in their lives.

The ten older adults include three men and seven women, representing an average ratio of attendance on a Sunday morning. The three men were George, Steve, and Bruce. George, age 80, was in several businesses including insurance sales and consulting work, and he owned a satellite communications business. He has been a member for two years, a weekly attender of worship, and he participates in parish events. Steve, age 70, was in sales. He has been a member of the parish for fifty-six years, serving on various committees and boards, has been a warden, and is currently a lay reader and parish property manager. Bruce, age 90, was in sales and was a regional Scouting coordinator for more than thirty years. He has been a member for twenty-seven years, was a Sunday school teacher, and helped at events, fundraisers and Sunday school.

The female participants include a very professional group of nurses, a doctor, and a personal support worker. Gracie, age 80, was a homecare personal support worker for several years. She also managed plants for offices, restaurants, and clinics. She said she is

³⁴ Permission was obtained from the parents in the permission letter to do an off site visit. I drove the youth to a couple in their apartment, and stayed in the apartment during the interviews. The interview took place on January 18, 2018.

most proud of her role as a wife and mother. She has been a member for two years, and along with her husband George are regular weekly attenders of worship. Gracie also participates in ongoing parish activities.

Freda, age 80, was a nurse. She has been a member for over 56 years, having been a Sunday school teacher. She currently sits on the parish vestry and is a member of the outreach committee. Rachel, age 82, was a nurse. She has been a member for seventy years, a past warden, a member of vestry, the coordinator of two major annual fundraisers, and on several committees. Meredith, age 72, has been a member most of her life. She is a member of the chancel guild and was the envelope secretary for sixteen years. She also runs the parish nursery. Shelley, age 81, has been a member for six years. She is the coordinator of luncheons, participates in all parish events, and is a Sunday school teacher and member of vestry. Ruth, age 73, is a recently retired surgeon. She has been a member for over twenty years. She is a lay reader, lay anointer, member of the outreach committee, and member of vestry. The last female participant is Francine, age 92, a retired nurse. She has been a member for over twenty-seven years, was a Sunday school teacher, and helps at parish events. Francine is married to Bruce.

All the seniors chosen care about young people, and all were involved with children and teens as Sunday school teachers as well as Guides and Scouts. All are faithful in their daily prayer life and most have a daily time for reading scripture and devotionals. They are friendly and positive. I believed that they would welcome the opportunity to get to know the youth and would be able to speak openly about their faith.

Section II

The youth are growing up in a very different world than when I was a teenager. Then, there were no cell phones or personal computers. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat didn't exist. Today, instant communication and the influence of social media on young people play key roles in the shaping of young minds. A word search about faith and religion will result in thousands of possibilities, but it is also information that can be overwhelming and not always clear or accurate.

Google has, for some, replaced the need to sit and listen to a real person. No relationship needed. Just type in a word or question, and press enter. What makes this project special is that some youth took the time to write questions about what matters to them and then listen to people who attempted to answer the questions from their own life narratives.

Today's technology can help us listen more intently. An article on *Why Videos are Important in Education* states that online video sharing sites such as YouTube and Vimeo can be used as educational tools. "The visual and auditory nature of videos appeals to a wide audience and allows each user to process information in a way that is natural to them."³⁵ We can pause an audio recording or video to take a moment to reflect, or we can rewind and re-listen to a dialogue, or if needed, pause and return another time to watch or listen.

The project employed the use of video to create a visual presentation that would appeal to the youth, and to allow the youth to listen to the seniors one at a time or

³⁵ Next Thought Studios, *Why Videos are Important in Education*, February 1, 2017, <https://www.nextthoughtstudios.com/video-production-blog/2017/1/31/why-videos-are-important-in-education>

consecutively as time permitted. This option was important since the video of all ten people was one hour and twenty minutes long. The youth were able to go back to an answer for clarification as many times as needed.

In an article published by Travis Bergwall on January 2, 2015 in LinkedIn, an online business and employment-oriented service, Bergwall lists seven reasons students learn better with video. He talks about visual processing, saying the brain responds to visuals faster and better than text or other learning materials. Video allows for self-study and for contextualization and illustration.³⁶

The use of video in the project allowed youth to see and hear how a question was answered: the tone, the gestures, and facial expressions such as a smile or a look of reminiscing or searching a memory. Watching the seniors on video helped draw the youth into the lives of the adults in a way that a written transcript or a faceless audio recording could not. Seeing the adults on the video also helped the youth make connections at the final dinner gathering.

The nine questions written by the youth said a lot about who they are and what is important to them. The youth are trying to understand who God is and how their lives and faith come together at a time when life is all about growing and developing their own identity and belief systems.

Questions about faith, and struggles from a faith perspective needed to be answered by people who have experienced life with its many joys and challenges, darkness and grief, forgiveness and grace. We will now look at the themes that are drawn from the questions, the seniors' answers, and the reactions of the youth.

³⁶ Travis Bergwall, *7 Reasons Students Learn Better with Video*, Retrieved May 8, 2018, from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/7-reasons-students-learn-better-video-travis-bergwall>

Themes, Responses and Reactions

Three key themes emerge from the nine faith-based questions written by the youth to the seniors. They are themes that have come out of group discussions the last two years as the youth felt more confident in openly discussing issues in their own lives such as the death of a grandmother, being thrown out of their home, unemployment of parent, alcohol and drug abuse, and whether God even cares about us. The themes are: *certainty of religious faith and relation to other faiths, faith trials, and what happens after death.*

Certainty of Religious Faith

Most of the youth in the St. Paul's program have little or no family church experience. As members of the youth program they have attended the occasional worship service at St. Paul's to do Christmas presentations and to sing a song at a funeral of one of the adult youth leaders who died suddenly last summer.³⁸ The concept of people taking the time to go to church is quite foreign to most of them. They see Sunday as a day for sleeping in or working part-time.

At the Tuesday evening programs held weekly from September to June,³⁹ youth have asked a variety of faith questions. Why do people go to church? What is it about worship that is so special? Why do people believe in a God they cannot see? Why is the bible considered special? Is there really a heaven and hell? Do I need to go to church to go to heaven? Most of the youths had never had the chance to raise these questions in the past, since they come from families that are not connected to any church and do not

³⁸ The adult leader was only 60 years old when she died suddenly. The youth were very upset at her death, insisting on singing a song at the funeral as a thank you for all she did for them. The song they chose was "It is Well With My Soul," a song with deep meaning. The congregation was touched by their musical offering.

³⁹ Discussions about prayer, worship, and faith took place over the last two years. I do not have a specific date for various statements made.

attend even church during the major holidays like Christmas and Easter. Some of the nine questions appear to have come from these earlier discussions.

Three of the nine questions relate to the theme of *certainty of faith*. They are: *What sparked your faith? How did you know what church was right for you? and How do you respond to people questioning your faith?* The questions were an attempt to understand faith. Did a common experience help form faith, and did that experience have any bearing on what church they choose to attend?

I find the questions in themselves interesting. The first question seeks to find out what starts someone on a path of faith? Is it an event, the influence of a person, or something more? The second question doesn't ask why the seniors like St. Paul's, but asks a broader question of what church was right for you?

The older adults' answers to the question, *What sparked your faith?* for the most part were not surprising to the youth. They saw the value a family member such as a parent or grandparent can make helping someone learn about church and God. The youth video interviewer Phillip commented that when he had children he wanted to take his children to church.⁴⁰

Some of the older adults' answers to the question included Freda who said, "I can't ever remember a time I didn't attend church."⁴¹ Bruce said his mother made sure they all went to church. Ruth also mentioned it was the influence of her mother who was, "a woman of very deep faith."⁴² Meredith had always gone to church, but she said it was when she had children that she had a new interest in her faith and that of her children.

⁴⁰ Leibovitch, Discussion with youth interviewers, February 13, 2018.

⁴¹ Freda, Video interview, January 14, 2018.

⁴² Bruce, Video interview, January 18, 2018.

She said, “I can’t say there was one thing that sparked it. It’s a growing spark through different stages of my life. When my children were little; that was a big change. You want your kids to grow up in the church too. So you get more involved at that time.”⁴³ The response from the youth to this answer was one of surprise because their experience was very different.⁴⁴ Their parents did not get involved with a church for their children. Ted voiced some regret that his parents were not helpful in this regard.⁴⁵

Parents played an important role in the faith life of the older adults, taking them to church on a regular basis. This was a time when it was the norm to attend church and Sunday school. If historically parents had a role in “sparking” the faith in the older adults, what about children and youth that do not have the same encouragement? What role can the parish play? This is an important question for the parish leadership to ponder.

A surprising discovery for me as a result of the project is that all the youth that filled out the post-video questionnaire said they believed in God. Samantha in her written answer to *What was your understanding of faith, God and church before watching the Video?* said, “I have faith in God because he made life and he made us.”⁴⁶ Chloe said, “My understanding was fairly simple. There’s a God who created earth and every thing on and around it. He lives in heaven, has no beginning or end, and is the only one with the right to judge us.” Phillip who does attend church said, “God is a huge part of my life. Whenever I need help, I will pray and ask God for help.”⁴⁷ Louise said, “My understanding of faith, God, and church before watching the video was that you didn’t

⁴³ Meredith, Video interview, January 16, 2018

⁴⁴ Leibovitch, Discussion with youth, March 20, 2018.

⁴⁵ Leibovitch, Discussion with youth.

⁴⁶ Samantha, Youth Responses, March 19, 2018.

⁴⁷ Phillip, Youth Responses, March 19, 2018.

have to go to church every Sunday or read the entire bible to still have a strong faith and belief.”⁴⁸ At some future time I would like to talk with the youth and find out why they believe in God and how their beliefs developed.

The second question related to the theme *certainty of faith* is the question *How did you know what church was right for you?* The youth are on a journey of discovery. While most do not attend a church, they all were interested in why people attend a certain kind of church. Did a certain kind of church make a difference to understanding God?

The youth know there are different kinds of churches, but aren't sure what makes them different and why someone attends one church over another. Is it the type of worship and music, or statement of beliefs? The minister? Is it about how welcoming a congregation is to strangers or whether they help people in the community? I believe some of the youth would attend a church if they felt their family would support going, but for now it is a time for gathering some knowledge and experience of church when possible.

When the seniors were asked the question how they knew a church was right for them, most said they were in the Anglican Church all their lives and that is what they knew and liked. The one exception was growing up in one denomination and then changing church to attend a new spouse's church. Steve was raised a Baptist, but has attended St. Paul's and the Anglican Church since he married forty-one years ago. Freda said she tried lots of different churches. "There is parts of some of those churches that I like, better than this, I like the music...(but) I'm not going anywhere no matter what the

⁴⁸ Louise, Youth Responses, March 19, 2018.

Anglican church does, I'm staying here. I'm kind of in a rut. (Female youth filming chuckles).”⁴⁹

Gracie added, “This has always been my church. So I don't know-I was raised here, so I just stayed. I went to different churches with friends as I was growing up, but this was always, this is my church.”⁵⁰ Rachel said she tried another church, but returned to the Anglican Church. “Well, I didn't know any other church, really. Before I was married, I had a boyfriend who was Pentecostal. And he got to the point where he thought I would make a good minister's wife, but that certainly wasn't in my plans at the time. So I did go to that church for some visits, but I knew that wasn't where I fit.”⁵¹ Loyalty to where you started to worship as a child seems to be a common thread, as does being comfortable in a certain worship tradition.

The youth appreciated the answers. Some had friends who always attended a certain denomination, but they also have relatives and friends who have tried many different kinds of churches. They concluded that the only way to know what church is right for them is to try different kinds and see what they like, since they haven't had the benefit of being raised in one specific tradition.⁵²

One area of concern for the youth is related to peer pressure. There have been times during a regular Tuesday evening program that a member of the group shares that friends at school question them about being part of a church program. This has caused some of them to be uncomfortable and not sure how to handle some of the questions and even ridicule. Even one member of the youth program speaks quite openly about being an

⁴⁹ Freda, Video interview.

⁵⁰ Gracie, Video interview, January 16, 2018.

⁵¹ Rachel, Video interview, January 16, 2018.

⁵² Leibovitch, Discussion with youth.

atheist, which creates some discord in the group. He continues to attend to be with his friends.

In response to some of the tensions faced by some of the youth, the youth asked the seniors, *How do you respond to people questioning your faith?* They told me they hoped to learn from others who have lived their faith for many years. The youth wanted to find out if they were the only ones who have had this problem. Is it a present day issue or have the seniors have had similar problems? How did they deal with it?⁵³

Rachel said she listens and doesn't challenge people. "I think that religions are a different variation of a whole lot of things, and what one person feels about it is different from another. I think if you listen to what they feel, what they challenge you about, but then I think you have to intellectualize what you've heard and you can point out things they said, but I would never be confrontational with them or anything, because they are entitled to their own thoughts."⁵⁴ Shelley said, "I just tell them I believe in God, and I feel that church is a faith and it also, especially with young people, teaches you a way of life. To me that's important."⁵⁵ Steve said, "Whether they understand it or not might make them feel good, but my faith is based on the scriptures as I understand them, and if they want to question my faith or my beliefs, go right ahead, I welcome the challenge."⁵⁶ Freda believes it's healthy to question. "I don't feel mad at somebody, it's probably healthy, you know, to question your faith at some time, and hopefully come out the other

⁵³ Leibovitch, Discussion with youth.

⁵⁴ Rachel, Video interview.

⁵⁵ Shelley, January 14, 2018.

⁵⁶ Steve, Video interview January 16, 2018.

side. It's a hunger, when you do question it, don't just sit there and do nothing about it, you know, there is lots to read, there are people who can help you."⁵⁷

In my discussion with the youth interviewers⁵⁸ and the rest of the youth in the program,⁵⁹ they all appeared genuinely surprised by the responses. There was an expectation that older people would be naturally judgmental and condemn anyone who questions them. What the youth discovered is that some of their peers and other young adults tended to be less open to dialogue, less inclusive, and more judgmental. It was an eye opener for them. Most of the seniors were not afraid to talk to other people if they were questioned. They had openness to dialogue and a respect for the other person's opinion. At the same time they were not apologetic. All the seniors were clear in what they believed.

Related to the question about responding to someone who questions your faith, is the question about *Is there truly a wrong religion to believe in?* and *Is it wrong to not believe in anything?* These questions came up once in a general discussion during a Tuesday evening. I learned quite quickly that what I think the word religion means is not always what others understand it to be.⁶⁰ The youth have commented on the Roman Catholic religion versus the Anglican religion. Some of this comes from the fact that four youth go to the publicly⁶¹ funded Roman Catholic schools. The local Roman Catholic

⁵⁷ Freda, Video interview.

⁵⁸ Leibovitch, Talk with youth interviewers, February 13, 2018.

⁵⁹ Leibovitch, Discussion with youth.

⁶⁰ This was not part of a formal discussion, but was discussed prior to introducing the project to the youth on November 7, 2017.

⁶¹ In Canada, the British North America Act of 1867 that created the Dominion of Canada protected the educational rights of Protestants and Roman Catholics. Public funds support both school systems. The Roman Catholic schools belong to the Separate School Boards.

high school has described Protestant as a religion, not a denomination within Christianity.⁶² I explained the difference between denomination and religion.

Beyond the incorrect identifiers within the Christian Church, the youth are exposed to other faiths such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and others through their world religion courses in both the public and separate (Roman Catholic) school systems. There was also a friend of a youth program member who visited one Tuesday and spoke about her Wiccan beliefs. Within the group itself are two atheists, one who talks openly about how God is not real.

While it is good to be aware of other faiths, and perspectives, it can also be confusing to young people who are trying to discern their own beliefs. Are all religions the same? Should some religions be avoided? Is it wrong to be an atheist? The youth decided that they would ask the seniors.

The older adults were mostly respectful in their responses about other religions, but only half were supportive of other religions. Freda would not shy away from talking about her Christian faith with a person of another faith. “I would treat these people with respect regardless. I respect their religion. We have people, we have come in contact with surgeons in our hospital that are Muslim, and I can’t help but respect them and their faith, and there are some men, just happens to be men, but I wouldn’t want to be a Muslim (laughs). But I would try to encourage Muslims to become Christians.”⁶³ Rachel said, “I don’t think there is any wrong one.”⁶⁴ George was also quite open to other faiths. He

⁶² My three sons have all attended the Roman Catholic schools in Lindsay. I have had to correct my sons when they have spoken about the Anglican religion as told to them by their religion teachers. I have also gone to the school to correct the misinformation.

⁶³ Freda, January 14, 2018.

⁶⁴ Rachel, Video interview.

said, “I would sooner they have a belief system than none what so ever.”⁶⁵ Shelley spoke of the good in other religions. “I’m very adamant about other people’s religion. Or other people’s where they come from. I feel there’s good in everything, and there’s some bad in everything too.”⁶⁶

While most respected other people’s religious choices, not all seniors thought other religions were good. Gracie said, “As a Christian, I’m going to say yes. There is one. One. That is Jesus Christ, that’s the only way.”⁶⁷ Steve voiced a similar opinion. “Yes. In my world, you’re either with Christ and for Christ, or you’re not. And if you’re not with Him then you are against Him. And that makes you a member of Satan’s club. So, is there a wrong religion, yes, if you are not part of Christ’s family, then you are out in left field, swimming in an ocean going around in circles.”⁶⁸ Ruth was mostly supportive, except for witchcraft. She said she was torn about other beliefs. “The only wrong religion I think would be witchcraft. I have a little bit of trouble with Hinduism and the multiple God’s, because I do believe in one God. I believe, I’m kind of torn, because I believe strongly that Jesus is God’s Son and that’s the way to have salvation...I think that God loves all His children no matter what religion they are.”⁶⁹

The youth were surprised by some of the responses. Phillip specifically commented on Steve’s comment about non-Christians being part of Satan’s club. First he thought it was funny, and then he thought it was a harsh statement. No other youth mentioned anything more about the comment.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ George, Video interview, January 16, 2018.

⁶⁶ Shelley, Video interview.

⁶⁷ Gracie, Video interview.

⁶⁸ Steve, Video interview.

⁶⁹ Ruth, Video interview, January 14, 2018.

⁷⁰Leibovitch, Talk with youth interviewers.

Overall, the youth were not expecting such openness about other religions or hearing that we can learn from other religions. Hearing these responses took away some of the concern related to having to study other religions in their world religion courses. The responses also provided a new image of the seniors to the youth.

The question the youth presented to the older adults about atheism was a concern based on the two members of the program that spoke openly about not believing in God. In addition, they periodically come across similar comments from other youth and adults. As they struggle at times with their own beliefs about Christianity and other religions, the extra issue of atheism stirs up new questions and confusion. In a society where religion has less of a role and significance to many people, this question hopes to solicit answers they could reflect on.

Ruth was very gracious in her response. “To be an atheist, you miss an awful a lot in life. I’m sure atheists are good people, I know that there are atheists that do a lot of good works, but to me believing in Jesus, believing in God and in the Holy Spirit gives my life meaning.”⁷¹ Bruce would try to move an atheist towards a belief. “I think I would try to steer them into a belief, a Christian life. That’s a tough question. I think they should believe in something.”⁷² Freda said, “An atheist or an Agnostic. An atheist believes in nothing. I think it would be terrible, to be honest...I can’t imagine how they could manage... how could anyone not believe in anything.”⁷³ Meredith affirms free choice, but says it is wrong. “From God’s point of view, He gave us free choice, but from a human point of view as a Christian I will say it is wrong.”⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ruth, Video interview.

⁷² Bruce, Video interview.

⁷³ Freda, Video interview.

⁷⁴ Meredith, Video interview.

The older adults felt people can believe what they want, but beyond that, they felt that to not believe in anything was a missing out on an important part of life. Steve, who a very strong Christian, commented that to not believe in anything meant you could be drawn into believing anything, without a filter to judge good from evil.⁷⁵

All the youth in the post-video questionnaire said they believed in God. They did not agree with or understand atheism in much the same way the older adults did not. The youth are tolerant and welcoming of the two youth who claim to be atheists, but they don't accept the view that there is no God.⁷⁶

The theme of *certainty of faith* is key to the ongoing development of the youth's faith journey. They liked the responses from the older adults and they were quite surprised by the openness and acceptance of the seniors towards people questioning their faith and their comments about other religions. The youth also gained insight into the need to encourage young children to learn about God. They can see the lifelong impact it has had on the seniors who were encouraged by parents and other close relatives to go to church and Sunday school. Perhaps, as Phillip had said he hoped to take his future children to church,⁷⁷ some of the other youth may realize that they may need to play a role in teaching and encouraging their children, unlike their own parents who did not do so.

Faith Trials

Three questions revolved around the theme of faith trials. They are: *Was there ever a time that you really struggled with your faith and how old were you? Is it hard to*

⁷⁵ Steve, Video interview.

⁷⁶ Youth Responses.

⁷⁷ Leibovitch, Talk with youth interviewers.

keep your faith when losing someone close and how do you get through that situation?
When your faith has been shaken, how do you recover? Within the theme of faith trials, the seniors had much to offer from their own experiences.

Believing in God can be hard enough when peers taunt and ridicule. Believing in a loving and forgiving God can be even harder when faced with challenges and struggles that make you question God's presence and ability to hear your prayers. The youth wanted to know if the older adults ever questioned God's existence in the midst of struggle. How did they cope? Some of the youth are dealing with strained family situations. One recently lost a grandparent. Does it help to have faith in God while facing struggles and loss of a loved one?

The youth are just beginning to put their toe into the vast ocean of belief and discipleship. This question about keeping faith while facing struggles is very real. Do people of faith struggle? Do they ever turn their back on God? Do they ever get angry with God? Is it okay to move back and forth from faith to disbelief and back to faith again? In the question that included "how old were you?" some of the youth want to know if struggle was just when the older adults were young or were struggles ongoing through all ages of life? Having spoken with the youth, the latter is more what they were searching for, validating their own struggle with faith.⁷⁸

When asked about faith struggles and recovering from them, Freda shared that she has struggled, but never lost faith. "On and off. I can't say that I never questioned, I think everyone must...even St. Paul questioned; so I think I have that right. And um, and I would say now that as I get older and I get closer to the end, I'm 80, so um, I find I'm

⁷⁸Leibovitch, Discussion with youth.

saying, ‘God you know, what’s this all about?’”⁷⁹ Ruth looked to her mother for strength and faith. Her mother’s fear before death had a profound effect on Ruth. “Yes there was. When my mother died, as I told you, she was a woman of a very deep faith, and in her last moments I saw a lot of fear in her eyes, which surprised me.”⁸⁰

Loss of a parent had a major impact on the faith of several other seniors who lost a parent at a young age, very close to the age of the youth. Meredith said, “My father had had a stroke and had been sick for a number of years, and then he got cancer, and I was questioning God, why? At that point in time, he had suffered what I had figured enough, and this was just an add on.”⁸¹

Steve said, “Probably when I was 18 with the loss of my mother. Spent a lot of time praying to God about not letting her die, and then wondering how He could let her die?”⁸² Bruce also shared that as a young adult he had to deal with the death of both parents that happened two weeks apart. For him, God provided the strength to plan the two funerals. George said he struggled at different times.⁸³

Rachel acknowledged there were times of hardship, but not doubting her faith. “I don’t think it was a matter of struggling with my faith, or doubting my faith. I think there were periods of times when there were hardships more than others; you were at loss about what the future was going to hold for you.”⁸⁴

The responses helped reassure the youth that it is okay to struggle at times. It doesn’t make them wrong or bad. It is part of the growing pains of life. It also

⁷⁹ Freda, Video interview.

⁸⁰ Ruth, Video interview.

⁸¹ Meredith, Video interview.

⁸² Steve, Video interview.

⁸³ George, Video interview.

⁸⁴ Rachel, Video interview.

acknowledges that life isn't always easy. Problems, pain, and hardships of all kinds can knock the wind out of us, but having faith gives us something to hold onto. It also shows the important pastoral role the church can play in a time when family support may not always be present, as is the case with some of the youth in our program. A good youth leader, pastor or mentor in a parish can be the sounding board young people need as they face critical times in their life and faith.

The pain of the recent loss of a loved grandmother was very much in the mind of one of the youth when this question was written. There are many layers to the death of someone close; emotional, spiritual, and physical, as the loss can impact our health through grief and depression. The youth have not experienced much death to this point in their lives, but some have lost grandparents. The emptiness and pain are difficult to soothe. Questions around why did God not answer prayers is one voiced not only by the youth, but also by the older adults. Loss is inevitable, but the youth were seeking to understand how the seniors dealt with death and how did they get through their pain and loss? Did faith play an important role?

All the seniors shared from cherished memories. They were forthright and honest about their feelings. Most spoke of their reliance on God for strength and comfort. Freda said, "I lost my husband 16 years ago. I can look around this church, and see there all sorts of things he made even that cross up there (looking up). And um, I think I grew closer to God during that time... But I don't know how people get through it without faith."⁸⁵ Gracie spoke of her reliance on her faith. "You don't lose your faith, you rely on your faith, and when something happens to you unpleasant or worse, that's when you

⁸⁵ Freda, Video interview.

stand in your strength, I've had that happen to me.”⁸⁶ Rachel shared, “I can see how it would be hard for individuals not to lose their faith when they lose somebody. But I lost my husband six years ago, and it was very trying...and so it was like losing your right arm. But I actually think it was your faith that kept you going through it all.”⁸⁷

One older adult shared her anger at God. Francine said, “I guess the only time I lost my faith was when my father died. And he had given up on the Anglican Church. And I thought we were being punished maybe by God who took him, he was only 61. I was angry at his death and I didn't go to church for maybe two years.” Francine continued to say, “I guess, half a year I was icky about church for a while, but I still went, but it wasn't the same feeling I had before my dad died. And I just got hold of myself and decided that it wasn't God that killed my dad... I had one minister at St. Nicholas, and he I guess was my guide. That helped. I went to him and he sat down and talked to me.”⁸⁸

In my discussion with all the youth,⁸⁹ I sensed many of the youth were moved by the honest sharing by the older adults about the death of their parents or spouses. The honesty of struggle and even anger at God gave some of the youth the freedom to question and be angry at loss and struggle in general. Before watching the video response about the loss of a loved one, some of the youth thought people of faith just got through without questioning God. Hearing the responses seemed to make a connection with the youth, some of who thought being mad at God was wrong. I shared biblical stories such as Moses and other prophets who didn't hold back from being angry or arguing with God,

⁸⁶ Gracie, Video interview.

⁸⁷ Rachel, Video interview.

⁸⁸ Francine, Video interview.

⁸⁹ Leibovitch, Discussion with youth.

and assured them that it's okay to pray and speak to God in many ways. God knows our hearts, sometimes better than we know them.

Beyond the difficulty of life's struggles and various losses we all experience, the youth needed to know how the seniors worked through their pain, confusion, anger, and doubts. The answers all point to prayer, scripture and also friendships with other believers.

Freda spoke about the importance of prayer and reading. "Prayer is a big thing...I read a lot, Christian books of course. And I read my Bible every day. And I can't say I've ever sought help from a priest, which I should do, and I wouldn't hesitate to approach my pastor, to ask for help. But prayer is a big deal."⁹⁰ Meredith said, "Through bible reading, through interaction with your peers so that you can discuss your feelings and what you are going through with others."⁹¹ For Steve, prayer is essential. "When my faith has been shaken, I would recover by spending more time with Christ."⁹² Similarly, Gracie shared, "You just rely on Christ, you know that he is there for you, nothing is too hard or impossible because you pray. I think prayer is important. There is lots of literature out there if you if you are so inclined. It's the Bible. There is lots of devotional things like that, and you just rely on those things."⁹³ George said it is important to speak to a minister or someone else of faith. "On a practical level, it's better to have a professional, if things are really difficult. So it's better to call in your minister or person who you respect, that's a person who guides you through you turmoil. And this is not just for this

⁹⁰ Freda, Video interview.

⁹¹ Meredith, Video interview.

⁹² Steve, Video interview.

⁹³ Gracie, Video interview.

question, but for all kinds of things, that people may face. Have been there done that. And can help you out.”⁹⁴

The need for prayer, reading of scripture and other Christian devotionals and literature, support of other Christians you can talk to, and, if needed, the help of a professional such as counseling by a minister were the bits of wisdom shared by the seniors for the youth.

What caught the youth’s attention was the need for prayer and peer support. Healing begins by bringing needs to God and by talking with trusted friends, preferably Christians when the issues are related to faith issues. Reading the Bible or other Christian literature was not something the youth considered.

Unlike the seniors, the youth don’t tend to seek comfort or answers from a devotional or the Bible. They Google answers for problems such as illnesses, or what do when your parents divorce, but they don’t have they model of seeking scripture or other authors to look for answers or support for spiritual matters. Neither would they seek out a minister or priest, but the answers by the seniors made some youth realize that was an option. The only problem is that most of the youth do not know any religious leader of a church.⁹⁵ The positive part of the youth program is that the youth leader, and occasionally myself as the priest of St. Paul’s Church, are on occasion approached by youth to talk about problems. It also opens the door to developing a mentor or buddy relationship with the older adults.

⁹⁴ George, Video interview.

⁹⁵ Leibovitch, Discussions with youth.

What Happens After Death?

The final theme, coming out of the questions to the seniors is very specific. *What do you believe happens after death?* This flows from the question about the loss of a loved one, but is very much a central part of our Christian message. The youth know what Christianity claims, but they wanted to know if the seniors really believed there was a heaven or life after death? Will they ever see their loved ones again?

Freda said, “I don’t think any of us know. I don’t even...sometimes I question what we have talked about, really. I think we are spirit, you know (shakes head) I think about it a lot since I’m getting closer, and I don’t know whether I’m going to meet a lot of people there that I know already, but that would be wonderful. But the person I KNOW I’m going to see is God. I have to believe it that He is going to be there. Whether I am in a spiritual realm or whether I have some kind of a body, I know my brains will be there, at least it won’t be this old body, I’ll be in something different, so I’m excited about it.”⁹⁶ Ruth said, “Nobody knows, I don’t really know, but I do believe that we are in God’s presence. I don’t know what form that takes, but I think that if we believe that Jesus is God’s Son, and we practice our Christianity, but even more, I believe that faith will deliver us into God’s arms when we die, and that we will be in His presence, and that will be a thing of great joy. Other than that I don’t know what form it will take.”⁹⁷ George was a little tongue-in-cheek in his reply. “Well I think the first thing that happens is that the undertaker is called (smiles)...The spirit lives on.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Freda, Video interview.

⁹⁷ Ruth, Video interview.

⁹⁸ George, Video interview.

One very interesting answer that caught the attention of the youth was Rachel's. Rachel shared a near death experience and a vision of heaven from when she was younger. "I would like to think I'm living here in a training ground, so that I will have a life after death. And I actually had a personal experience where I nearly drowned, and before I was rescued, I went to visit this place that had all this beautiful music, and all these bright lights, and it was absolutely phenomenal before they finally dragged me out of the water and I feel that I had a little vision of what heaven is like."⁹⁹ Several of the youth commented on her experience with surprise.¹⁰⁰

The consensus in the responses indicates a clear belief in a heaven. Ruth said, "We will be in His presence, and that will be a thing of great joy." This helped reassure the youth who already had some thoughts about life after death. The answers came from seniors who know that there are less years ahead of them than years behind them. As Freda said, "I think about it a lot since I'm getting closer."¹⁰¹ There is no apparent fear or worry in the ten seniors. For them death is a coming reality, but belief in the existence of heaven and being in the presence of God provides a joy for many of them. For the youth, it was one more piece of a puzzle they are trying to put together regarding faith in Christ. St. Paul said, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known."¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Rachel, Video interview.

¹⁰⁰ Leibovitch, Discussion with youth.

¹⁰¹ Ruth, Video interview.

¹⁰² 1 Corinthians 13:12. All scripture citations are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Youth Interviewers

On February 13, 2018, the two youth interviewers, Chloe and Phillip were brought together to have a debriefing about their experience. Chloe and Phillip were the only youth who volunteered to be interviewers. My hope was to have three or four youth share the roles of cameraperson and interviewer, but that didn't materialize. Phillip did some of the interviewing, but was more comfortable running the video camera. During the debriefing discussion that was audiotaped for the record, some comments they shared were later included in the general youth responses, but they did have a few additional comments that were significant.

Both Phillip and Chloe found the whole experience interesting. They enjoyed the chance to meet seniors they didn't know. Chloe was surprised how nice the older adults seemed to be. She shared that not all older people in her life are nice. One grandmother is quite nasty and bitter about life and about getting older. It seems that Chloe's relationship with her Nana is not very positive, so to meet older adults who were not only nice, but genuinely interested in her, was a pleasant surprise and made her quite happy.

When asked whether any answers from the seniors surprised them, Phillip commented on Steve's comment about non-believers being part of Satan's club.¹⁰³ Chloe's response was very firm, "I hope not!"¹⁰⁴ She said that because she knows some people who speak like that. She said that was not her belief.

Chloe also commented that she liked the senior's answers that displayed a diversity and acceptance of other religions. She shared this outlook and was surprised by the openness of so many of the seniors.

¹⁰³ Steve, Video interview.

¹⁰⁴ Leibovitch, Talk with interviewers.

One question they asked the older adults seemed to be a significant point of interest to both Chloe and Phillip. Both of the youth commented on the question about *struggling with faith*. They observed that most of the seniors replied that they never really struggled. Phillip wondered if they didn't want to really talk about it or whether being videotaped played a role in the answers being short and evasive. Chloe said she wanted more from the answers, but also admitted they could have asked the older adults to elaborate more. Chloe went on to say that she struggles with different issues and felt it was "quite odd" that they said they didn't struggle.

This one question, more than any of the others, seemed to be a hot topic for the interviewers. They are youth dealing with multiple issues in their lives such as family dynamics, school and peers, as well as physical changes and planning for their futures. Chloe and Phillip wanted to hear more. I believe they wanted to hear how having faith can make a difference in facing and working through struggles. There was a feeling of disappointment on their part, but also a determination to talk to the seniors again at some future opportunity. Of all the answers during the videotaping, this was the major one that needed more elaboration.

Another interesting comment from the debriefing with the interviewers was a comment by Chloe. She said, "I would have liked to have heard more questions of us. I thought they would want to know more about us. Maybe ask us about our faith?"¹⁰⁵ She did say that the video interviews didn't provide time for questions, but hoped to be able to share her faith with the older adults in the future. After more discussion with Phillip

¹⁰⁵ Leibovith, Talk with interviewers.

and Chloe, I believe Chloe wanted the seniors to see the youth in the program in a different way, not just the loud group that gathers on Tuesdays.

I asked the interviewers if there were any questions that they would have liked to ask the older adults that were not on the list. Chloe replied, “I would have liked to ask them what kind of prayer, worship and service speaks to you most?”¹⁰⁶ This response is quite illuminating, especially coming from a youth that does not attend church.

Chloe’s comments on wanting to know more about struggle, prayer and worship, as well as wanting the seniors to know more about her, indicate to me that Chloe is in a time of searching and discernment.

Phillip was mostly quiet during the debriefing, but not because he has nothing to share. I know him as a quiet young man who is of deep faith. He is the only one of the youth program who attends church regularly, and didn’t change his views about faith after doing the interviews.

The one experience Phillip did want to share was his time doing the video editing with George. George is an 80 year old who once ran a radio show as a teenager in the 1950’s. George’s interest in technology continues to this day, and is known as an expert in Mac computers and iPad technology. He is frequently hired to put together video articles for organizations and even uses a drone for videotaping. Phillip spent two days at George’s home studio learning how to use Mac software and equipment to do the editing. “Got to know George. For an 80 year old, he could teach me things I couldn’t figure out.”¹⁰⁷ Phillip hopes there will be more chances to work with George.

¹⁰⁶ Leibovith, Talk with interviewers.

¹⁰⁷ Leibovitch, Talk with youth interviewers.

The final question I asked Phillip and Chloe was whether other youth could benefit from hearing stories about faith from seniors? Both said yes. Phillip also added it can help youth better understand older people.

Project Goals

All thesis projects work towards validating the thesis statement. My thesis statement is *by connecting youth and older adults, youth participants will grow in understanding and faith, and the seniors will be affirmed in their supportive role while validating their own experiences of faith, which will open doors to generational sharing and provide a model of learning that can be used for other programs in the parish and throughout the diocese.* I feel confident that the goals of helping the youth grow in understanding and faith, while affirming and supporting the older adults in their role was achieved. Chapter Six will look at future possibilities and next steps.

To support my thesis statement I draw on data and observations from the questionnaire the youth answered after watching the video and answers the older adults wrote to questions after the dinner with the youth on March 6, 2018. In addition, I include some observations I made watching the youth and older adults interacting at the dinner. The video camera also recorded parts of that evening.

This intergenerational project was about the bringing together youth and older adults. The primary goal was for the youth to bring questions of faith to the seniors and to draw on the seniors' life experiences through the narratives they shared. The project also gave the youth a different experience of older adults that revealed spiritual knowledge and wisdom, compassion, kindness and love. I believe the youth gained knowledge and insights that support their growing faith.

The second goal was to affirm the older adults in their role. Though sharing their narratives, the seniors were able to feel they are making a difference in the lives of the youth, and begin a process of not only breaking down some of the historic barriers at St. Paul's, but also begin the process of developing relationships with the youth. The seniors had a chance to share their stories and faith in a way that is making a difference, and affirming them as elders of value in the church.

Youth Questionnaire and Seniors' Answers About the Youth

In the questionnaire,¹⁰⁸ there was a section about the youth's impressions about older adults before they watched the video and after. The answers about older adults prior to watching the videos included a mix of comments. Phillip said, "My thoughts about the seniors were mostly positive. I always knew that they are generally more wise than most people."¹⁰⁹ Bob said, "My thoughts were that they have a lot more experience in the world and have seen a lot change. I highly respect them for this." Louise had a less positive comment. She said, "Before I watched the video I didn't think they would say anything interesting. I also didn't want to meet them."¹¹⁰

The response of the youth after having a chance to watch the video did not change too much since most of the youth already had a good opinion of seniors, but some did experience a change in attitudes toward the older adults. Bob said, "It has given me more respect for many of the people by hearing their stories." Samantha said, "Yes, because I was like, OMG, they look like they will say awesome things."¹¹¹ Ted observed, "I still think they are pretty cool and interesting because they like to tell us stories about either

¹⁰⁸ Appendix 4

¹⁰⁹ Phillip, Youth responses.

¹¹⁰ Bob, Youth responses, March 19, 2018.

¹¹¹ Samantha, Youth responses.

the past or present.”¹¹² Chloe said, “None of my thoughts have really changed, if anything I respect them more because it shows how much an elder can know.”¹¹³

These were impressive results from just watching the video and having the chance to see and hear the feelings and sincerity of the older adults. Using the video in this kind of project enhanced the youth’s impressions and allowed these deeper perceptions.

The older adults also had a chance to comment on their impressions of the youth after the dinner. Rachel said, “The youth that I sat with to have dinner initially seemed defensive and shy by us but that was easily corrected when they discovered that we did not wish to be critical and were interested in what they were studying, their hobbies, music, etc... However, generally I found them to be polite and enthusiastic.”¹¹⁴ Ruth said, “My impressions of the youth: they were shy but seemed well rounded in being involved with sports and other school activities. I liked them but certainly felt the age gap as they are so deeply into technology. I would certainly like to get to know them better if they are willing - their backgrounds, more about their interests, hopes, fears, expectations and their faith.”¹¹⁵ Freda talked about the generation gap. “The three young people at our table were polite and interesting to talk to. We discussed their likes and where they are in their lives. One lad sat with some sort of eye covering on his head that, even after explaining it to me, I did not have a clue what it was -- ‘the generation gap’?”¹¹⁶

¹¹² Ted, Youth responses, March 19, 2018.

¹¹³ Chloe, Youth responses, March 19, 2018.

¹¹⁴ Rachel, Video interview.

¹¹⁵ Ruth, Video interview.

¹¹⁶ Freda, Video interview.

While some answers spoke about the shyness of the youth and the generation gap, overall it was quite positive with most of the seniors wanting to get to know the youth better.

Another question asked of the youth was whether they would like to get to know any of the seniors that made an impression on them in the video? Half the youth said yes. Jean said, “Yes. I think 2-4 seniors should come back and tell the youth group some more.”¹¹⁷ Bob wanted to get to know Bruce more. “I would like to speak to Bruce about his life experiences. In my opinion, he was one of the most inspiring of those who were interviewed.”¹¹⁸ Paul, who tends to be more reserved in the group said, “Each and every one of the asked individuals had a unique answer and personality. I could keep a conversation with most all of them. I would like to meet all people in the world. Including these people.”¹¹⁹ Ted said he would like to get to know Steve. “Yes I would like to get to get to know Steve. He was funny made us laugh.”¹²⁰

I was very happy with the answers from the youth. Watching the older adults in the video had more impact than I had expected. The fact several of the older adults also wanted to get to know the youth better was evidence that the project produced some of the hoped for results of breaking down barriers on both sides and moving towards developing new relationships.

The concluding dinner on Tuesday, March 6, 2018, helped bring the seniors and youth together. Thirteen youth and eight of the ten seniors participated. While there was nervousness and hesitation on behalf of both the youth and the seniors to mingle and talk

¹¹⁷ Jean, Youth responses, March 19, 2018.

¹¹⁸ Bob, Youth responses.

¹¹⁹ Paul, Youth responses, March 19, 2018,

¹²⁰ Ted, Youth responses.

prior to the meal, it wasn't long before discussions began. Before the youth arrived, I explained to the seniors the purpose of the dinner and that there would be a chance to talk over appetizers and at the dinner.

Tables were arranged to allow for two or three youth with two or three older adults. I did suggest that the older adults might need to start the conversations, but that they were free to talk about any topic the youth wanted to discuss. Before dessert, I asked the seniors to move to a different table to meet other youth.

Once the dinner started, there were lots of conversations, laughing and general chatter. During the dessert, one youth wanted to ask a question of the older adults. The question was, "How do you know God exists?" Two got up to answer. Freda said she knows God exists when holding a newborn baby. Ruth said she experienced God in nature. The youth seemed content with those answers, and continued their discussions with the older adults at their tables.¹²¹

One unexpected result of the dinner was that one female youth member (who attended but didn't answer the youth questionnaire) discovered she was a distant cousin of Rachel. When the dinner was finished, both Rachel and the youth stayed in the hall and talked another half hour.

The dinner was the climax of months of lead up and execution of the project. Both generations came together in a way that was not imagined prior to the project. Both youth and the older adults felt they grew in understanding of each other. An opportunity also exists for future relationship building. The youth learned much from the older adults, and

¹²¹ Concluding dinner, March 6, 2018.

the older adults realized that the youth want to learn, and that they, as adults in the church, have an important part in that learning.

Overall, I believe the primary goals of the thesis have been achieved of bringing together the two generations and beginning a process of faith discovery on the part of the youth, and having the older adults affirmed through the sharing of their faith narratives. New relationships are forming, and I look forward to future developments and possibilities in the parish and in the diocese. Some of the future possibilities will be discussed in the conclusion, Chapter Six.

This chapter looked at the qualitative data resulting from the methodology used in the project. The next two chapters will look at the theoretical and social science foundations that are at the core of the project.

Chapter 4

Theoretical Perspectives Focusing on Narrative

*I would want to hear more about faith and how it is special to the seniors
~Jean, youth participant*

In chapter 3 we looked at some of the qualitative data resulting from the older adults' answers to the questions posed by the youth, and the youths' responses and observations. This chapter will now look further at an important theoretical foundation of this project, the concept of narrative.

As I worked with the youth over the past few years, it became clear to me that the youth did not understand the Christian narrative, or even have a narrative that explained the meaning of their own lives. To hear and appropriate that narrative, I believed they needed to be in a community that would help them formulate their own narrative through hearing the narratives of faithful members of the congregation. Having a safe, loving, Christian community like St. Paul's was important for their narrative development for it is in community that stories are shared and lives can be changed, and through the nurturing and strengthening of faith in individuals, the narrative of the community is changed through renewed energy and insights.

C.S. Song talks about stories in a way that opens up our theoretical discussion of narrative. "Stories are told to be responded to. Storytelling is not the monologue of a storyteller. It is a dialogue between the storyteller and the story listener. It is more than a dialogue. The story told is not just a medium, a means, an avenue. It becomes the story of the storyteller and it becomes the story of the story listener."¹²²

¹²² C.S. Song, *In the Beginning Were Stories, Not Texts* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011), 161.

C.S. Song says that stories are not one-sided. They are told to evoke a response, or at the very least to lead to a new insight or change in the listener. A story can engage images and language that produce emotional responses in the listener, and can, in some cases, draw out emotions in the storyteller who shares an exciting or sad story.

Years ago, a man shared a story with me that drew me into the narrative of an important time in his life. It brought tears to my eyes and helped me learn something about the man I would never have known without the story. That encounter changed my perceptions about seniors and taught me a valuable lesson. Stories have the power to inform and transform. I share my story of that man with you.

A Short Story

In 1985, I was a chaplaincy student doing Clinical Pastoral Education (C.P.E.) at a Toronto Hospital. I decided my C.P.E. project would be interviewing seniors in the geriatric ward about life experiences, as a way to get to know them. One particular interview has remained with me, a visit with a WWI veteran in his 90's. This encounter was so powerful that it helped change my perception of older adults. More than thirty years later that man's story and my conversation with him would give me the idea that would eventually be incorporated into my thesis project.

In my mid-twenties, I did not know many older people other than my grandparents. My impression at the time was that many old people seemed to dislike children and young people, and I could not relate to them. Some of my views go back to when I visited a great-grandmother in a nursing home as a child where the smells and sights scared me. I knew my impressions were wrong and if I was to be a parish priest I needed to change my opinions.

I visited several times with the veteran and was intrigued by his stories. I was drawn into his war experiences that opened up a world that became so real I could imagine the pounding sound of artillery, the endless muck and rats, the terrifying moments when the scream of “gas!” rang out, that awful and profound sadness when his buddy died, and the constant fear of dying that pervaded the trenches. Tears came to his eyes as he shared the story of his friend’s death. I was drawn into his narrative of the trenches. His tears moved me to tears.

Story was the means that provided a window into the veteran’s life, turning an old man in a hospital bed into a young and strong twenty-two year old who missed his family and just wanted to go home. He was no longer a dying old man, but a young man with a name who dreamt of having a family and owning a house in the countryside.

That experience thirty-four years ago changed how I looked at older people. They were no longer anonymous individuals, but people who lived a life rich with experience to share. I learned that the power of words and images could draw you into the narrative of someone’s life and help you as the listener to learn something that can be meaningful to your own life. Stories provide insights and knowledge, and can even change your view and understandings, as my encounter with this veteran had.

I could never have imagined how a chance encounter would change my view of older people and open up to me the power of story. The experience listening to the veteran’s story and the subsequent impact on me gave me the idea for my project. Youth in St. Paul’s church program could learn about the Christian narrative from older people who knew that narrative and would be able to share it through their own faith experiences.

Oral tradition

Before the narratives about God and Creation were written down, oral tradition was the means of communication about early historical knowledge and cultural traditions. An article written in *Teach Africa* on the oral traditions of Africa says, “Oral traditions are messages that are transmitted orally from one generation to another. The messages may be passed down through speech or song and may take the form of folktales and fables, epic histories and narrations, proverbs or sayings, and songs.”¹²³

“Oral traditions make it possible for a society to pass knowledge across generations without writing. They help people make sense of the world and are used to teach children and adults about important aspects of their culture.”¹²⁴ Teach Africa notes the importance oral tradition played in guiding social and human morals. “The transmission of knowledge, history and experience in West Africa was mainly through the oral tradition and performance rather than on written texts. Oral traditions guide social and human morals, giving people a sense of place and purpose. There is often a lesson or a value to instill, and the transmission of wisdom to children is a community responsibility.”¹²⁵

Families have ways of passing down information and wisdom to the next generations in ways that parallel to oral tradition that Teach Africa describes. My grandmother shared stories about family history and traditions with my mother that she in

¹²³ Teach Africa, *The Oral Traditions of Africa*, 1.
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53cfd0e5e4b057663ea1bc61/t/57b1e0b746c3c406dd172afd/1471275383444/Oral+Traditions+of+West+Africa.pdf>

¹²⁴ Teach Africa, *The Oral Traditions of Africa*, 1.

¹²⁵ Teach Africa, *The Oral Traditions of Africa*, 1.

turn shared with my sisters. This sharing included Jewish traditions of how to prepare for the special Jewish holidays and festivals through the year.

Growing up in a Jewish family, I learned that Biblical narratives played an important role to teach Jewish identity. I had the benefit of experiencing rich traditions, holidays and festivals. They were times of family gatherings, but were also times of entering into the lived experience of a people going back more than five thousand years. They are stories of covenants made and broken, exile and redemption, but most importantly, stories of God's faithfulness.

One of the most meaningful times of the year for me was to celebrate the Passover and to hear the story of the Exodus.¹²⁶ Lots of good food and fun, but Passover is about sharing the story of the power of God and celebrating the salvation of a people. The story is more than history; it is a narrative of God's ongoing redemption.

A booklet used at the Passover meals is called the Passover Haggadah. One of the passages in it says, "In every generation one must see oneself as though having personally come forth from Egypt, as it is written: 'And you shall tell your child on that day, this is done because of what the Lord did for me when I came forth from Egypt.' It was not our ancestors alone whom the Holy One, blessed be He, redeemed; He redeemed us too, with them, as it is written, 'He brought us out from there that He might lead us to, and give us, the land which He had promised to our ancestors.'"¹²⁷

The Passover narrative teaches an important part of the Biblical history and tradition of a people. It imparts a theology of salvation that continues to speak to the lives

¹²⁶ Exodus 12:18,26-27 is the command that the story of the Passover be told annually to remember God freeing the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt and why it is recalled.

¹²⁷ Rabbi Nathan Goldberg, Passover Haggadah (Hoboken, N.J: Ktav Publishing House, 1993), 23-24.

of Jewish people today, shaping their world view as it did at the time of Jesus when they hoped for a Messiah who would free them from the bondage of occupation. Narrative helps us make sense of tradition and culture, and the world we live in. Religious narratives in particular seek to inform and teach. The Passover narrative helped define my own heritage and identity.

Narratives can form and shape the story of a people. Narratives can also help us have a better understanding of our belief systems. The narratives shared by the seniors at St. Paul's clearly defined their faith and beliefs within the larger Christian narrative. In the book, *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones quote from a lecture by James Gustafson, "Narratives function to sustain and confirm the religious and moral identity of the Christian community, and evoke and sustain the faithfulness of its members to Jesus Christ."¹²⁸

The narratives shared during my thesis project video highlighted the faithfulness of the seniors in times of struggle and change. Their stories showed how faith provided them strength, grounding them during the storms of life, and how their prayer provided a way to express their needs and pain to God as they sought God's help and direction. Some of the older adults' narratives also clearly expressed their views about other religions as seen through their understanding of the Christian narrative.

When we speak of narrative how and what we share is important. Do our stories engage and connect with the listeners? Is there a purpose in sharing a specific story and what are we trying to accomplish? These questions speak to a concept that Dorothea Erbele-Küster calls narrativity.

¹²⁸ Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, Editors, *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 2.

In an article called *A Short Story of Narratology in Biblical Studies*, Erbele-Küster says, “The concept of narrativity refers to the fact that we live our lives by stories, while conversely, stories are capable of engaging us to the point of making us feel part of them. Therefore the narrative structure of any story is more than the quality of the text, it is an anthropological reality. Telling stories is crucial to the way we open up our world.”¹²⁹ My experience with the war veteran is an example of this narrativity. His story of the trenches in a World War opened up a new worldview for me about the war, but more importantly his way of telling the story, the sharing of fear and pain, taught me about the man who told the story. How he told the story, bringing in images that made the story come to life, engaged my senses and drew me into the narrative. By drawing me into his narrative, I came to appreciate his sacrifices and connect with a defining part of his life.

Narratives serve many roles. One such role is preserving life lessons as a legacy for others. When I was eleven I spent several days on a fishing trip with my grandmother and grandfather at a place called Chazy Lake in upper New York State. This was a special time with my grandparents where I heard family stories from the past and present. While out fishing each day I learned more about my grandfather through some stories he shared, but the time also allowed me to hear his pearls of wisdom and outlook on life. Daniel Taylor says this kind of experience creates a spiritual legacy.

In his book, *Creating a Spiritual Legacy: How to Share Your Stories, Values, and Wisdom*, Daniel Taylor says, “A spiritual legacy preserves a life, and life lessons, as a blessing for someone else...A spiritual legacy is, simply put, the passing of wisdom from

¹²⁹ Dorothea Erbele-Küster-*A Short Story of Narratology in Biblical Studies*, in *Religious Stories We live By: Narrative Approaches in Theology and Religious Studies*. Edited by R. Ruud Ganzevoort, Maaïke de Haardt, and Michael Scherer-Rath Koninklijke, (Leiden, Boston: Brill NV, 2014), 75.

one person to another, and such a legacy is the single most important thing you have to give someone you love.”¹³⁰ Taylor also says, “A spiritual legacy is an offering of wisdom from one life to another. Wisdom is practical knowledge about the nature of the world and how to live well in it. It is a combination of the right priorities and the right actions.”¹³¹ Looking back at the fishing trip with my grandfather, I can see how special the time was. Whether he intended it to be a time of sharing, his stories and teachings remain with me. What I gained in that time, and the time itself, becomes a story I can share with my children about their great-grandfather.

An interesting part about sharing a story is that the process of sharing may stir up further memories and motions. The veteran shared a story that that opened up some long forgotten pain that brought tears to his eyes. The sharing of a story may produce unexpected reactions from the listener as well as the storyteller.

The video interviews stirred up emotions in some of the older adults who, when looking back at certain events, are now able to reflect on them from a different perspective. One vivid example is that of Ruth,¹³² who shared the story about her mom’s fear as she was facing death. Through sharing that story with the interviewer Ruth was drawn back to the time with her mother. She shared a story about how she couldn’t understand how her mother, who was a woman of strong faith, could be fearful of death? What came to her in telling the story was how important the Gospel story of the angels and the shepherds in Luke 2 was to her when the angel said, “Fear not.” For Ruth,

¹³⁰ Daniel Taylor, *Creating a Spiritual Legacy: How to Share Your Stories, Values, and Wisdom* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2011), 3.

¹³¹ Daniel Taylor, *Creating a Spiritual Legacy*, 11.

¹³² Ruth, Video interview.

remembering that even the shepherds feared helped her to come to a better understanding of her mother's fear. "Even the shepherds were afraid," Ruth said.

Daniel Taylor said, "Many times, reflecting on a story yields a new deeper comprehension than we had when it happened. Looking back, with the benefit of more mature minds and subsequent experiences and space for reflection, we can see meanings and patterns and consequences that were hidden from us at the time."¹³³ In this way, stories of past events can take on new meanings and be understood differently with the passage of time. Stories of faith can be mined for new riches that can then be shared with others.

Another important part of narratives is the role they play in sharing faith and spirituality. Every person experiences God differently and the stories that they share are unique to the individual who shares it. From a theological perspective, narratives help us to think about God and our place in the world. C.S. Song says, "Where there is story, there is theology... it invites us to reflect on the roots of who we are and what we are, what the world around us is, and ultimately who and what God must be. Story is the matrix of theology."¹³⁴ The crucial part of my project was to begin the process of helping the youth to not only learn about God, but also to help them reflect on who they are as children of God created in God's image. The older adults' narratives helped the youth understand how they live their faith. The narratives also help the youth see themselves as loved by God and able to tap into the strength and confidence expressed by the seniors as they face their own life challenges and crossroads.

¹³³ Daniel Taylor, *Creating a Spiritual Legacy*, 67.

¹³⁴ C.S. Song, *In the Beginning Were Stories, Not Texts*, 18.

As stories help individuals understand God and their place in relationship to God, Christian narrative takes on an evangelistic role. As the youth learn about God and Christ, the narratives begin to become their narratives. John Westerhoff in his book, *Will Our Children have Faith?* uses a quote from C. Ellis Nelson that says, “Faith is communicated by a community of believers and the meaning of faith is developed by its members out of their history, by their interaction with each other, and in relation to the events that take place in their lives.”¹³⁵

This role of narrative is critical to passing on Christian traditions and faith. David Gortner, in *Transforming Evangelism*, says that people respond to personal stories. Storytelling can be a great evangelistic tool. “People respond to personal stories and direct expressions of wonder and joy. Without these personal connections, people may experience the church’s worship as irrelevant.”¹³⁶

My thesis project created the personal connections. The sharing of narratives broke down intergenerational and perception barriers by connecting youth and the older adults. The older adults’ lived faith, shared through stories, will continue to have an impact on the youth. They are helping to give voice to the youth in defining their experiences of the divine as they seek to discover their place in the Christian narrative.

In chapter five of *Transforming Evangelism*, David Gortner shares the story of the followers of Jesus on the road to Emmaus.¹³⁷ What resonated with me in what Gortner touched on was the role of story. The two disciples have their hearts stirred up and eyes opened through the journey and breaking of bread with Jesus, but the interesting point

¹³⁵ John H. Westerhoff III, *Will our Children Have Faith* (San Francisco: Harper, 1976), 51.

¹³⁶ David Gortner, *Transforming Evangelism*, 155. Kindle edition.

¹³⁷ Luke 24:31-32

was that Jesus invited them to tell their story.¹³⁸ By sharing their story, Jesus is then able to share and explain the Biblical narratives that will make their *hearts burn*.

“Impelled by the force of their awakening, they take to the road again immediately, rushing by night to find their friends back in the city to tell them their amazing good news. As they tell one disciple after another, again the world changes, expanding before them as they share their stories of meeting the Christ.”¹³⁹ The role of story takes on an evangelistic quality, adding to the Easter narrative.

Another comment by Gortner addresses the need to listen closely. This listening is an important component of narrative transfer. “There is no perfect way of sharing our faith with others. But the more we are awake and alert, the more we become attuned to the questions that people will bring to us along the way; the more we listen closely and deeply, the more we learn to respond.”¹⁴⁰

Formation

Personal faith narratives can provide the pathway to further discoveries about the Bible, church, and faith. Through sharing our narratives, we invite people to listen closely. In this regard, the seniors of St. Paul’s Lindsay have a unique opportunity to help form the faith of the youth that attend the Tuesday program. The traditional approach to formation would be to try to get the youth to attend Sunday worship and expose them to wonderful Anglican/Episcopal worship, in the hope that they will be hooked for life. Unfortunately, at St. Paul’s, this approach is not working. My project points to another way forward.

¹³⁸David Gortner, *Transforming Evangelism*, 164. Kindle edition.

¹³⁹David Gortner, *Transforming Evangelism*, 165. Kindle edition.

¹⁴⁰David Gortner, *Transforming Evangelism*, 168. Kindle edition.

A key theoretical premise of the project is that lived faith can teach more about the Christian narrative than memorizing creeds or sitting in a traditional Sunday school classroom. As a community of active Christians, St. Paul's has a golden opportunity to invite the youth to put their faith into action by getting involved in a fuller slate of Christian action, including outreach initiatives such as helping at the nursing homes and shelters the parish supports, or getting involved with the annual Christmas dinner that welcomes so many people from the local town.

To learn the narrative, youth will need to hear the stories as they also experience how those stories are lived out. Our youth have voiced their need to make a difference in the world.¹⁴¹ They can hear part of the Christian narrative, such as this important passage in the letter of James: "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."¹⁴² Jesus' teaching reinforces the importance of lived faith: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."¹⁴³ As youth hear these and similar scriptural passages, they also can be invited into ministry opportunities that let them experience faith as more than knowledge. By inviting the youth to get involved in ministry, the older adults will help nurture the seeds of faith present in the youth.

¹⁴¹ On different occasions, the youth have talked about wanting to do something of value in the neighborhood such as helping at the local food bank or shelter. This was mentioned in general conversation and not part of a specific program.

¹⁴² James 2:14-17.

¹⁴³ John 13:34-35.

This understanding of faith in action may seem obvious to us, but will not necessarily be to our youth. Darrell L. Guder, in *Missional Church: A Vision For The Sending Of The Church In North America*, says, “Those who hear the good news and want to become citizens of the reign of God will need teaching. The church as a holy nation has a culture, an accepted way of doing things, a specialized vocabulary to talk about life under the reign of God. The church should not expect new people in its midst to know these things automatically.”¹⁴⁴ How the youth are brought into the fold will have a lasting impact. My project has aimed to allow the youth to feel comfortable and not forced in the church setting. My hope is they will ask the questions that the older adults can answer, affording them the opportunity to help teach, encourage and empower the youth.

Formation of the youth needs to include an intentional process, as mine intentionally involves the members of the community of St. Paul’s. Allen and Ross, in *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, point to James Wilhoit who defines Christian spiritual formation as the “intentional communal process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴⁵

The responsibility in this intergenerational relationship rests with the older adults. This means capitalizing on the relationship that has been created through the project, by encouraging the youth to participate in ministry that involves outreach and social justice initiatives, and by supporting the youth leader in his work with the youth. The older adults can offer to be prayer partners with the youth, volunteer some time at the Tuesday

¹⁴⁴ Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision For The Sending Of The Church In North America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 137.

¹⁴⁵ Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 22.

youth program, or provide the program with more resources to reach out to more youth in the area.

An increased interest and involvement of the older adults with the youth will help foster further relationships and open the door to more narrative sharing opportunities from both the seniors and the youth. The deeper involvement and inclusion of the youth in the parish can have a positive and transformative effect on the community of St. Paul's church. For Guder, this transformation can only happen when the people in the church are "walking in the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and sowing the Spirit."¹⁴⁶ The opportunities to help the youth walk in the Spirit are present. The challenge is for the older adults to allow themselves to be led by the Spirit, so that they can be shown the way to help the youth growth in faith and bear fruit.

A Common Lament

One last observation I want to make about narrative is that through listening to the narratives of the youth and the older adults before, during, and after the project, I have observed something that I believe can create a common meeting place that transcends the generation gap. It is what I call a common lament; a voiced common concern for personal situations experienced by the youth and seniors at their current stage of life, including concerns for situations in the world and the environment.

I will reserve my discussion for the next chapter, which addresses some of these psychological and sociological realities in the life of the youth and seniors. However, for the purpose of this chapter, it is important to note that the video showed that the seniors

¹⁴⁶ Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church*, 147.

and the youth share theological questions pertaining to struggles, challenges, loss and death.

Common lament cuts through ageism and generational disparities. It provides a meeting place where fears and concerns can be expressed and allows for the realization that both young and old share similar concerns and needs. Narrative helps give voice and form to the concerns and anxieties shared by both generations. This common lament I believe will draw both young and old together as they share their narratives, and then seek ways to live out their narratives by helping those in need regardless of age.

This chapter looked at some of the theoretical perspectives of narrative as the center of this project. Narrative is the way that stories are shared and how faith, tradition and wisdom are passed on to the next generation. Narrative is also about our lives and how they are weaved together and fit into the greater Christian narrative that gives meaning to our individual life narratives. These narratives are shared in community where formation happens.

The next chapter will draw on the social sciences to take a closer look at the current life and faith stages of the youth and older adults in my project. I will also look at trends in intergenerational faith endeavors, generativity, and the pedagogical underpinnings of my technologically hybrid project model.

Chapter 5

Social Sciences

I don't have to go to church anymore because there's an app for that!
~ Generation Z kid¹⁴⁷

At the time of the writing of this paper, I sit in a unique spot. I still have two teenage boys at home and am living through their stages of development. At the same time, I am just a few months away from enjoying senior discounts at some restaurants. My current station in life motivates me to learn more about both the young adults I still live with and the future generational shift I am about to experience. In this chapter, I will look through the lens of the social sciences to better understand the situation of youth and older adults in our society, including those that have come together for this intergenerational project.

The project provided me as researcher a window into the lives of two different generations, defined for the project as youth and older adults. Both generations have similarities and differences that are defined by the decades in which they grew up. The older adults are part of the Builder or Silent Generation, and the youth are Generation Z or iGeneration.

Both generations experienced similar stages of development and learning through early childhood. Divergence entered through the adolescent years due to changes in society and technological differences. The youth are living in a very different world than what the older adults experienced as teenagers, and that has had an impact on identity, mental health, religious participation and social interactions.

¹⁴⁷21 Ridiculous Quotes of Gen Z Kids, https://medium.com/@info_71443/21-ridiculous-quotes-of-gen-z-kids-205caf36d2b

This chapter has four parts. First, I will examine the current life and faith stages of the youth and older adults, with an emphasis on the youth at the heart of this project. Second, I will look at current trends in religion and intergenerational faith endeavors drawing on the work of sociologist Reginald W. Bibby and educator John Roberto. I will discuss generativity, and important motivation for the older adults in my study. Finally, I will lay out the technologically hybrid pedagogy for the project.

Life Stages

This project and thesis were formed around two distinct generations: the youth aged 12-20 and the older adults aged 70-91. Both generations bring life experiences, values, and preferences to the project. They also have their own perspectives on family, friendships, politics, the world, and religion.

The youth are trying to develop their personal and vocational identities and value systems. They are preparing to disconnect from the homes and the families they know as some hope to go on to school or move from Lindsay to find work. A newfound sense of independence undergirds their plans.¹⁴⁸

The older members of St. Paul's face possible disconnections with family and their church community as they become more affected by health and aging issues. Some are losing the freedom to come and go as they please, as vision problems, sight loss, and infirmity make them unable to drive or they have lost a spouse who was their driver. Both groups are at different stages of life, but both have the need for community, relationship, love, respect, and acceptance.

The Youth: Generation Z/iGeneration

¹⁴⁸ Jane Kroger, *Identity Development* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2007), 70-75.

The youth who participated in the project are called Generation Z, or the iGeneration¹⁴⁹ born between 1995 and 2015. Statistics show there are about 74 million in this age cohort in the United States. Generation Z seeks truth, they avoid labels, and value individual expression. They believe that dialogue is a way to solve conflicts and improve the world. They “make decisions and relate to institutions in a highly analytical and pragmatic way. They are different than the previous generation called Millennials (born 1980-94) who are sometimes regarded as the *me generation*.”¹⁵⁰

Generation Z is also the first generation to grow up in a fully digital age. From the time they were infants, they were exposed to cellphones, computers, and later tablets and iPads, and online streaming of music, shows and movies. The digital age has had a profound influence on this generation, which indirectly opened the door to the pedagogy used in this project. I have noticed these characteristics in my own sons born between 1998 and 2002. They are true Generation Z children never knowing a time without the internet, computers, and various other technologies.

The internet and social media have forged a generation that is very different from the older adults in the project. I am not just speaking about the use of technology, but how technology has added a new element to human development that is not just a North American phenomena but one that influences all areas of the world that are touched by the internet and social media.

¹⁴⁹ The “i” is for Internet.

¹⁵⁰ Tracey Francis and Fernanda Hoefel, *The Influence of Gen Z—the first generation of true digital natives—is expanding*, Article, November 2018. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/true-gen-generation-z-and-its-implications-for-companies> Note: Comparisons across generations are not entirely clear-cut due to comparing across developmental ages.

Jean M. Twenge, in her book *iGen*,¹⁵¹ discusses her research that compares teens from 1976 to 2016, with research involving eleven million participants. She calls the generation born between 1995 and 2015 iGen'ers, and I can see her observations about this generation in the youth at St. Pauls and in my own boys' behavior.

Four of Twenge's findings about iGen'ers relate directly to the youth at St. Paul's. First, she notes that the youth are in no hurry, and extend childhood into adolescence. Second, she recognizes the significant amount of time spent on phones and the internet, and the replacement of other activities. Third, she sees a decline in in-person social interaction. Fourth, she finds a sharp rise in mental health issues due to insecurity.¹⁵²

One of the biggest influences on this generation was the introduction of the iPhone in 2007. The iPhone and the competing smart phones created a technological and a human development shift. The smart phone meant mobility of technology and instant access to the internet. No longer did someone need to sit at a desk and use a computer to surf the Web. The creation of applications or Apps means an almost endless variety of ways games are played and information is shared. High quality cameras on phones have also developed a "selfie" culture that feeds Apps like Snapchat and Instagram.

While first perceived as a movement forward, smart phones and social media have led to less personal face-to-face interaction among youth. In my teenage years and the teenage years of the older adults, getting together with friends was an important part of socializing and development. The older adults may have gone to the soda shop and sock hops and parties to be with friends. Today's teens think differently. One telling

¹⁵¹ Jean M. Twenge, PhD. *iGen* (New York: Atria Books, 2017)

¹⁵² Jean M. Twenge, PhD. *iGen*, 3.

attitude is, “People party because they are bored. Now we have Netflix—you can watch series nonstop.”¹⁵³

Twenge points out that there is less social interaction. Almost all leisure time is spent on the internet in one form or another.¹⁵⁴ Texting composes 28% of leisure time. Internet surfing 24%, Gaming 18% and Video chat like Face time at 5%. TV is only 24%. Regarding TV, my Gen Z boys rarely watch TV. Their preference are streamed shows or Netflix, which is quite different from the older adults who tend to prefer TV shows.

Texting is a way of life for today’s young people. For Gen Z’ers, texting has replaced most talking on phones. The problem with texting is the loss of nuance and tone, now replaced by words and emojiis. Twenge said social media is virtually mandatory. 97% of teens use Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter. “This is the new reality of teen social life: it’s conducted online, for all to see, with clear messages about who’s in and who’s out.”¹⁵⁵

Twenge pointed out in trends that there is not only a decline in socialization, but also a decline in mental health. She shares some quotes from teens:

“I spend so much time on Instagram looking at people’s pictures and sometimes I’ll be like, why am I spending my time on this? And yet I keep doing it.” “If I go on my phone to look at Snapchat, I go on it like an hour, I lose track.” “The minute I start my homework I have to have my phone by me to see what my friends are texting...It’s like someone is constantly tapping you on the shoulder, and you have to look.”¹⁵⁶ Social media, the great connector, has created a generation of youth who worry about what

¹⁵³ Jean M. Twenge, PhD. *iGen*, 71.

¹⁵⁴ Jean M. Twenge, PhD. *iGen*, 51.

¹⁵⁵ Jean M. Twenge, PhD. *iGen*, 54.

¹⁵⁶ Jean M. Twenge, PhD. *iGen*, 56.

others will text and post. There is an increase in anxiety and depression. Teens are more lonely according to Twenge.

Social media has also led to a higher risk of depression and suicide. “The link between screen time and mental health issues is distressingly clear: teens who spend more than three hours a day on electronic devices are 35% more likely to have one suicide risk factor.”¹⁵⁷ The big question is why? Twenge cites several factors that include insecurity, loneliness and cyber bullying and shaming.

Insecurity and feeling left out are significant factors that lead to depression among teens. “Social media promotes happiness and good looks, but most are not. People look happy online, but most are on the verge of depression or other mental health crisis.”¹⁵⁸ As teens spend less time with their friends and more time on their phones, their life satisfaction has dropped 73% in 2012 to 63-65% in 2015. Teens feel lonelier since records were first kept in 1991.¹⁵⁹

Cyber bullying and shaming is another part of today’s generation that didn’t exist when the older adults were teens. There were always school bullies, but the internet and social media are relentless. There is no hiding and negativity is spread quickly and widely. “Teens bullied at school are twice as likely to have at least one suicide risk factor such as considering suicide or making a suicide plan. However, cyber bullying via texting, social media, or chat rooms is even worse. 66% of cyber bullied teens have at least one suicide risk factor, 9% more than those who were bullied at school. Media and

¹⁵⁷ Jean M. Twenge, PhD. *iGen*,83-84.

¹⁵⁸ Jean M. Twenge, PhD. *iGen*,93..

¹⁵⁹ Jean M. Twenge, PhD. *iGen*,97.

their phones do not allow any way to get away from their tormentors, unless they give up their phones.”¹⁶⁰

Cyber bullying is one of today’s realities, targeting vulnerable teens that are already dealing with self-image and mental health issues. Even members of St. Paul’s youth program have had to deal with cyber bullying.

A famous case of cyber bullying in Canada involved a 15-year-old teen named Amanda Todd from Port Coquitlam, British Columbia.¹⁶¹ In September 2012 Amanda posted a short video on YouTube with a plea for help. She held up white cards written with messages crying out for help saying, “I have nobody. I need someone.” This tragic video was followed days later by her suicide. Amanda, who already had mental health issues, was bullied by an unknown man online who got her to expose herself in front of a webcam. He then blackmailed her threatening to destroy her reputation. Although this happened far from Lindsay, it had a profound effect on the youth in our program. There have always been difficulties facing young people in each generation, but social media has elevated concerns for vulnerable youth.

Religion and Faith: Changing Church Trends

Periodically, I hear of the “good old days” of large church attendance and the Sunday school filled with two hundred children on the three levels of St. Paul’s Church. These recollections usually occur over a cup of tea or coffee during a pastoral home visit with members of the congregation. People reminisce over the past, and hearken for the

¹⁶⁰ Jean M. Twenge, PhD. *iGen*, 85.

¹⁶¹ CBC report, October 11, 2012. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/b-c-girl-s-suicide-foreshadowed-by-video-1.1217831>

days when the church appeared to have more life. Much of what they remember is true, but like many past memories, stories and numbers can be embellished.

The 1950's, 60's, and 70's did in fact see higher church attendance, but not all attendance was for religious reasons. In 1956, a sociology report commissioned by the University of Toronto looked at a well-to-do suburb of Toronto called Crestwood Heights.¹⁶² It was the pseudonym for Forest Hills, which is still a wealthy part of Metropolitan Toronto. Their report said church attendance was encouraged in that suburb by social norms of the time. Many people in Crestwood Heights saw church as a place of worship and fellowship, but there were also many who saw the church as a place for moving up the workplace ladder. This 1956 report demonstrated the importance of being seen as a churchgoer whether or not a person was motivated by their faith. People made connections and networked at church.

While the reason for attending church in Crestwood Heights may not have been the reason people attended St. Paul's Church in the "good old days," the cultural milieu at that time makes us look more closely at memories and statistics in our own parish. From a social science perspective, it is always important to look at the variety of factors motivating behavior.

Jumping ahead to 2019, those who hold onto the myth of past years grieve the empty pews. Unfortunately, this grief is not totally misguided. St. Paul's is an aging congregation. There has been an average of thirty funerals a year over the last decade. Long-time members have passed away leaving a smaller, aging membership to take up the slack in volunteering and financial giving.

¹⁶² John R. Seeley, R. Alexander Simm, and Elizabeth W. Looseley, *Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life* (Toronto: Basic Books, 1956)

In addition to the loss of friends, there is grief due to the loss of Christendom. I still hear parishioners say the decline started when the Lord's Prayer was taken out of school. They go on about how society has changed and how the Church has lost its position of importance in society. Some believe the busyness of today's society is destroying the church and leading people away from faith.

John Roberto, in his book *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century: Engaging All Ages and Generations*, shows that the decline in religiosity in the last fifteen years has doubled from the decline of the 1960's and 1970's.¹⁶³ Citing a Pew Research report, Roberto says that those no longer associated with any religion has risen to twenty percent of all Americans and thirty-two percent of those in their twenties and early thirties, and up to thirty-four percent of Millennials in their early twenties.¹⁶⁴

Roberto also shares a Canadian statistic from a 2012 study called *Hemorrhaging Faith: Why & When Canadian Young Adults Are Leaving, Staying & Returning to the Church*.¹⁶⁵ Only 23 percent of young adults that claim a connection with a church are actively engaged in their faith community. The study also found that churches were losing more young people between childhood and adolescence than between adolescence and young adult years.

Citing Christian Smith, Roberto says that declining participation in all aspects of church life, worship, sacraments, rituals, and children and youth programming has resulted in declining levels of family religious transmission and faith practice at home.

¹⁶³ John Roberto, *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century: Engaging All Ages and Generations* (Naugatuck, CT: Lifelong Faith Publications, 2015). Kindle location 317, Kindle Edition.

¹⁶⁴ John Roberto, *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century: Engaging All Ages and Generations*, Kindle location 315, Kindle edition.

¹⁶⁵ John Roberto, *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century: Engaging All Ages and Generations*, Kindle location, 372, Kindle edition.

These trends have a direct impact on developing Christian identity and a Christian way of life today.¹⁶⁶ This is an interesting observation.

Our older adults lament the absence of their adult children who grew up in the church, attended Sunday school and youth programs. They wonder why their adult children don't come to church. The major concern for the older adults is the lost opportunities their grandchildren and great-grandchildren have to be baptized, participate in worship, and to attend Sunday school. The transmission of faith, whether through family sharing and teaching or through church based programs, in many cases is not happening. In the end, there may not be a clear causation to this change, but a combination of factors. The one fact that is clear is the loss of faith development in children and adolescents. This loss is evident even in most of the youth attending St. Paul's youth program.

The statistics shared by John Roberto seem to support the worries of many people at St. Paul's, but there are glimmers of hope in the gloom. At a recent town hall meeting held by my bishop,¹⁶⁷ we were told that twenty-five percent, or fifty-one of the parishes in my diocese were growing. Most are holding their own, while some are in decline. The fact that several are growing shows that churches are still attracting people to worship and participation in a parish family.

While there are many reasons a church grows or declines, evidence exists that adults and young people are still being drawn to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The youth that participated in the project are proof that young people are interested in learning more

¹⁶⁶ John Roberto, *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century: Engaging All Ages and Generations*, Kindle location 416-423, Kindle edition.

¹⁶⁷ May 16, 2019.

about God, faith, and the church, even youth from non-church backgrounds. For the most part, these unchurched youth are self-motivated in their faith endeavors.

Reginald W. Bibby is a well-known sociologist in Canada that has been publishing reports on church life and attendance since the 1970's. In 2017, Bibby undertook a study looking ahead to Canada's 200th anniversary in 2067. This study explored where Canada may be then and where churches may be heading. His 2017 work builds on his 2009 study, *The Emerging Millennials*. His look forward in 2017 says that teenagers believe their futures rely on their own determination and willpower, but also finds that teenagers and adults still have a belief in God, albeit in less numbers than in a 1975 study.¹⁶⁸ Those relying on willpower numbered 89 percent. Those claiming reliance on God or some other supernatural force numbered 40 percent. He also found that 75 percent of Millennials believed in life after death, 68 percent believed in God, and 57 percent believed in miraculous healings. These numbers show us that our churches have opportunities to reach younger generations.

Generativity

Generativity simply means “concern for and commitment to the well-being of future generations.”¹⁶⁹ Generativity is something we engage in to better the lives of others, or to leave a legacy that continues in the next generation and beyond. Generativity may be intentional in nature, or, in some circumstances, may come as a natural long-term consequence of work and actions to meet immediate needs. In *The Redemptive Self*, Dan P. McAdams says that generativity is a broad category that includes many things adults

¹⁶⁸ Reginald W. Bibby, *The Future as an Allusion: Using Social and Personal Forecasts to Uncover Explicit and Implicit Religion* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2017), 443.

¹⁶⁹ Dan P. McAdams and Regina L. Logan, *The Generative Society: Caring for Future Generations*, (Washington, D.C. :American Psychological Association, 2004), 16.

do and feel, as they strive “consciously and unconsciously,” to pass on to posterity some aspect of themselves.¹⁷⁰ Quoting psychologist John Kotre, generativity is “the desire to invest one’s substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self.”¹⁷¹ One such example occurred in my town by a member of our parish.

On January 28, 2019, St. Paul’s Lindsay celebrated the life of a man named Mal who in his own quiet way made a difference in the lives of hundreds of children. Mal was a founding and charter member of the Lindsay Optimist Club in 1971. He was dedicated to helping youth in Lindsay, particularly those considered “at risk.”¹⁷² His approach to the children in the town became a unique part of the club’s philosophy. Due to the efforts of Mal, the Optimist Club partnered with the local Boys and Girls Club when they built their new facility and the town’s soccer field, Wilson Fields.

I had never heard of the word generativity prior to my research, but in the months following the project I have gained an understanding of how the concept makes a difference in people’s lives. I believe Mal was a living example of generativity. His commitment and dedication to children and youth in the town left a social and spiritual legacy.

As I planned the various components of my project, I had a theory that some of the older adults in the parish would want to participate because they could make a difference in the lives of youth. This was speculation on my part, but as I began to understand the concept of generativity, I found theoretical language for my belief that

¹⁷⁰ Dan P. McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By*, (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 53.

¹⁷¹ Dan P. McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By*, 53.

¹⁷² Lindsay has a significant number of low-income families who have difficulty feeding and clothing their children and paying monthly bills.

some of the older adults who were contributing to the life of the church and local community would be willing to reach out to the youth in the parish program to help them to grow in faith.

The older adults selected for my project care deeply about the welfare of others. They volunteer in the church, as well as other organizations and institutions such as the local hospital. I believed that through the sharing of faith narratives, there would be a positive effect on the youth, including the key results that a deepened faith among the youth and the building of relationships with the older adults would occur.

McAdams describes generativity as a psychological construct that is situated in the psychology of individual lives.¹⁷³ McAdams says that the course of adult development is “not so neat and predictable,” as some other theorists believe, and that there may be “ebb and flow at different times” over the course of life.¹⁷⁴ He steps outside the box by saying that “generativity may be an especially salient psychological issue in midlife, but generative concerns and issues can arise at virtually any point in the adult life.”¹⁷⁵ This broader understanding fits well with my theory.

Benefits of generativity

In its basic form, generativity was regarded as mature men and women working to assure the wellbeing of their children, such as parents who want to ensure traditions, culture and wisdom are passed on to the next generation.

George E. Vaillant in *Aging Well* says to be a generative parent enriches everyone, especially if the doing or giving is selfless in nature.¹⁷⁶ “If creativity puts into

¹⁷³Dan P. McAdams and Regina L. Logan, *The Generative Society: Caring for Future Generations*, 15.

¹⁷⁴Dan P. McAdams and Regina L. Logan, *The Generative Society: Caring for Future Generations*, 18.

¹⁷⁵Dan P. McAdams and Regina L. Logan, *The Generative Society: Caring for Future Generations*, 18.

¹⁷⁶ George E. Vaillant, *Aging Well*, (Boston, New York, London: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), 114.

the world what was not there before, so selfless Generativity, too, puts into the world more than was there before.”¹⁷⁷

Generativity also extends beyond family. It includes the wellbeing of future generations through various kinds of activities and enterprises in “churches, schools, neighborhoods, communities, organizations, and society at large.”¹⁷⁸ A bequest to a church for use in ministry and outreach is one example. Mal’s work with the Optimist Club to improve the lives of children and youth in Lindsay is another example.

Generativity may also be expressed in teaching, mentoring, volunteer work, charitable activities, and religious involvements. These aspects work well with the theory and the action of the project. The older adults are being generative in their work in the church with the youth. They are teaching faith through narrative and building relationships that may develop into mentor relationships. They are contributing to the wellbeing of the next generation through planting seeds of faith and nurturing of existent faith. They are also contributing to the wellbeing of the church through the raising up of future members and leaders in the church.

The concept of generativity plays a major role in the project. The desire of the older adults to help the youth is altruistic in nature. They took the time to do the interviews and to meet the youth at the dinner, expressing a desire to continue conversations about faith beyond the project itself. There is a sincere concern for the youth’s future and the willingness to help in whatever way is needed.

¹⁷⁷ George E. Vaillant, *Aging Well*, 115.

¹⁷⁸ Dan P. McAdams and Regina L. Logan, *The Generative Society: Caring for Future Generations*, 16.

Project Pedagogy

Faith formation is the central component of the project along with developing relationships and breaking down barriers between the generations. The challenge in the project was to discover or create a pedagogy that would work with two very different generations separated by as much of seventy-five years.

Both generations learn very differently. The older adults came out of a model of learning that primarily involved classroom teaching and lectures. This is the same model I grew up with in the 1960's and 70's.¹⁷⁹

The youth in the project are taught in a similar fashion to what the older adults experienced. They attend classes listening to lessons and lectures, but laptops, tablets, and phones are now incorporated into most high school classrooms in Lindsay. For example, my youngest son, who is in eleventh grade, is provided with a Chrome book to use in school and has to log on to a Google classroom site for assignments and for posting homework.¹⁸⁰ The approach to education and class participation has changed. Even I could not have imagined the advances in technology that are taken for granted by Generation Z.

When considering a pedagogical approach to the project, I had to consider the following factors: a) Where is there still interest in faith, and who can help those wanting to learn? b) Are older adults a resource that can communicate faith to the youth in a way that will connect and resonate with the youth, while at the same time being meaningful to

¹⁷⁹ For philosophies of education that influenced our traditional models of education, see Steven M. Cahn, *Classic and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Education*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

¹⁸⁰ When my son was three years old, he taught himself how to read using a Leapfrog Phonics Writing Desk. It sounded out the name of the letters, the sounds, and had a window to learn to write the letters with a stylus. He is a true Gen Z!

the older adults? c) Is there a way that the youth can contribute to their own learning objectives?

A different model

The older adults at St. Paul's understand the classroom model such as Sunday school as the way to teach, but the last thing the youth want is more school. Besides, the youth do not attend church on Sundays. I knew this model of learning would not work and a different approach would have to be considered. Is there a pedagogical model that could blend the concept of classroom and face-to-face teaching with a digital approach to learning that would satisfy the older adults and also appeal to the youth?

The pedagogical model I used originated with something called Hybrid Networking.¹⁸¹ This was an approach to learning taught at the *eformation*¹⁸² seminars I attended for two years at the Virginia Theological Seminary. I modified the model to achieve the goals of the project.

In June 2013 and 2014, I had the good fortune to meet Kyle Matthew Oliver, the former Digital Missioner for VTS who worked with Lisa Kimball at the Center for Ministry and Teaching (CMT). I also met John Roberto who shared his knowledge of intergenerational ministry and modern pedagogical approaches to teaching.

“We are witnessing transformations in the way we think about learning, reflecting the convergence of new technologies, digital media and tools, and network learning.”¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Hybrid networking, <https://www.ecfvp.org/search/?q=Hybrid+faith+formation+>

¹⁸² eformation are workshops and seminars held annually at Virginia Theological Seminary through the Center for Ministry and Teaching.

¹⁸³ John Roberto, *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century: Engaging All Ages and Generations*, Kindle locations 1271-1280. Kindle edition.

Hybrid networking blends traditional ways of learning with digital technology and is participatory in format. In the fall of 2014, I was part of a cohort coordinated by Kyle Matthew Oliver and colleague Day Smith Pritchartt.¹⁸⁴ The cohort was part of a study funded by the Episcopal Church Foundation *Vital Practices*. We experimented with hybrid networking, meeting online several times as a group on Google Hangouts to discuss approaches to learning in our own contexts.

My project for this effort involved introducing digital technology into an intergenerational confirmation class that was made up of several teenagers who were to be confirmed, and six older adults who were to reaffirm their vows. The hybrid component involved the sending of daily scripture and reflection links by email to the group, and online links for study for the confirmation. There were also several sessions together as a group that also included review of the online studies. The final session concluded with a dinner at the home of one of the facilitators, the youth and the older adults.

The model used in the 2014 hybrid networking study helped me develop a strategy and pedagogy for my project that could work with the questions I posed at the beginning of this section, particularly the question regarding interest in learning about God and faith and how do we develop that interest further?

Based on my own experience in 2014, I believed that hybrid networking or a similar model could bring the two generations together in a way that would benefit both groups. The youth would have a chance to ask the questions that were important to them and both the youth and the older adults would have a chance to be part of a process that

¹⁸⁴ Oliver and Pritchartt presented an article at the 2013 Forma Conference, introducing the approach to teaching for people who wanted to learn but couldn't attend a weekly Bible study or Sunday school.

both generations would be comfortable with. The youth would learn using a familiar digital platform, and the seniors would benefit from knowing they were making a difference in the life of the youth.

This hybrid model of video presentation and in-person interaction turned out to be an effective pedagogical model for my thesis project. Chapter Three described the practical steps of my project in more detail, and my next chapter will look at the project outcomes and next steps.

This chapter discussed looked at generational differences between the youth and older adults in my project, faith trends across generations, the concept of generativity, and the hybrid model that served as my pedagogical underpinnings. Now I will turn to my conclusion, with an analysis of the outcomes of my thesis projects and potential next steps in my parish and in other contexts.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Review, Analysis and Potential Next Steps

We should do this again. It was fun being able to speak with some of the older adults and I would like to get to know all of them! ~Ted, youth participant

I did not know when I started the project that I would come to care so deeply for the youth and older adults that participated in the research, but as I continued to meet with the youth to hear their spiritual questions and listened to the stories shared by the older adults, both groups took on a new character. They were no longer participants in a project, but became fellow seekers walking with me on my journey of faith and discovery.

The youth and I share a common inquisitiveness about life and faith. They thirst for spiritual knowledge, which can only be satisfied by going deeper into the Christian narrative and a growing relationship with Jesus. Faced with peers and a society that at times belittles their enquiries of faith and participation in a church program, the youth continue to connect at St. Paul's, led by the desire for fellowship and to know more about God, faith, and the church.

The youth program has planted seeds of faith and stimulated a desire to learn more. What the program planted, this project watered by providing the meeting place for youth to come together with seniors to hear faith narratives and lay the foundation for future relationship.

This chapter will now review and analyse my project and look at future possibilities for ministry in my context and others. It will conclude with some thoughts on what a reader can take away and do with the results of this project.

Project Review and Analysis

My project thesis is that by connecting youth and older adults, youth participants will grow in understanding and faith, and the older adults will be affirmed in their supportive role while validating their own experiences of faith, which will open doors to generational sharing and provide a model of learning that can be used for other programs in the parish and throughout the diocese.

The primary goal of the project was to help the youth gain an understanding of faith and the church. Interest in things spiritual was expressed at the weekly youth program. Youth ranging in age from twelve to twenty were asking important questions including, “Who is God?” “Is there a heaven and hell?” and “Why does God allow suffering in the world?” How could the church respond in a meaningful way that was more than, “go to church and you will learn.” The traditional approaches to Christian education such as Sunday school and Bible study weren’t working with youth who didn’t belong to the church and who had little or no exposure to the Bible and the Christian faith. We needed another pedagogical approach.

A secondary goal of my project was involving older adults, aged sixty-five and older, who represent the largest demographic in the parish. At the time of the project, I was approaching ten years at St. Paul’s. I had observed the gradual disconnecting of older adults with their beloved church. They were faithful Christians who through age and infirmity had lost or were losing their voice and influence in the church. I wanted to find a way to allow older adults to express and be affirmed in their faith, and at the same time be a resource and support to the youth who are seeking answers to their faith-based questions.

With these goals in mind, I developed a methodology that brought two very different generations together, the Builder Generation and Generation Z. My theory was that the older adults would be interested in helping the youth in their quest for understanding. The challenge was whether the youth would be interested in talking to the older adults who could be their grandparents or great-grandparents.

I was very pleased and relieved when the youth agreed to be part of the project. The methodology used provided an opportunity for bringing their questions to the older adults in a non-threatening way. A video would be produced of the older adults' answers, and the youth would be able to view the video on YouTube, something very familiar to Generation Z.

The older adults agreed to being videotaped, although there was some apprehension. Once they were told that the video would not be posted publicly, they were more willing to participate. The taping was all done at the church except for one couple that were homebound due to health issues. That interview was done at their apartment with me present.

The logistics and scheduling the videotaping and the viewing of the video by the youth afterwards felt at times like the proverbial "herding of cats." Contrary to common perceptions about retirement, the older adults at St. Paul's are extremely busy with parish or community activities, as well as scheduled medical appointments. The youth are always busy with extra-curricular activities, homework, social life, and part-time work. An early winter and the lead up to Christmas 2017 meant delays to the videotaping, editing, viewing, and the final dinner gathering. The first discussions with the youth occurred in November 2017, yet the project wasn't completed till March 2018.

Qualitative Inquiry and Pedagogy

In Chapter Two, I identified a qualitative inquiry method for the project called narrative inquiry. The project involves faith formation through the use of narrative, and my research directed me to narrative inquiry as described by Lynn Butler-Kisber in her book, *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Based Perspectives*. Butler-Kisber's understanding of narrative includes short or extended story, or a life story that can be biographical or autobiographical.²²⁶

The pedagogy for the project does not fit into one approach to education, but is a hybrid model that blends digital technology and traditional philosophies of education. The video provided two ways to interface with the older adults. The interviewers were involved directly, but the youth were able to be secondary listeners through the video on a digital platform.

Combined with group discussions, questionnaires, and the final gathering of youth, learning happened on a content and on a relational level. Youth learned about the faith of the adults through specific answers to crafted questions, and at the same time learned about the older adults through hearing and observing. These two areas of learning came together in the final meeting of youth and older adults in which both listened to and observed each other.

What worked?

There were many positive outcomes from the project. The first was the intergenerational aspect of the project. The youth and older adults were open to working together in the project and then meeting as a group. In Chapter One, I described some

²²⁶Lynn-Butler Kisber, *Qualitative Inquiry*, p. 75.

historic issues that made relations between the youth and older adults uncomfortable and even adversarial at times. The adults reaching out to the youth was the beginning of a new relationship, and this connection accomplished one of the goals of the thesis.

The interactions I observed at the concluding dinner were lively and positive. The adults took great interest in listening to the youth, whether about school, hobbies and interests, or what they hoped to do once they graduated. The youth, once they got over their shyness, were quite open to chatting with the older adults. After the dinner, some youth made it a point to tell me how much they enjoyed meeting the older adults and talking to them. The quote from Ted, which I used to introduce the chapter, expressed the sentiment of several of the youth.

One surprise was revealed in the youths' comments after their interaction with the older adults. The negative sentiment of some adults in the congregation about the youth was shared by the youth for the adults. The youth were actually taught by a past youth leader that the adults hate them and don't trust them. The coming together of the two generations was extremely significant, signalling a shift in attitudes on both sides. My hope is that this change will filter into the congregation and represent a new beginning for the parish.

The second set of positive outcomes occurred through the success of the video process. First, the completion and viewing of the video is a success. The two youth interviewers overcame their own shyness and apprehensions, discovering some strengths and skills in the process. At age fifteen, both interviewers did a great job. They took the responsibility seriously and didn't allow the age difference between them and their interviewees to get in their way.

The second success with the video is that most of the youth followed through with watching the video and responding to the follow-up questionnaire. Of the thirteen youth who contributed to the writing of the nine questions, eight of them, or sixty-two percent, answered the questionnaire providing the youth portion of the qualitative data for the project.

The third success is that the use of video supported the methodological and pedagogical process. The youth responded positively to what they heard and observed, some expressing a desire to get to know the seniors more after watching the video, and others wanting more answers to the questions or gaining new insights.

Jean, age 12, said, “I thought they were all nice and caring.” In response to the questions she said, “I think 2-4 seniors should come back and tell the youth some more.” “I would want to hear more about faith and how it is special to the seniors...I would like to hear some more stories and experiences that people have had.”²²⁷

Phillip, age 15, shared a significant insight. “When asked about if they struggled with their faith when losing someone almost all of them said that it brought them closer to God. I expected that they were going to say that they would be upset or mad at God, but instead they said that they were closer to Him.”²²⁸ This understanding was an eye opener for him. It was opposite of what he expected.

Louise, age 14, shared, “I was surprised at some of the older adults’ answers about other beliefs. They were more accepting than expected.” She also said, “I would

²²⁷ Debrief of the final dinner with the youth on March 6, 2018.

²²⁸ Debrief of the final dinner with the youth on March 6, 2018.

like to learn ways to help keep faith when something bad happens.”²²⁹ This question points to an open door to more discussions with the older adults.

Paul, age 17, also had a question for future discussions. “I was a part of the youth group. And the question I most wanted to know was what to do during a loved one’s death.” He also commented on the benefit of the video process. “Youth can benefit from listening from the older members of society. Faith stories help others know whether that’s the path for them or if another pathway is the best path.”²³⁰

The video was a lot of work, but it proved its worth as a pedagogical methodology. The youth came away learning about older adults and gained insights into faith, as well as initiating more faith questions and a desire to go deeper.

The video also had an unintended positive aspect with the relationship that developed between George and Phillip during the editing process. Phillip learned that older people can have skills with technology, and George expressed his admiration of Phillip’s ability to learn to use unfamiliar software and utilizing it to add a creative introduction for each interview segment.

The third significant positive outcome of the project was the final dinner that brought together the youth and the older adults. Aside from the conversations that went on for about two hours, there was an unexpected question and answer time. After dessert one of the youth asked if they could ask a question of the older adults which they agreed to. The question was, “How do you know God exists?” Two seniors got up to answer. Freda said she knows God exists when holding a newborn baby. Ruth said she experienced God in nature.

²²⁹ Debrief of the final dinner with the youth on March 6, 2018.

²³⁰ Debrief of the final dinner with the youth on March 6, 2018.

The youth seemed content with those answers, and continued their discussions with the seniors.²³¹ The answers went into more detail, but what impressed me was the initiative taken by the youth and the willingness of the older adults to respond in a group setting. For me, it shows that there is a possibility of more discussion in a group setting around further questions that were not originally asked or for questions where more depth was needed.

What needed more work?

Taking a step back to look at the entire project and process, I realize what a big undertaking it was. Initially, my plan was to have the youth write a few questions and then ask the older adults. It grew from that point into a detailed methodology with an extended roadmap.

If I could do the project again, I would spend more time preparing the adults to answer questions. Although I explained the process of the videotaping and what the interviewers would be asking, I needed to do more instruction in what I was looking for and that they were free to share any story that may support their answers. Phillip said that he was disappointed with some short one or two sentence answers.

In terms of the interviewers Phillip and Chloe, I needed to do some role-playing with them to teach them how to reflect back short answers and draw out further responses. Chloe wanted to know more about struggling with faith, but when she got short answers or answers that basically said, "I never struggled," she did not know how to ask for elaboration or examples. Being a skilled interviewer takes time and training. I needed to find a time with the youth to do more preparation.

²³¹ Concluding dinner, March 6, 2018.

What didn't work?

Overall, the project went as planned. The only variable I had little control over was the youth participation. Thirteen youth provided input to the written questions. Most watched the video, but only eight answered the questionnaire. This isn't a bad response rate, but I wish I could have done something to increase the response rate. This issue is difficult since the whole process is voluntary and youth attendance any week at the program can vary considerably.

The video was edited down to one hour and twenty minutes, which is a long video for an adult to watch, and more so for youth. If I could redo the video, I would cut back the number of questions to five or six from nine. I would use the video time for more depth and storytelling. A shorter video may have also been more appealing to the youth and may have solicited more youth responses.

Time was also a factor in the lead up to the project. The difficulty in getting youth together and the busyness of the adults made it impossible to have an initial pre-Christmas social time. Originally, I had planned such a meet and greet to give the youth and older adults a chance to meet each other before the videotaping. If this had happened, I wonder if the youth would have been more interested in viewing the video or if the adults would have understood the youth better and shared more.

Potential Next Steps

A Follow-Up Gathering

I believe we could take this project to the next level. In terms of the project as it currently exists, I would like to take some of the questions that the youth felt were not answered well, such as those dealing with the loss of a loved one and how faith helps in

times of struggle, and go deeper with them. These were two important questions that the interviewers and the other youth wanted to hear more about.

Both youth and the older adults expressed an interest in another meeting. I have considered an informal lunch gathering in the fall of 2019. I would hope to do some preparation ahead of time with the youth and older adults around questions that would prove fruitful for more discussion. The preparation with the adults would include the sharing of some comments from the youth following the video. For the youth, I would also refresh their memories regarding their comments about what they wanted to know more about.

The other part of the lunch meeting would be to provide an opportunity to reconnect after the March 2018 dinner and perhaps include a discussion about what they may like to do next.

Common Lament

I would also like to bring the youth and adults together to go further into what I called a common lament in Chapter Four. This is not a lament of tears, but a common meeting place of concerns for oneself and one's future, as well as for concerns for the community in which addictions, abuse, and violence exist. Both groups share a concern for the future of our planet. The youth worry about what future they face with climate change and the older adults worry about their grandchildren's future. One exercise I would like to try would be using colored post-its on which youth and adults write their concerns or laments and then post on different walls with their names on the back. It would be fascinating to see how the two groups are similar. Such an exercise could point to possible areas of shared ministry in the community, such as help with the local shelter

or river conservation. It could bring the two generations together in their common action, realizing that in many ways they are very similar.

I would like to repeat the project as a whole with a new set of adults and youth that are new to the program since 2017-18. As a researcher, I wonder how similar the results of a second project would be and what new insights might result.

Mentorship

Another possibility would be to do the project with a younger demographic of adults who are still working or in early retirement. The current thesis project was clear in wanting to include a group of adults who are beginning to move to the margins of the parish involvement due to age and infirmity, and to affirm their faith, gifts, and ability to be generative in their involvement with the youth. Younger adults might provide more mentor opportunities, however. By virtue of being currently employed, the adult could offer the youth an opportunity to learn about a trade or profession. Adults in this demographic may also have perspectives on faith that would be a good compliment to what the older adults shared.

Dementia

Over the course of my time as Rector, I have seen many in the parish develop different forms of dementia. I wonder out loud if the youth have a role to play with these families? They could visit parishioners in the early stages, providing friendship and support. Some youth do not have grandparents. Perhaps this could be a way of bringing some love and grace into what can be at times quite difficult. The youth could be taught how to offer support and presence to the families, filling a need and learning special skills that will benefit them into the future.

Other Parishes and Beyond

In the spring of 2019, I had a friend in a parish one hour away ask if he could use the process of youth writing questions for adults to answer. He was doing some sessions with a confirmation class and was intrigued by my project.

I have had other inquiries from other clergy friends. All have expressed an interest in the intergenerational formation of the project for use in their own contexts. My bishop has also approached me about doing a workshop based on my thesis for her area of forty-three parishes. She has also brought my project ideas to the Diocesan College of Bishops. There may be the possibility of a wider diocesan workshop or consulting as needed.

These inquiries indicate that there is interest in using my thesis methodology to bring together youth and older adults around faith narratives. An avenue for further research would be to create a standard format for ways to use such a methodology and to gather research data from it. Such a project could be a resource for congregational development, faith formation, and intergenerational ministries.

Final comments

I hope that other researchers will see the value of my project and take it to new levels in their own contexts. St. Paul's is a wonderful place to serve and do ministry, but other parishes and ministries may have people and resources that I do not have. I would be grateful to see another parish duplicate my findings and expand on them. If my project becomes a starting point for another intergenerational ministry in another parish, I would love to see where it leads. That's the exciting part of research. My thesis project isn't an end; it's a beginning that opens up doors that can lead the way to new discoveries.

I hope that anyone who reads this thesis will be encouraged in his or her own ministries. My context would not have seemed like a place where youth and older adults would come together and share their faith and stories, but it happened. May my experience be a motivation to others who are looking for something to stir up a spirit of possibilities in ministry.

I really enjoyed this whole experience. From interviewing the seniors, to watching the video, to having a big dinner with them, to even answering these questions. It gave me a chance to learn about other people's faiths. I would definitely love to do this again with other people. This was a great thing to do that can bring others together.

~Phillip, youth participant

Appendix 1

Informed Consent Document

Virginia Theological Seminary

CONSENT TO PARTICPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Project Title: *Growing Christian Disciples: An Intergenerational Project of Faith Development through Story Telling, Relationship Building and Community.*

Principal Investigator: The Reverend Warren Leibovitch
St. Paul's Anglican Church
45 Russell Street West
Lindsay, ON K9V 2W8
705-324-4666 (church)
705-321-3588 (cell)
warren@st-pauls-lindsay.ca

Site where study is to be conducted: St. Paul's Church, Lindsay.

Introduction/Purpose: You are invited to participate in a research project as part of the Reverend Warren Leibovitch's Doctor of Ministry Thesis. The purpose of this study is to look at how the sharing of faith stories from adults can help young people grow in faith. The thesis is that by connecting youth and seniors, youth participants will grow in understanding and faith, and the seniors will be affirmed in their supportive role while validating their own experiences of faith, which will open doors to generational sharing and provide a model of learning that can be used for other programs in the parish and throughout the diocese.

Process: The project timeline begins in November 2017 and will end no later than March 2018. The process is as follows:

1. The members of St. Paul's youth program will be invited to think of some faith related questions they would like to ask adult members of the congregation.
2. Video interviews of the adults answering the questions will be conducted at St. Paul's Church at an agreed to time. Please note, in the event of mobility needs of any adult participant, the interview will be done at their place of residence with Rev. Warren present. Rev. Warren will drive the interviewers.
3. The interviews will be done by two to three youth. Rev. Warren will be asking for volunteers from the youth program.
4. Between eight to ten adults from the congregation will be invited to participate.
5. A video will be created and viewed by the youth on a private YouTube site to

- ensure confidentiality of those interviewed.
6. The youth will be invited to answer a questionnaire following the viewing of the video interviews.
 7. A final celebration dinner will be held in March 2018 bringing together the youth and the adults.

Possible Discomforts and Risks: Your participation in this study will involve minimal risk. The youth discussions will happen in their regular Tuesday night program. The youth interviewers will have Rev. Warren available at all times for any need, as will the adult interviewees.

Benefits: On an individual level, the potential benefits are: 1) an experience of growth in faith and understanding 2) deepened relationships with other participants; and 3) The potential of helping the church develop a model of intergenerational support and affirmation that could help other churches.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decide not to participate without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also decide to leave the study at any time, or to request that certain responses are not reported as data in the project research. If you would like to leave the study or remove certain statements, please contact Rev. Warren to inform him of your decision.

Financial Considerations: Participation in this study will involve no cost to the subject. For your participation in this study you will receive no compensation.

Confidentiality: The data obtained from you will be collected via audio and video recording and on-line documents. The collected original data will be kept for a minimum of three years and will be accessible only to Rev. Warren, the recording transcriber, and seminary faculty. The researcher will protect your confidentiality by coding the data and securely storing the data. The collected data will be stored on a password protected computer system. Audio and video recordings will be transcribed and coded. Subjects will be protected from breach of confidentiality by storing any digital data on a password-protected computer system and written documents and recordings will be stored in the locked office of Rev. Warren. In the thesis itself and any future academic work, no one will be identified by their actual name. However, some identification by age will be given, and some people may be able to infer original attribution of quotes.

Contact Questions/Persons: If you have any questions about the research now or in the future, you should contact Rev. Warren by telephone at 705-324-4666 or by email at warren@st-pauls-lindsay.ca

Statement of Consent:

“I have read the above description of this research and I understand it. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions that I may have will also be answered by the principal investigator of the research study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

___I give consent to be audio and video recorded. ___I **do not** give consent to be audio and video recorded.

*For Parent/Guardian of Youth participants:

___I give consent for my son/daughter to participate and to be audio and video recorded.

___I give consent for my son/daughter to be part of the interviewing team.

___I **do not** give consent for my son/daughter to participate or to be audio and video recorded.

By signing this form I have not waived any of my legal rights to which I would otherwise be entitled.

I will be given a copy of this statement.”

_____ Printed Name of Subject	_____ Signature of Subject/Parent Or Guardian	_____ Date Signed
<u>Warren Leibovitch</u> Printed Name of Investigator	_____ Signature of Investigator	_____ Date Signed

Appendix 2

Questionnaire for the Older Adults after the Dinner

Email
March 20, 2018

Hello everyone,

Thank you for coming out to the dinner with the youth! The food was delicious and it was great to see everyone interacting!

So far, half the youth have answered the questions after watching the video.

Now that you have met some of the youth, I was hoping to get your thoughts for my research. No need to rush. I need to take time to think about your experience and answer as in-depth as possible.

1. What were your thoughts about the youth group before you met them at dinner? What are others in the church, who have never met the youth saying?
2. What was your impression of the youth that you talked to at your table or before dinner?
3. Being videotaped can be nerve-wracking. If you had a chance to re-answer any questions from the video interviews, what would they be? Would you have shared any stories or go deeper? Please describe.(the questions are attached to this email)
4. Now that you met the youth, what would you want to say to them or ask them?
5. Would you like more time to talk with some of the youth if that could be arranged?
6. Would you ever consider being a mentor to help them grow their faith?
7. What about sharing a skill you may have with the youth?
8. Any last comments or thoughts about the experience?

Thank you again for all your time and for helping me with my thesis project. Once I have the rest of the youth answer the video questions and I receive your answers to these questions, I begin pulling together the data for the qualitative research part of my paper. The goal is to have a draft of my thesis accepted by mid-fall and the defence before Christmas. At least that is the plan!

Blessings and thanks,
Warren+

Appendix 3

Video Questions

1. What sparked your faith?
2. Was there ever a time that you really struggled with keeping your faith and how old were you?
3. Is it hard to keep your faith when losing someone close and how do you get through that situation?
4. How do you did you know what church was right for you?
5. How do you respond to people questioning your faith?
6. Do you think there is a truly wrong religion to believe in? Or one that you have to believe in?
7. What do you believe happens after death?
8. When your faith has been shaken, how do you recover?
9. Is it wrong to not believe in anything (atheism)?

Appendix 4

Youth Questionnaire

The questions are divided into two parts. **Part One** is background information about you for my statistics only. Please note that your name will never be used in the thesis. **Part Two** is based on your observations of the video.

Part I- Statistics:

1. Name
2. Age
3. Do you have any brothers or sisters, Yes or No?
If yes, how many of each and their ages.
4. What grade are you currently in?
5. Have you always lived in Lindsay? If not, where did you live before?
6. Have you ever been in a youth group other than St. Paul's?
7. How long have you attended St. Paul's youth group?
8. Why do you choose to attend a church youth group? What would you like to learn?

Part II- Video Observations:

Observations of the seniors and their answers-

1. What were your thoughts about older adults and seniors BEFORE you watched the video?
2. Have your thoughts or impressions changed after watching the video?
3. Would you like to get to know any one that was interviewed that may have made an impression on you?
4. Were you surprised by any answers in the video?
5. Was there any question(s) that you wanted to hear answers to from the ones written by the youth group?

6. Did you hear what you hoped or did you want to hear more about any specific question(s)?

Faith Questions for you:

7. What was your understanding of faith, God and church before watching the video?
8. Has your understanding of faith, God and church changed since hearing some of the older adults and senior's sharing their experiences and stories?
9. Hearing how faith has been important in their as they grew up, would you like to learn more about how faith can be a special part of your life? What would you like to know, learn or experience?
10. Do you think other youth could benefit from speaking with or listening to faith and life stories of older people? Why?
11. Any last comments?

Appendix 5

Invitation for Youth to Watch the Video

February 27, 2018

Dear St. Paul's Youth,

First, I want to thank all of you for your help in coming up with the questions that were used in the recent video interviews of older adult members of the congregation. The time you dedicated to discussing and proposing the questions helped make the video interviews possible.

Beginning in the fall of 2017, I started to talk with you about my doctoral thesis project and the special way you can contribute to my project. As you may recall, the focus of the project was to have two youth interviewing some older members of the church about how they came to faith and how their faith has been an important part of their lives.

I invite you to watch the video over the next few days. There are ten people who were interviewed using your questions. If needed, you can break up the viewing into 15-20 minute segments till the whole video has been viewed.

I have also attached a few questions that I would like you to answer. It is your answers and feedback that will be the data I will use in my thesis. You can type your answers or print off the attachment and write on the sheet.

Please complete the answers no later than March 6th. You can email me your answers or bring your answers with you to the special Youth Group Dinner with the seniors who were interviewed, catered dinner with Chef Edna Smith on Tuesday March 6th.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 705-321-3588 if you have any questions after viewing the video.

The link is: <https://youtu.be/h1wv-RvJtck>

Yours in Christ,



Rev. Warren Leibovitch

Appendix 6

Adult Video Transcript

Video One: Freda, age 80 (filmed in sanctuary)

Interviewee: I'm B.B., and I go to this church. I've been going to this church for 56 years.

(Male) Interviewer: So, What sparked your faith?

B.B: I was a born Christian. I was a born Anglican (laughs). So, I can't ever remember a time I didn't attend church, and never ever not wanting to. So I think I was pretty easy, I was an easy kid. I was an only child, so you know, it was fun to go to Sunday school and church. I sang in choirs, and was involved from the word go.

Interviewer: Was there ever a time that you really struggled with keeping your faith?

B.B: On and off. I can't say that I never questioned, I think everyone must...even St. Paul questioned; so I think I have that right. And um, and I would say now that as I get older and I get closer to the end, I'm 80, so um, I find I'm saying, 'God you know, what's this all about?', and our own church is going through a hard time right now. There was a time I thought the bishop and the Anglican church-I didn't question anything, but now I question a lot of things about the Anglican Church, um, but I knew that I could not live without believing in the Lord Jesus

Interviewer: Is it hard to keep your faith when losing someone close and how do you get through that situation?

B.B: I lost my husband 16 years ago. Um, I can look around this church, and see there all sorts of things he made even that cross up there (looking up). And um, I think I grew closer to God during that time. Um, he was sick for a year and a half with cancer, and you know, he wasn't going to get better. Well, You know that, but you pray like crazy, you know, that he would, you know, that there would be a miracle, but he was a wonderful Christian man, and I'm a nurse, and he was easy to look after . And if anything, without a belief in the Lord Jesus, I wouldn't have been able to do it. No, I understand why people why people do, and I've called on people who lose their faith during a terrible time, um, I think maybe losing a child, you're not supposed to question it, but that's out of context, you know you question that, you know that's not supposed to happen, you know, so that's one thing. But I don't know how people get through it without faith.

Interviewer: How do you did you know what church was right for you?

B.B: Well, uh hum, uh hum. I've been to churches, I certainly do, I've been around, I know what goes on in churches in town, and we've got a lot of them, um, and there is parts of some of those churches that I like, better than this, I like the music , but that being said I like play songs, which may seem strange for an 80 year old, (laughs), but I like music, yep, no, um., they won't get rid of me here, I'm not going anywhere no matter what the Anglican church does, I'm staying here. I'm kind of in a rut. (female youth filming chuckles)

Interviewer: How do you respond to people questioning your faith?

B.B: Well, I certainly sympathize with them, you know, I don't feel mad at somebody, its probably healthy, you know, to question your faith at some time, and hopefully come out the other side. It's a hunger, when you do question it, don't just sit there and do nothing about it, you know, there is lots to read, there are people who can help you. I think you have to seek help, maybe reading the bible more frequently. Prayer, praying is important to my life.

Interviewer: Do you think there is a truly wrong religion to believe in, or one that you have to

believe in?

B.B. : No, I don't have any strong, I would treat these people with respect regardless . I respect their religion., We have people, we have come in contact with surgeons in our hospital that are Muslim, and I can't help but respect them and their faith , and there are some men, just happens to be men, but I wouldn't want to be a Muslim (laughs). But I would try to encourage Muslims to become Christians.

Interviewer: What do you believe happens after death?

B.B.: I don't think any of us know. I don't even...sometimes I question what we have talked about, really. I think we are spirit, you know(shakes head) I think about it a lot since I'm getting closer, and I don't know whether I'm going to meet a lot of people there that I know already, but that would be wonderful. But the person I KNOW I'm going to see is God. I have to believe it that He is going to be there. Whether I am in a spiritual realm or whether I have some kind of a body, I know my brains will be there, at least it won't be this old body, I'll be in something different, so I'm excited about it.

Interviewer: When your faith has been shaken, how do you recover?

B.B.: Prayer is a big thing. And um, ya, and um, I read a lot, I read a lot, um you know, Christian books of course. And I read my bible everyday. And I can't say I've ever sought help from a priest, which I should do, and I wouldn't hesitate to approach my pastor, to ask for help. But prayer is a big deal. I'm alone, so I can talk to God all the time (laughs). He's my husband!

Interviewer: Is it wrong to be an atheist (note: he changed the question from-not believe in anything (atheism))?

B.B: An atheist or an Agnostic. An atheist believes in nothing. I think it would be terrible, to be honest. (laughs) I can't help it, the way I am. I can't help it. I would be trying to convince an atheist, if it was in my power to do it, that there was a loving God. Yup, I can't imagine how they could manage... how could anyone not believe in anything. I think an Agnostic is more about people who have been turned off, and there is lots of that, its no religion.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time

Appendix 7

Youth Questionnaire Responses

Questions For Video

The questions are divided into two parts. Part One is background information about you for my statistics only. Please note that your name will never be used in the thesis. Part Two is based on your observations of the video.

Please answer on this Word Document questionnaire, or print your answers on separate sheets of paper.

Part I- Statistics:

1. Name

Phillip (changed for thesis)

2. Age

I am 15 years old

3. Do you have any brothers or sisters, Yes or No?

If yes, how many of each and their ages.

I have 2 brothers, 20 and 18 years old

4. What grade are you currently in?

I am in grade 10, attending St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School

5. Have you always lived in Lindsay? If not, where did you live before?

For the first 5 years of my life, I lived in Barrie, Ontario. For the next 8 years I lived in Lindsay. Now I live in Bolsover, Ontario.

6. Have you ever been in a youth group other than St. Paul's?

I have not consistently been to a different youth group, but every once in a while I go to the St. Andrews Presbyterian youth group.

7. How long have you attended St. Paul's youth group?

I have been at the St. Pauls youth group for about 6 years

8. Why do you choose to attend a church youth group? What would you like to Learn?

I attend the youth group because I like to see the friends I have made there. I have built many friendships over the years that I have went there. I also love learning about God and the amazing things He does and has done.

Part II- Video Observations:

Observations of the seniors and their answers-

1. What were your thoughts about older adults and seniors BEFORE you watched the video?

Before I watched the video, my thoughts about the seniors were mostly positive. I always knew that they are generally more wise than most people. I have known a lot of older people because of the fact that I have grown up in the church. Most of the people that went to St. Margarets (My previous church) and St. Pauls are elderly people. I have always had a chance to get to know them. I find that they are all just like younger people. Of course, they have different views on certain things such as technology. I found that a lot the seniors are more positive than adults. All my thoughts on the seniors have all been mostly positive.

2. Have your thoughts or impressions changed after watching the video?

My thoughts about the seniors have not really changed after watching the video. Like I mentioned in the previous question, I have grown up around them because the majority of the people that go to St. Pauls are old. I already have gotten a chance to meet all the people in the video in the video before watching it. I have always known that they are nice people. Most of my impressions have not changed by watching the video.

3. Would you like to get to know anyone that was interviewed that may have made an impression on you?

I already know everyone in the video. They did not really leave an impression on me because my faith is already really strong. But if one of them did leave an impression, I would definitely like to know them better and have a chance to talk to them.

4. Were you surprised by any answers in the video?

I was surprised with how many of the people in the interview said one thing. When asked about if they struggled with their faith when losing someone almost all of them said that it brought them closer to God. I expected that they were going to say that they would be upset or mad at God, but instead they said that they were closer to Him. Most of the answers were not as surprising as that though. It was interesting to hear what (Steve) said about if you had to be in a religion; if you aren't Christian, you are in Satan's club. But overall, the answers were pretty much what I expected

5. Was there any question(s) that you wanted to hear answers to from the ones written by the youth group?

I wouldn't of minded to hear their thoughts on why God allows suffering and pain in the world. I have asked my youth pastor. I have been coming to a conclusion on why this happens, but I want to hear more people's opinions on this subject who have a strong faith.

6. Did you hear what you hoped or did you want to hear more about any specific question(s)?

Most of what was said in the video was what I wanted to hear. If someone was lacking a good answer, there was at least one other person who was able to answer that question with more meat. Even though the answers were pretty good, I would of liked if the seniors has all elaborated more on their answers, like for example incorporate a story into their answer. But pretty much these answers were what I wanted to hear

Faith Questions for you:

7. What was your understanding of faith, God and church before watching the Video?

I have grown up in the Church, all my life I have believed and had a faith, so that had been a big influence on my faith. Of course, I have found my own reasons why to believe, but growing up in the Church is a big influence.

Before watching this video, my relationship with God has been very strong. God is a huge part of my life. Whenever I need help, I will pray and ask God for help. God has been the most amazing part of my life. I do not know how people can live their lives without God in it because of just how great He is. I have no doubts that God exists because I have had an experience where God did something for me after I prayed about a specific topic. I also have felt God's presence multiple times.

My understanding of faith, God and the church has been that we need them in the world. Without God, I feel like the entire world would of fallen into chaos and we would not of been able to get to where we are right now. God tells us what we need to do, faith gives us hope, and the church shares the Word of God to everyone.

8. Has your understanding of faith, God and church changed since hearing some of the older adults and seniors sharing their experiences and stories?

My understanding of these things has not changed since watching the video. But I did enjoy listening to what they had to say about their faith.

9. Hearing how faith has been important in their lives as they grew up, would you like to learn more about how faith can be a special part of your life? What would you like to know, learn or experience?

I already completely believe in God and there is nothing that could change that. But, something I want to experience that I have not experienced yet is hearing God speak to me. I hear people say that they have heard God speak to them when praying, whether it be an actual voice or just a feeling, but that is one of the things that I have not experienced yet and I would love to. I pray almost every day but I still have not heard this voice.

10. Do you think other youth could benefit from speaking with or listening to faith and life stories of older people? Why?

Yes, other youth could definitely benefit from speaking to or listening about older people's faith. First of all, everyone knows that older people are more wise than younger people, so we already know that some of the things they say are very credible. Hearing a person so old believe in something that seems impossible makes it more credible. The youth could realize that if so many old people believe, then maybe they should consider believing in God.

The youth that do have a faith could benefit from hearing these things too. Hearing that, for example, losing a loved one brought them closer to God and how He helped them get through it could allow youth to get through losing their own loved ones with ease. Learning about someone else's own perspective on God is very influential to those who maybe are struggling with their own faith. Anyone could potentially benefit from listening to older people speak about their faith.

11. Any last comments?

I really enjoyed this whole experience. From interviewing the seniors, to watching the video, to having a big dinner with them, to even answering these questions. It gave me a chance to learn about other people's faiths. I would definitely love to do this again with other people. This was a great thing to do that can bring others together. I learned a lot about using an iMac when I was editing the video with (George). I learned that old people also can be good with technology, they just need to learn how. Overall, I enjoyed this and would do it again if asked.

Appendix 8

Post-Dinner Questionnaire Response

Rachel age 82

1. What were your thoughts about the youth group before you met them at dinner? What are others in the church who have never met the youth saying?

My initial impression was that they were inhibited being with adults or possibly uncomfortable being with 'church' adults particularly if they were unchurched as is usually the case. However, the presence of your boys in the mix might have eased that situation considerably. Teens of this age, I find, have little confidence in the mix with seniors as they feel that we don't speak their language. As well, it is their opinion usually that we are out of touch with their world.

I think that there are others in the church who feel they have nothing in common with the youth for the same reasons and that they are very reluctant to engage with the congregation.

2. What was your impression of the youth that you talked to at your table or before dinner?

The youth that I sat with to have dinner initially seemed defensive and shy by us but that was easily corrected when they discovered that we did not wish to be critical and were interested in what they were studying, their hobbies, music etc. However, understandably, they did not reciprocate any interest unless the conversation touched on one of their talkable points. I discovered that there were 'artists' of many types within the group (some visual, some gamers).

Prior to dinner, as I 'worked the room' there were a few who did not wish to engage socially and refused to even enjoy the appetizers provided. (I thought all teens were hungry!!!)

However, generally I found them to be polite and enthusiastic.

3. Being videotaped can be nerve-wracking. If you had a chance to re-answer any questions from the video interviews, what would they be? Would you have shared any stories or go deeper? Please describe.(the questions are attached to this email)

Always, after any type of interview, I find that there are things I wish I could have said or explained differently or more clearly. However, having the questions prior helped to sort out appropriate responses.

4. Now that you met the youth, what would you want to say to them or ask them?

Given the experience of that dinner with them I would probably engage in more depth

with them as to their interests in music, social interests, church activities and opinions

5. Would you like more time to talk with some of the youth if that could be arranged?

Some of the youth have assisted with our Strawberry supper etc and I find that that type of engagement really works with them. They are helping so in a positive mood and the movement involved In the activity in which they are engaged makes it easier in casual conversation to discover interests and abilities that you can't pick up in a formal setting. I am not criticizing the dinner. It was an excellent venue. [L L L]
[SEP SEP]

6. Would you ever consider being a mentor to help them grow their faith?

I do not feel that I would be a good faith mentor.

7. What about sharing a skill you may have with the youth?

If I had a transferrable skill that the youth would be interested in I would gladly share.

8. Any last comments or thoughts about the experience?

This was a pleasant and engaging experience. It was well thought out and implemented. I enjoyed meeting the youth and listening to their conversations. Towards the end of the dinner one of the youth came over to me (once she had heard my name) and asked me about my family connections. It turned out that her grandmother was a relative. This was a very spirited conversation as she did not know about our arm of the family

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