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Recontextualizing the Catechumenate for Church Youth in Hemsedal: A Strategy for the Norwegian Lutheran Church

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RECONTEXTUALIZING THE CATECHUMENATE FOR CHURCH YOUTH IN HEMSEDALE: A STRATEGY FOR THE NORWEGIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary upon the recommendation of the undersigned reader:

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RECONTEXTUALIZING THE CATECHUMENATE FOR CHURCH YOUTH IN HEMSEDAL: A STRATEGY FOR THE NORWEGIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

ALLAN HELMER MADSEN
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ABSTRACT

Recontextualizing the Catechumenate for Church Youth in Hemsedal: A Strategy for the Norwegian Lutheran Church
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Doctor of Ministry
2017
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The purpose of this project is to address the lack of discipling of post-confirmation youth in the Church of Hemsedal by forming a Mission Action Team (MAT). The team will take a set of specific actions and test if these can diffuse new discipleship approaches after a traditional Lutheran catechesis, as a part of a recontextualization process of the gospel in a Scandinavian culture. This paper is divided into three parts.

Part One presents the ministry context and describes the circumstances and the nature of local adaptive challenges. It offers important understanding regarding what is going on among former Hemsedal confirmands and examines the decline of the Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia and the relevance of a post-Christendom Church. Qualitative research is prepared by a MAT consisting of key persons. Then evaluation of the research follows, proposing some initial approaches and experiments.

Part Two reflects theologically on the findings from the interviews in order to recontextualize the gospel locally. The biblical and theological foundations of discipleship and the concept of recontextualization are examined. This analysis will be done through the lens of teachings on the Trinity, Ecclesiology, and Individuality. In particular, Robert J. Schreiter’s five criteria for establishing Christian identity are employed for these proposed experiments.

Part Three presents a ministry strategy based on the interviews, the recontextualization process, and the initial experiments. It uses the Missional Change Model, with the intent to innovate and diffuse ways of recontextualizing discipleship. The strategy utilizes a methodology of an action-reflection-action process and looks at challenges presented by new existing praxis, interprets them and the feedback, and proposes experiments—which in turn are evaluated. After experimentation, there is assessment to continually recontextualize the gospel within youth culture in the Church.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

PART ONE: MINISTRY CONTEXT

Chapter 1. THE DECLINE OF LUTHERAN CHURCHES IN SCANDINAVIA/EUROPE 10

Chapter 2. THE RELEVANCE OF A POST-CHRISTENDOM CHURCH 37

PART TWO: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Chapter 3. THE CONCEPT OF RECONTEXTUALIZATION IN THE LIGHT OF PROJECT RESEARCH 47

Chapter 4. A PROPOSED THEOLOGY OF DISCIPLESHIP FOR YOUTH 81

PART THREE: A MINISTRY STRATEGY FOR ENGAGING YOUTH

Chapter 5. INNOVATION OF DIFFUSION STRATEGIES FOR THE CHURCH OF HEMSEDAL 112

Chapter 6. IMPLEMENTATION OF CHURCH YOUTH WORK AFTER CONFIRMATION 140

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION 158

BIBLIOGRAPHY 163
INTRODUCTION

The Lutheran Church of Norway engages its context and persistently attempts to contextualize its ministry. However, this is mostly occurring on a technical level. The most tenacious local adaptive challenge in the Lutheran Church in Hemsedal is that we do not know how to engage young people in effective discipleship formation after they have been confirmed. Unless we learn how to do this, we will not be able to form young people in Christian life. This deficiency in the Church of Hemsedal is addressed by taking a set of specific actions and testing if these actions can diffuse new discipleship approaches after a traditional Lutheran catechesis as part of a recontextualization process of the gospel in a Scandinavian culture.

There are some crucial predicaments when it comes to the Lutheran Church and the socio-cultural context of Scandinavia. The most crucial of which is that the Lutheran Church of Norway (LCN) used to be a state church. Most of the European Lutheran churches maintain approximately this model. The Lutheran Church of Norway, which includes the local congregation of Hemsedal, is part of a communion of seventy-five million Lutherans in The Lutheran World Federation (LWF).1

The LCN is part of the constitution of Norway and has its own church laws and is built on the three confessions of the early Church, Confessio Augustana (CA), and the Small Catechism of Luther. The Lutheran faith is defined by the five solas: sola scriptura, sola fide, sola gratia, solus Christus, and soli Deo Gloria, where the Lutheran axiom of justification by faith alone can be seen as the reformational gift to all of Christianity. It also

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defines itself by the “and” in the pairs of Law and Gospel, *simul justus et [and] peccator*, the Spiritual and Temporal Regiment, the Holy and the Profane, and finally Word and Sacrament. Recontextualization and local theologies have to emerge out of the larger Church as an attempt to incarnate the gospel through listening to the Living Spirit and the network of traditions, as faith comes from hearing others: *fides ex auditu.* The LCN is reminiscent of Christendom but presently has entered into an exciting new era.

In 2013, the LCN was separated from the nation-state administration through a change in the constitution. About 80 percent of the population of Norway holds membership in the LCN, most by infant baptism, but only about 2 percent attend Sunday service. Hemsedal is different. Hemsedal used to be on the fringe of everything, a valley seen as a kind of addendum to Hallingdal, where the big river flows. Those who live here used to build their existence on farming. They have the home-farm, the spring and autumn pastures, and the summer pastures with the alpine huts. It used to be the women’s job to tend to the animals in summer and winter. The men often have another line of work in foresting, in the railroad companies in the vicinity, and now during later years in the water reservoir plants and the skiing company. It is not unusual for men even today to have two to four different jobs, depending on the season. Earlier, a local farmer said, there were about two hundred farmers producing milk, but nowadays the number is only twenty and still decreasing.

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2 Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985) 21. “But the gospel does not fall from the sky. Our faith is also a fides ex auditu, a faith we have heard from others. The gospel is always incarnate. . . . Thus there is no local theology without the larger church. . . . Both living spirit and the network of traditions that make up living communities need to be taken into account.”

3 Thorleif Løken, interview by author, Hemsedal, NO, 2014.
This narrative has intensified since the 1960s, when the alpine skiing company started. Now there is much work to be done in Hemsedal, so much that the locals cannot fill all the openings. For instance, there is more administrative work in the commune (municipality), in services to the community, and in general commerce. Strangers are moving in from all over Norway, Sweden, and Denmark—and many other countries, also from the former east-block. Hemsedal’s population is growing steadily, as opposed to most other valleys and small communities in Norway. For the most part, these newcomers only have one job and occasionally two; they do not own land nor have huts for rent, as the locals do. The tourist office estimates that in the high season for skiing there are about twenty-five thousand people in the valley per day.4

The LCN is both forming its missional appearance and reforming its confessional propensity,5 as it engages its context and sometimes contextualizes its ministry in an attempt to do local theology.6 Our constitutive narrative continues in and through the lives of the congregation’s sacred practices7 from specific traditional and very old contexts of a Lutheran church trying to be near to the people8 and with close bonds to the state, the Holy Scripture, great conciliar and confessional statements, and through the ecumenical


8 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, 17. “Doing local theology is a service, like washing feet.”
movement. However, this constitutive narrative can and must be enacted, because on all parameters the Lutheran Church here in Scandinavia is losing its grip on its members and society in general. The primary adaptive challenge in any congregation of the LCN is how to stop the decline on all parameters. This is an adaptive challenge, as there is no general technical solution. The intention of this paper is to address this challenge through recontextualization, which in itself is adaptive in character, to prepare the base for local missional actions.

One of the discussions of “a faith that rebels and a faith that accepts” naturally concerns nominal membership. In Hemsedal about 80 percent of the total population is a member of a Lutheran church, and almost 7 percent of the members here attend Sunday service on average. However, John R. Franke makes a good observation: “Simply because a person attends a church on a Sunday morning does not mean that he or she is a part of a true community. Even formal membership is no guarantee of being part of a community.” According also to John Calvin, the other most important reformer besides Martin Luther, people show themselves to be part of the Body of Christ “by confession of faith, by example of life, and by partaking of the sacraments.”

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9 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, 95.


13 Franke, The Character of Theology, 175.

Presbyterian and United Reformed Church, asserts that the Lord left behind him an actual visible community.\textsuperscript{15} Their point is there can be no invisible church; it must come into view.

Due to the situation of the LCN in Hemsedal, the church building sees many different congregations every year. Most are members of the church, while some are not. Most are Norwegians and from Hemsedal, while some are neither. The church building houses practically all funerals, baptisms, confirmations, and weddings in the valley but with a different congregation almost every time and with the numbers attending actually matching the numbers of those attending the Sunday services. All of this cannot obscure the fact that although most people from the valley enter the church building about three times per year, this does not at all make them true believers in Christ. Therefore, they cannot automatically be counted collectively as members of the worshipping community and, for the most part, would not see themselves as disciples of Christ.

In the Church in Hemsedal (CH), there is “continuity with Christian origins,”\textsuperscript{16} along with what Clemens Sedmak calls “unity in pluriformity.”\textsuperscript{17} This means the CH has centuries of history and a European Lutheran culture behind it with a cacophony of voices handed down from generation to generation, but it is still ensconced in rural conservatism. As the only church in the valley, the CH has a very unique position in the community, and there is no obvious competition for the souls in the valley. Craig Van Gelder comments on this: “A missional ecclesiology challenges the church to be intentional about its unique

\begin{footnotes}
\item[17] Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, 64.
\end{footnotes}
social potential. Congregations should reflect the full social mix of the communities they serve, if they are truly contextual.” Since the population is still growing in Hemsedal, the challenge for the local congregation to recontextualize the gospel in order to echo or answer all the variables is inevitable. Hemsedal commune leads the growth rate in all of Norway for the second year in a row and, according to the statistics above, has grown some 10 percent from 2009 with 2,030 to 2012 with 2,230, which is very unusual for rural communities. Essentially, the growth rate is due to Hemsedal being a ski resort.

There certainly are many Christians in this valley being confronted with the rigid structure of the church and with a bulk of doctrines, who neither attend the Sunday service on a regular basis nor engage in rites of passage but who do have a confession of faith and life examples that bear fruit. An interesting observation is that most of these are young people participating in the running of missional experiments in the valley and thus are potential members of any Mission Action Team (MAT). The big challenge is to determine how the CH can help them see the necessity or advantage of participating in an Action Learning Team (ALT) process. Additionally, with the traditional history behind the

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20 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, 48.

Church that Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen discusses, “loaded with so many unfortunate connotations from authoritarianism to coercion to antiquarianism” and the “individualistic, postmodern cacophony” in our ears, the question remains whether the ecumenical movement as well as a wish for all Christians in Hemsedal to be one church is just wishful thinking and not a dichotomy between the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of spirituality.

This action-reflection project will be divided into three parts. Part One will present the ministry context and the nature of the adaptive challenge: that we do not know how to engage young people in effective discipleship formation. To address this, it is important to understand what is going on among former Hemsedal confirmands. Qualitative research will be prepared using a local, and for this age group, modified Appreciative Inquiry amongst some thirty former confirmands in order to reflect on our catechesis. The modified Appreciative Inquiry leans on the one from Mark Lau Branson. Other Scandinavian research material that pertains to this particular age group also will be included, because the situation is quite the same in all of Scandinavia. The MAT then will evaluate the research practically and propose some initial approaches and experiments. The action-reflection process will be supervised by some leaders of the Lutheran Church in Norway.

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23 Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, 70.

Part Two reflects theologically on the findings from the interviews in order to recontextualize the gospel locally. The biblical and theological foundations of discipleship and the concept of recontextualization will be examined. For the purpose of this discussion, recontextualization will be defined as doing local theology in a post-Christendom paradigm to translate the gospel for nominal Christians of this age group. This analysis will be done through the lens of teachings on the Trinity, Ecclesiology, and Individuality and open up perspectives of discipleship for other generations as well. Its intention is to create awareness in church leadership about the adaptive challenge and engage ways to frame experiments. In particular, Robert J. Schreiter’s five criteria for establishing Christian identity will be employed for these experiments.25

Part Three presents a ministry strategy based on the interviews, the process of recontextualization, and the initial experiments. This strategy uses the Missional Change Model in order to locally recontextualize the catechumenate. A MAT, with me as coach, will speak into awareness the findings and monitor changes through repeated adapted Appreciative Inquiries, experiments, and participation counts, with the intent to innovate and diffuse ways of recontextualizing discipleship. It will make use of a methodology of an action-reflection-action process and look at challenges presented by new praxis, interpret them and the feedback, and propose experiments—which in turn will be evaluated. After experimentation, there will be assessment to continually recontextualize the gospel within youth culture in the church.

25 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, 117.
PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT
CHAPTER 1

THE DECLINE OF LUTHERAN CHURCHES IN SCANDINAVIA/EUROPE

The Lutheran Church is in dire straits on a worldly basis. This is a fact in Europe, and statistically it is proven to be the case in Scandinavia. Trends for the Church are alarming for all churches in Europe, but attention will be drawn here to the Lutheran Church in Scandinavia especially. Not only does the traditional European Lutheran turn his or her back on the Church, sister-churches no longer will associate with churches whose hermeneutics and ethics in their view have left the common foundation of the Bible. For the Scandinavian Lutheran Churches the trend is much the same—and in some cases, the decline is even graver than elsewhere.¹

Unique Scandinavian Predicaments

On all parameters the Scandinavian Lutheran Churches are declining. This is the case when it comes to baptisms, which form the foundation of all Lutheran churches, as

¹ Darrell L. Guder, ed., “Missional Connectedness: The Community of Communities in Mission,” in Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 267. “All of this helps us to see how we are conformed to this world. We may welcome the disestablishment of our traditional structures and the rapidly changing shape of our denominations as a God-given opportunity to shape ourselves for God’s mission.”
well as confirmations, which only are tangible options for children being baptized.

Weddings are unfortunately very few, and not all will last for the rest of their lives. Decline is seen also in church attendance, which is dropping at an astounding rate, as well as church membership, which is decreasing although the total population is growing.

Membership in Lutheran Churches

The Lutheran Church of Denmark has lost 4.7 percentage points—whereas the other Scandinavian churches are losing their grip on their population by much higher numbers. The Lutheran Church of Finland dropped 7.8 percentage points in that same period, the Lutheran Church of Norway fell almost 10 percentage points, and on top of this sad trend lies the Lutheran Church of Sweden losing 14.1 percentage points in just these past twelve years. Interestingly, these two latter churches have consecutively loosened their relationship with the state administration within that same period and apparently did not benefit from this numerically in any way.²

With respect to the term folkchurch, one might argue that it is a national church having more than half of the total population as its members. According to estimations, Sweden will get below that around 2020, Norway around 2025, Finland around 2030, and Denmark around 2035. The case is that even numbers of baptisms are declining. The

Lutheran Church of Denmark has lost in these twelve years 7.7 percentage points, whereas the Lutheran Church of Finland declined 10.8 percentage points in that same period. The Lutheran Church of Norway saw reductions of 14.7 percentage points. On top of this even more unfortunate trend, compared to memberships, lies the Lutheran Church of Sweden losing 19.9 percentage points in just twelve years, which is approximately one-fifth.

Baptisms

The most important aspect of the downward trend throughout Scandinavia is what might be called biological unpeeling. If a birth surplus cannot be kept in the church by baptizing more people every year than the number of people dying, the total number of members will decline and fewer and fewer individuals will have the opportunity of being transformed by life in a congregation. Two aspects are of importance when looking at the numbers.

First, it seems that still in some areas of the country 90 percent of the children are baptized, where at least one parent is a member of the church, but people who themselves are neither baptized nor confirmed are unlikely to baptize their children. This group is growing rapidly, so that in some areas of the country—mostly the major cities—only every third child is baptized. This fact will have the gravest and even an accelerating effect on the decline of Lutheran Christianity in Scandinavia. This is in addition to

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immigration, which takes its toll, as well as people leaving the church for different reasons.

Second, in *folkchurch*, more than half of the population is baptized, according to estimations on the percentage of the population carrying their child to baptisms. Sweden arrived there in 2013, Norway will probably follow around 2020, Denmark around 2023, and Finland around 2025. It is therefore of indistinguishable importance that the Scandinavian Lutheran Churches start doing something about these trends. Baptisms are the crucial turning point of all statistics in the churches throughout Scandinavia, along with entrance into the church membership, and most certainly a condition for being a confirmand.

**Confirmands**

Confirmation as a necessity in the church when youngsters arrived to the second rites-des-passage was the backdrop for starting schools. The national Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia all still have confirmation, at least at this present time. Around the latest millennium shift, it became obvious that confirmation soon no longer will be a dominant part of growing up in Scandinavia.

*Folkchurch*, which basically means a church having more than half of the population in catechesis as confirmands, no longer is an appropriate description for the church in Sweden when it comes to the percentage of confirmands. Already in the early 1990s the Lutheran Church of Sweden had less than half the population as confirmands. According to estimations, Norway will follow around 2020, then Denmark around 2025, and finally Finland around 2030. Numbers of confirmands are declining alongside the
numbers for baptisms. The Lutheran Church of Finland in these twelve years between 2000 and 2011 has lost 4.2 percentage points of possible confirmands, whereas the Lutheran Church of Norway has declined by 5 percentage points in that same period, and the Lutheran Church of Denmark has seen reductions of 6 percentage points. Moreover, the Lutheran Church of Sweden has witnessed a decreasing 11.3 percentage points in confirmands in just twelve years, ending up on a low point in 2011 of 31.8 percent of the population, which is just shy of one-third. One of the explanations between the neighboring countries, Sweden on one end of the scale and Finland on the other, is probably that Finland has most of its catechesis during camp gatherings, which seems to be quite popular among the teenagers. Denmark is doing comparably fine as well, due to the fact that the catechesis of the confirmands (until 2014) was during school hours and unlike Norway one year earlier.

Service Attendance

Unfortunately, service attendance has declined in that same period between 2000 and 2011. In Sweden more than 4.5 million fewer people went to Sunday morning services in this period. This is almost the total population of Norway. Finland in this same period lost more than one million visitors to its services on Sunday morning, whereas in Norway some 660,000 fewer people attended church on Sunday mornings. For some reason, statistics for Sunday morning attendance have not been released for Denmark; but there is no reason to think that the numbers would be much different and probably lie somewhere between the numbers from Finland and Norway, since all other numerical references for Denmark are comparable with these countries.
In summary, the Lutheran Churches of Scandinavia are looking at dramatic changes on all fronts, and all of them for the worse. It is probably too late to save the term *folkchurch* for coming generations, since within a generation half the populations in Scandinavia neither will be members nor bring their children to baptism, nor have them go through confirmation, nor attend the Sunday morning service regularly. This calls for drastic measures, and it is called recontextualization, which can be implemented on all levels of activities in Scandinavian Lutheran congregations.

**The Norwegian Lutheran Church Context: Times of Adaptability and Adaptation**

In fostering a missional imagination the CH faces three adaptive challenges. If it really believes that a perichoretic God wants change and for the church to be a counterculture, this is the time to adapt and transform. In this line of thought, the CH is a congregation of primary groups and exists in a transitional phase towards becoming a missional church. It will face technical challenges, like the five top-down reforms of the LCN, but also will exist in the spiritually nomadic land between the worldly and the churchly regiment. This means it will experience adaptive challenges and must rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and believe that God is actually at work in the local community.

Concepts and paradigms have shifted throughout the course of time, and the so-called Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia must certainly learn to live with it. Now it even seems some are conjoining in the use of this special missional language and frameworks

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5 Recontextualization will be discussed at length in Part Two of this doctoral project.

coming out of rationalism.\textsuperscript{7} The backdrop is that the LCN no longer is a confessional church or an Evangelical-Lutheran church, other than on paper. In reality, the LCN is a communion of traditions that has developed into so many different directions. This is also the case with other Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia, so much that the label “Lutheran” gives little meaning. There are not only tensions between low-churchly, middle-churchly and high-churchly Lutherdom; now it seems all kinds of confessionality have entered into the postmodern Lutheran Church, like reformed, liberal, methodist, spiritualist, liberational, ecumenical, charismatic, and even humanistic cultural Christendom.\textsuperscript{8} The LCN is no longer a confessional church but rather an ecumenical association, and the only thing trying to keep it together is not a common understanding of Word and Sacrament but Saville Row and a common liturgical ordo.\textsuperscript{9}

\textbf{The Reform of the Catechumenate in the LCN}

The lack of discipling of post-confirmation youth, what one also could call the Follow-Up Challenge, has in some congregations in the LCN led to a combination between and supplement of continuous enterprises and broad ad hoc happenings. Research from all over Scandinavia about the youth’s relation to God shows that most are little concerned about children developing a personal faith. Every congregation must have a

\textsuperscript{7} Michael Polanyi, \textit{Personal Knowledge} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 265.

\textsuperscript{8} Kärkkäinen, \textit{An Introduction to Ecclesiology}, location 103: “The doctrine of the church has surfaced in the systematic theologies of . . . such as the Orthodox John Zizioulas; the Catholic Hans Kung; the Lutheran Wolfhart Pannenberg; the Reformed Jürgen Moltmann; the ecumenical Miroslav Volf, who has roots in both the Pentecostal and Reformed traditions; the Baptist James Mark Clendon Jr.; and the Anglican Lesslie Newbigin. All of them bring to the understanding of ecclesiology their specific voices.”

Local Strategy for Catechesis, which is the intent of this particular reform, but too little attention has been paid to the age group that is focus of this paper. The Reform of the Catechumenate in the LCN was passed as a resolution by Stortinget\(^{10}\) on May 27, 2003, in the hope that children and youth become confident in their religious identity and understanding of their culture and traditions, thus providing a breeding ground for respect and tolerance in meeting with people of another faith or attitude to life. The Reform of the Catechumenate in the LCN is one of its five main ventures. The Church Council of the LCN wants the Strategy for Catechesis to be a tool for developing a renewed catechesis in the Norwegian Church.

The National Strategy gives the local congregations help to make their own local plan for a systematic and coherent catechesis. The purpose is to awaken and strengthen Christian faith, give knowledge about a Trinitarian God, and contribute to Christian interpretation and mastering of life challenges for engagement and participation in church and community life for all baptized in the ages between zero and eighteen years, independent of level of functional ability. The intention is for children and youth to maintain their baptism and develop their connection to the Christian faith and the church of which they are a part. Catechesis is a process of formation where upbringing, education, propagation of tradition, and Christian praxis come together.

The aspects of the content of catechesis seek to conjoin the life and world of every individual, the beliefs and tradition of the church, with a focus on Christian faith in

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praxis, constituting wholeness in the experience of catechesis. At the center stands God’s love in Christ, and it is surrounded by an interpretation and mastering of life as well as the Church’s beliefs and tradition and also Christian faith in praxis.\footnote{11} The document states that every congregation must have a Local Strategy for Catechesis.\footnote{12}

The Strategy for Catechesis is a combination of guidelines and a resource document able to stimulate the work of developing and implementing a Local Strategy for Catechesis. All congregations obtain fresh means for renewal of their Local Strategy for Catechesis. When the congregations attain allocated means, they have three years to develop a Local Strategy for Catechesis, approved by the bishop. The Strategy for Catechesis in every single congregation must be developed against the background of local needs and conditions. Approved local congregations then receive their own tool-site on the homepage of the LCN, where they can use a template to develop individual strategies.\footnote{13} Other congregations can start working on their local strategy and use another template found there as well.

Children’s Ministry and Youth Work through Confirmation

For more than one hundred years there have been Sunday schools in Hemsedal, and the congregation can boast about Sunday school teachers having taught classes for more than thirty years. At this point in time there are three, and soon to be four, Sunday schools. In this context, “Sunday school” means Christian education for smaller children

\footnote{11} The Church of Norway National Council, \textit{Strategy for Catechesis: God Gives, We Share} (Oslo: The Lutheran Church of Norway, 2010), 2.

\footnote{12} Ibid.

\footnote{13} Ibid.
under ten years of age. Such gatherings happen every other Sunday in the suburbs of Hemsedal, and the third is every first Sunday of the month during “Sunday for All.” The fourth is about to start and is the only one during the Sunday morning service of the congregation, intended to be a preparation for the children to participate later in the service itself.

The S-club is also a continuous enterprise in the congregation of Hemsedal. It happens every other Wednesday for children between five and twelve years of age. Recently, a big celebration happened. The local S-club celebrated its hundredth anniversary on April 27, 2014. Many volunteers are active in the club, and many children from the valley attend the gatherings out of which forty-four have paid the fee.

There used also to be a Children’s Gospel Choir in Hemsedal, which unfortunately had to stop in 2013. The reason why it is mentioned here is that the effects and afterglow of the activity still roam in the perimeters of Hemsedal. Almost all children between the third and seventh grade sang in that choir—at times counting about 150 members and giving out compact discs and concerts. These people will be the future of this particular discussion and especially the church. Another choir has though taken over some of the activity and some of the children; it is called Hemsedal Soul Children.

There are yearly events gathering children and youth in the church, like camps for all ages, services at Christmas for all until the age of sixteen, and a gathering around the Nativity Scene and Easter visits for all the kindergartens. It is the hope of current leadership that more and more of these activities become continuous enterprises, both those from the Local Strategy for Catechesis in Hemsedal as well as those having been a part of the children’s and youth work in Hemsedal. Then certainly continuous enterprises will have
a greater effect on the propagation of the gospel to coming generations. Collectively, these activities profit from one another, since none of them is unnecessary or redundant.

Evaluation of the Strategy for Catechesis in Light of Preparation for Confirmation

The National Strategy for Catechesis already has been evaluated on a higher level. People from the National Lutheran Research Institute have been working on the feedback from all over the country. The Church’s own research institution, KIFO, regularly publishes a report on how things are in the Church. The Kirke Forskning “KIFO” report, together with “The Congregation’s Cooperation with the Home,” concludes:

Blant foreldre og ungdom i kirken er det bred oppslutning om kirken som formidler av verdier og tradisjon. . . . som respekt for andre mennesker, nestekjærlighet og tilgivelse. . . . Majoriteten av foreldre er ikke opprett av kirken som en religiøs ressurs til hjelp i kristen livstolkning . . . Foreldre er positive til at barna får kulturell kompetanse og kunnskap om kristendommen . . . som en ressurs som kan hjelpe barnet til å ta et selvstendig trosvalg . . . men er lite opprett av at barna skal utvikle en personlig tro.14

It is not possible here to go into details about the whole report. Rather, it is most important only to touch on the comments about the age group relevant for this particular project. However, one thing is clear: what Jesus wanted us to do, which he expressed and emphasized in the great commandment in Matthew 28:19-20, namely “make disciples,” seems to be totally absent from both strategy and report. In the Strategy for Catechesis

14 Ida Marie Høeg and Irene Trysnes, “Menighetenes samvirke med hjemmet” [The congregation’s cooperation with the home], in Evalueringsforskning På Trosopplæringsreformen: Rapport 1, KIFO Notat 1 [Evaluation research on the reform of the catechumenate in the LCN] (Oslo: KIFO Stiftelsen Kirkeforskning 2012), 82. “Amongst parents there is a broad rallying around the church as propagator of tradition, cultural fellowship and values. . . . like respect of other human beings, Christian charity and forgiveness, . . . the majority of parents are less concerned about the church as a resource for Christian interpretation of life . . . parents are positive to the children attaining cultural competence and knowledge about Christianity and a resource for making an independent choice of belief, but they are little concerned about the children developing a personal faith [translation mine].”
the focus is on the child as subject, and the church nowadays hands over to the child an active role in the church. The main tendency was to do the following:

Legge vekt på dimensjonen av fellesskapet, i løpet av søndag morgen tjeneste, og at barn og ungdom skal være inkludert i tjenesten. Ikke minst er dette uttrykt ved for eksempel den endrede rollen Herrens nattverd. Som det tidligere var det sentrale målet med katekumenat at de nye voksne kunne delta i nattverden; det har nå blitt sentral agent for Strategi for Katekese.15

The main objective of this doctoral project is the age group between fifteen and eighteen, youth preparing for confirmation and the ones having just been confirmed in the church. The mentioned report informs that the majority of the parents (77 percent) as well as the confirmands themselves (72 percent) are happy about the preparation for confirmation.16 Among an array of aspects youth accentuate camps and outings during this time, besides fellowship with others of their age. This is a general trend all over Scandinavia,17 which has an explicit influence on the changes the confirmands undergo

15 Otto Hauglin, “Sammendrag,” in Kunnskap, opplevelse og tilhørighet: Evaluering av forsaksfasen i Den norske kirkes trosopplæringsreform [Knowledge, experience and belonging: Evaluation of the try out phase in the faith education reform of the Norwegian Church], eds. Otto Hauglin, Lorentzen Håkon, and Sverre Dag Mogstad (Bergen, NO: Fagbokforlaget, 2008), 221. “Attach importance to the dimension of fellowship, to the space of the Sunday morning service, and that child and youth must be included in the service. Not the least this is expressed by for instance the changed role of the Lord’s Supper. As it earlier was the central goal of the catechumenate that the new adults could participate in the Lord’s Supper; it has now become the central agent of the Strategy for Catechesis [translation mine].”

16 Ida Marie Høeg, “Konfirmasjonstiden har vært bra. Jeg har fått litt mer kunnskap og hatt det fint sammen med de andre konfirmantene” [The time in preparation for confirmation has been good, I have some more knowledge and had a good time with the other confirmands], in Samfunnet i gudstjenesten [The Society in the Service] ed. Stig Lægdene, (Tromsø, NO: KUN, Kirkelig utdanningscenter i nord, 2009) 230.

during preparation for confirmation. Remarkably, there is a positive link between the number of sleepovers and a growing Christian faith.\textsuperscript{18}

However, not even four of ten are attending preparation for confirmation to make up their mind about what they believe, and only every third appreciates getting blessed on the day of confirmation.\textsuperscript{19} The choices for attending preparation for confirmation in Norway are not unlike the choices in other Scandinavian countries. In the parents’ view, preparation for confirmation does not create major interest in Christianity in confirmands, and only 4 percent show a growing interest in it as compared to before preparation for confirmation.\textsuperscript{20} The focus in preparation for confirmation is “to give a full impression about the meeting with the faith’s content-, praxis-, and fellowship-dimension in a dialogue with the confirmands questions to life.”\textsuperscript{21} However, it seems that the youth’s relationship to God is preoccupied with consumerism; God is a kind of resource that can be drawn on in times of distress.

The youth’s relationship to God as a kind of resource also is described in an international study, “Religion and Life Perspectives of Young People” (RaLP).\textsuperscript{22} Most of the youth in the survey are members of a church, but very few are religiously active;

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\textsuperscript{19} Høeg, “Konfirmasjonstiden har vært bra,” 230.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Evalueringforskning På Trosopplæringsreformen: Rapport 1, KIFO Notat 1} [Evaluation research on the reform of the catechumenate in the LCN] (Oslo: KIFO Stiftelsen Kirkeforskning 2012), 69.


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religion is seen as a private matter, and they are generally critical of “authoritative system of beliefs and practices in the form of church-related religiosity.” Their religiosity is characterized by individualization, and religion is more and more understood as a resource for help to master life in difficult situations. A study on youth attending Christian summer camps reveals the same findings. Here God is seen both in preaching and by the youth themselves giving testimonies as a resource in difficult situations. The focus is on how to get a better life by becoming a Christian, and God is viewed as a close friend and helper. The relation to God is determined less by demands, and the focus is on solicitude and love.

In many ways, it is a therapeutic relationship to God that is presented. The basic sentiment is that God helps, supports, and gives life meaning; as a result, believers will fare better in life, be happier, and have good feelings by becoming a Christian. In light of how the LCN’s Strategy for Catechesis aims at awakening and strengthening faith, imparting knowledge about God as Trinity, and helping youngsters to master life through Christian interpretation and engagement in the church, what actually is going on does not match. In other words, we as the local church and the national Church have not succeeded at all.

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The Follow-Up Challenge: Former Confirmands Fifteen to Eighteen Years of Age

In Norway, compared to the neighboring countries of Sweden and Finland, relatively few young people wish to be part of the congregation’s youth milieu after confirmation. Only 22 percent say at this point that they actually would like to continue their contact with the church at all; and even if they want to do that, it is not always possible. Only about half of the congregations actually have something to offer in this respect. Most of these are not continuous gatherings. Continuous enterprises are like clubs (which are only 13 percent), but most activities are one-time experiences spanning a set period of time or training to be leaders (39 percent).

It is in the Reform of the Catechumenate in the LCN regarding the age group after confirmation with whom the congregations nationwide have their greatest challenges. Most youth groups suffer under the yoke of having to do most themselves, without getting help from their local church or the local organizations. In the evaluation report about the reform, attention was called to the fact that children’s theology was the main focus, while the theology of youth was neglected. To add to this problem, most agreed that the age group between twelve and fourteen was challenging to work with and


considered even harder was the broader teenage group. For these reasons, most efforts were put into the small children’s groups.\(^{28}\)

The youth’s experience with confirmation and the following years pinpoint the fact that the Church is facing massive challenges. The combination among and supplement of continuous enterprises and broad ad hoc happenings for this particular age group is a demanding task for any church or congregation, and even to do just one of them demands a massive established and resource-strong youth department and many volunteers. On average, the LCN in 2010 had 17.5 volunteers per congregation; in five years, it will experience a growth rate of 18 percent due to the Reform of the Catechumenate in the LCN,\(^{29}\) which certainly will not be enough to live up to the task ahead. Congregations are blessed, where both continuous enterprises and broad ad hoc happenings are functioning and the one can profit from the other. Although in Hemsedal there are more than five times as many volunteers as the average congregation in the LCN, even here there are very few who work with the specific age group of this paper.

Most importantly, continuous enterprises for this particular age group will be absolutely necessary for the church to be an arena for youth in the future. They will prove vital to build lasting relationships after confirmation. In the conclusion of the KIFO report it states: “I menighetenes innrapportering i ressursbanken kommer det frem at det spesielt er behov for utvikling av materiell og opplegg tilpasset ungdom etter konfirmasjonsalderen.”\(^{30}\)

\(^{28}\) Hauglin, “Sammendrag,” 122.

\(^{29}\) Evalueringsforskning På Trosopplæringsreformen, 85.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 98: “In the congregations’ reports back to bank of resources in the LCN, it appears that there is a special need for developing material and proposals tailored for youth after confirmation [translation mine].”
Developing opportunities for youth to grow in Christ is what this paper is all about, and one of the means is a local MAT, which will be discussed in Part Three of this paper.

**The Lutheran Church in Hemsedal: A Post-Christendom Paradigm**

When the Lutheran Church in Scandinavia starts losing its grip on the population and is no longer a folk-church, each local congregation will gain more and more significance in developing a new understanding of what it means to be a church for the people and on the fringe of society. Essentially, there will be no way around a recontextualization of the gospel in today’s culture. This is also the case for the Church in Hemsedal. A prophetic proclamation by Darrell L. Guder states it very distinctively:

> It is that neither maintenance nor survival is an adequate purpose for any particular community or ecclesial structure. . . . Business as usual will not work if our local congregations are to become missional. . . . We must scrutinize the criteria of success that we transfer to the church from our society. . . . It calls for strong and sensitive community leadership, disciplined Bible Study, and a willingness to deal with conflict within the community . . . our communities and their structures need to be profoundly evangelized and to be converted. . . . It will lead Christian communities to ask: What is our particular expression of the mission to be Christ’s witnesses? What are our charisms for that ministry? What is our sense of vocation as a sent community?

Answers to these questions cannot be found in the present state of national churches, especially taking into consideration the reservations in contemporary culture towards larger institutions. Answers only can be found locally by innovating local

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31 Darrell L. Guder, “Missional Structures: The Particular Community,” in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 236. “The local congregation will continue to be the center of emphasis . . . the traditional parish must emerge as a missional community.”

32 Ibid., 240.

33 Guder, “Missional Connectedness,” 254. “Particular communities must be tangibly and structurally connected to the larger church, for the sake of the integrity of their mission.”
theology and recontextualizing what it means to be a witness to present-day society. The congregational aspect of the calling into discipleship and sending is much more important than the individual aspect, which has been dominating everything in the Church for decades, especially when it comes to the kerygma; only then as a community of believers is it possible to represent the full spectrum of ways in which God wants the Body of Christ to meet the ministry context.

\[\textit{Countryside Christianity as Central to the Culture}\]

There are at least four factions in the Church in Hemsedal: people from Kristian Idrets Kontakt (KRIK), “Light House,” “Normission,” and traditional churchgoers. While the first three groups will be discussed at length later in this chapter, for now it is important to mention that the traditional churchgoers are for the most part closer to an older “modern” perspective of what the church is. They are quite reserved towards the division of state and church, which in several ways makes the new seasonal arrivals feel marginalized. However, most of the recent voluntary workers in the church are from this particular group, and they have done a tremendous job for centuries.

There are efforts of trying to define all the communes (municipalities) in Norway as \textit{Folkekirkemenighet}, or “folk church assembly.” Alan J. Roxburgh says, “Symbol migration has created a decentered context for the churches that is a new form of

\[\textsuperscript{34}\text{Dietterich, “Missional Community,” 150. “We discover who we are face to face and side by side with others in work, love, and learning. All of our activity goes on in relationships.”}\]

\[\textsuperscript{35}\text{Ibid., 149: “an alternative social order that stands as a sign of God’s redemptive purposes in the world.”}\]
liminality.” 36 As an example of this, some of the rites of passage have lost their theological foundation in these parts of the churchly structure. On this Inagrace T. Dietterich comments, “Salvation is not a private transaction between the individual and God, but a social reality of transformed relationships,” 37 and so the church cannot only represent one kind of tradition. The Swedish bishop Martin Modéus says about the use of rites of passage, “Allt detta visar att det är svårt för kyrkan att hävda att ‘ritten är vår’ och att ‘vi bestämmer hur den skall tolkas.’ Riten fungerar helt enkelt inte så.” 38 On the other hand, one could define some municipalities as Bedehusmenighet, “assembly of evangelicals.” The congregation in Hemsedal is of the latter kind. Van Gelder says, “In order to contextualize responsibly, the church must assess its culture critically, discerning and unmasking its philosophical foundations and values.” 39

A fundamental challenge is that the traditional Lutheran congregation is not too excited about experimenting in general. For Hemsedal, the different experiments and Action Learning Team processes are going on already. This is exemplified by the reluctance of the CH’s board to take a deeper interest in the experiments of “Sunday for All,” “The Seasonal Workers Project,” “Team TimeToGo,” and the “Light House”


37 Dietterich, “Missional Community,” 182.

38 Martin Modéus, Mänsklig Gudstjänst [Human Service] (Stockholm: Verbum Förlag AB, 2008), 234. “All this shows that it is impossible for the church to insist that ‘the rite is ours’ and that ‘we decide how it is to be interpreted.’ The rite does not work that way [translation mine].”

community.\textsuperscript{40} This also manifests as the reluctance of being “a people of memory being continually formed in practices that shape us as an alternative story in our culture,”\textsuperscript{41} which in this case means changing rapidly with the context of an emerging tourist arena and a totally new culture—and also a new church. Being able to address this social change in a semiotic explanation of culture and church is of tantamount importance for local theology and a must for recontextualization.\textsuperscript{42} On the other hand, most people performing the local experiments are more interested in the isolated soul and “my” God and are not living in and accepting of a very long church history with old liturgy and organ music.

**Discipleship**

Mapping the contours of the situation in Hemsedal is necessary in order to have a backdrop for completing the Local Strategy for Catechesis in Hemsedal with the discipleship project. In order to substantiate and ground new experiments for the youth after confirmation, one must have an overview of what already is going on. Only such an understanding can comprehend what is possible within the sphere of Christianity in the valley.

Presently, there are five arenas where specifically the youth are challenged by the gospel in Hemsedal. First and foremost is preparation for confirmation, with more than seventy hours in the course of half a year finished by the confirmation itself. To this end the minister is assisted by volunteers from the church as well as from the team “TimeToGo.”

\textsuperscript{40} These experiments are discussed further in the next section titled “Discipleship.”

\textsuperscript{41} Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren. *Introducing the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 460.

\textsuperscript{42} Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 70.
During this time the confirmation camp with the confirmands from the neighboring city of Gol is worth mentioning as one of the most important events of the whole year, and for some years leaders have experienced that the challenge to follow Christ and be his disciple is met positively. This seed is sown to prosper in this discipleship project.

The meetings every Wednesday with the team “TimeToGo” on their premises happens in a collective outside churchly perimeters. This is the second arena where youth are challenged by Bible study and discussions concerning Christianity, arranged by young adult Christians having just finished Bible school. There is also space for just hanging out or going skiing and sharing fellowship, without being under the influence of the Word directly, but it serves an important time to socialize with other young Christians.

As the third meeting place there is a possibility of attending a group of young adults, who call themselves “Light House,” They gather in private homes every Sunday evening for teaching and Bible study. There the youth meet a mixture of people from the KRIK milieu. These include those who form the team “TimeToGo.” Most of the employees are young people who either have settled as newcomers to Hemsedal because of the snow facilities or are locals searching for fellowship with other young Christians.

As the fourth option, Hemsedal has the arena “Sunday for All,” which happens every first Sunday of the month. Christians of all ages, as the name implies, gather in the parish hall. There is Sunday school for all children. Older children attend preparation for confirmation, and those who have been confirmed join the adults in the teaching of the day, which is done by different teachers from all over the country. Finally, it is still a hope that the fifth arena of Kristent Ungdoms Lag Hemsedal (KULH) again will rise to the occasion of being a platform for discipling former confirmands, as they meet every
Saturday evening and exist as one of the continuous enterprises offering a perfect frame for shaping an identity as a Christian.

There are other arenas, which are best described as ad hoc ventures. KULH has its excursion at Pentecost. There are different meetings arranged in the deanery for young Christians, the youth organization of Normisjon “ACTA” offers different courses and events, and there are a number of youth camps during summer and winter in the vicinity as well as farther away. All of these have the ability of adding to the discipleship program intended for implementation, but overall they are too scarce and at times shallow to be tasked with following up with these young Christians and really help them tread in the footsteps of Jesus. This does not disregard these ad hoc ventures, as they can be good and constructive and build up Hemsedal’s young Christians, but they cannot and never will be able to do the job of the Church—namely, to help disciple rising leaders of the church. For far too long the church has made itself depend on parachurch organizations and ad hoc ventures to do the second half of the great commandment. It is now time to recontextualize its ministry and do the job thoroughly itself.

**Newer Scandinavian Research on Youth and Faith**

In writing books about youth and faith in Scandinavia—with such titles as “Pluralism and Identity,” 43 “The Faith Is Loose,” 44 “The Maybe Christians,” 45 *I’m a...*

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44 Leif Gunnar Engedal and Arne Tord Sveinall, eds., *Troen er Løs* [The faith is loose] (Trondheim, NO: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2000).

Believer—But I’ll Be Damned if I’m Religious,46 and “Maybe I Believe in God But . . .”47—authors seem to accentuate the lack of faith and in due course the seemingly irrelevance of the Church. Erling Birkedal and Paul Otto Brunstad are of special interest to this project, primarily because they are Norwegians but also because they have researched the age groups of concern with respect to this particular ministry strategy.

Adolescence is the time where one becomes grounded, either positively or negatively, concerning the religious dimension. This clarification often happens in conjunction to the degree a person experiences the religious dimension as a key to interpreting the new phases of life that lie ahead. The meeting with churchliness in conjunction with preparation for confirmation seems to have consequences for an individual’s religiosity far exceeding the one year the preparation originally lasts, according to Kalevi Tamminen.48 With this being true, it is astounding how little impact preparation for confirmation has on the youth in all of Scandinavia. Two studies from Norway focus on this challenge. The first is from Birkedal concerning the age group leading up to confirmation. The other is from Brunstad regarding the time after confirmation, fifteen to nineteen years of age.

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47 Erling Birkedal, Kanskje jeg tror på en gud, men . . . [Maybe I believe in God, but . . .] (Oslo: Prismet bok, IKO forlaget, 2000).

Birkedal sees no direct connection between faith and “church-religion,” a description he uses for institutionalized Christianity. He concludes that there is faith in God among adolescent youth both with and without experiences of “church-religion.” He describes three different forms of approach to religiosity: the cognitive, the emotional, and the social.

For young people primarily building on knowledge and intellectual considerations (the cognitive approach), the propagation of knowledge about Christianity and reflective talks about faith and religiosity are of prevailing importance. This affects religious formation and religiosity in the age of youth. It is crucial that this knowledge and proficiency provide meaning for the individual. For young people primarily building on confidence and experience (the emotional approach), religious experiences, events, rituals, atmosphere, and a spiritual being in the presence of God are vital for the religious formation of youth.

Birkedal’s third approach builds on the social aspect. In this relational approach, teens have fellowship with their friends and other youth in a community, where there is both a probable rendering as well as concrete visible proof of faith through religious praxis or everyday rituals. Fellowship and action are important for this particular group.

Birkedal does not describe these three different approaches as three types of youth but rather as distinct approaches to religiosity. He thinks that the young people who have the greatest possibility of maintaining their faith and their religiosity throughout

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50 Ibid., 215.

51 Ibid., 216.
adolescence are those whose faith is deeply rooted in all of them—in the cognitive as well
the emotional and social approaches, as these have a variation of experiences in meeting
“church-religion.” With respect to preparation for confirmation, Birkedal points to the
importance of taking the young one’s own learning strategy seriously. This means
flexibility during preparation for confirmation. There are different possibilities for
acquiring knowledge and becoming acquainted with the Christian faith, and Birkedal
advocates preferably all three approaches.52

Stemming from a cultural-analytical method, Brunstad has studied Norwegian
youth in the last part of adolescence and their religiosity and change in religious beliefs
and praxes. By investigating their expectations for the future, interpretation of life, beliefs
and thinking, Brunstad has tried to give a picture of their relationship to church and
religiosity, which is important for this project. He concludes that young people have airy
and abstract speculations about religion, independent of affiliation to certain faith
fellowships or church-wings.53 The message of the church has not been presented to most
young people as a reliable interpretation of life. On the contrary, this is done primarily by
popular culture (music videos, films, and commercials), which has attained a most
important significance as a religious agent of socialization, without carrying any public
mandate or obligation towards anything religious. The pulpits of today more and more
are determined by pop culture instead of those used on Sundays. Brunstad’s solution is to

52 Ibid., 217.
53 Paul Otto Brunstad, Ungdom og livstolkning [Youth and interpretation of life] (Oslo: Tapir,
1998), 263.
use pop culture as a starting point in presenting the good news to young people—in other words, in a Kierkegaardian way to address them primarily where they are.\textsuperscript{54}

Religiosity is developed under the influence of many factors, both in relation to primary socialization (home, family) and in relation to secondary socialization (religious institutions, other young people and adults, media, and popular culture). The conclusion is that the Church does not reign supreme when it comes to defining and presenting Christianity. Essentially, the question remains whether it reigns at all.

Quantitative research material from three dioceses in Norway additionally conclude that the Church actually has very little to do with formation of Christian life among youth. Preparation for confirmation is responsible for 9 percent and organized Christian ventures only for 5 percent. The most important entity is the home. However, out of fourteen hundred answers from confirmands from the three dioceses only 14 percent would characterize their home as Christian, whatever that might imply.\textsuperscript{55} This is especially the case on the backdrop, in that there are more than three times as many Christian homes in the diocese of Møre than in Tunsberg and about three times as many non-Christian homes in Tunsberg than in Møre. On that account, it is not difficult to understand that the homes in general in this diocese do have much less Christian praxis (e.g., prayer, devotion, participation in Christian work) than the homes to which they are compared in Møre and Bjørgvin. While an additional 50 percent of confirmands state

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{55} Rune Øystese, “Unges Religiøse Univers: En empirisk Undersøkelse av konfirmanter tro” [Young people’s religious universe: An empirical investigation about faith of confirmands], in Troen er Løs [The faith is loose], eds. Leif Gunnar Engedal and Arne Sveinall (Trondheim, NO: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2000), 226ff.
parents as most important for developing faith, it looks quite gloomy for Tunsberg. This is also the reason why this diocese is Christianized to a much lesser degree than the two others.

In his conclusion, Rune Øystese states: “De unges religiøse verden er svært sammensatt. De møter et mangfold av religiøs påvirkning, og de tar opp i seg trek fra de forskjelligste kilder. Det kan virke som kristentro fremdeles gir mange impulser til de unges tro, men at kirken har mistet mye av sin autoritet. Det er ikke kirkens lære de unge tror på.”56 On this account, Christian leaders must strengthen connections between home and church and start where the young people are. We must use three different forms of approach to awaken or strengthen Christian faith in young people: the cognitive, the emotional, and the social. This sounds a lot like discipleship.

56 Ibid., 240. “The religious world of young people is very complex. They experience a multiplicity of religious influence, and absorb features from different sources. It seems as if Christian faith gives many an impulse to the faith of the young, but that the church has lost a lot of its authority. It is not the doctrine of the church the young people believe [translation mine.]”
CHAPTER 2
THE RELEVANCE OF A POST-CHRISTENDOM CHURCH

This chapter discusses how in a post-Christendom church, like the one in Hemsedal, the cultural role of rite-des-passages normally forms the only connection between the church and community. Centrality in this respect focuses on both the minister and church building in engaging with the upcoming generation. In light of the lack of lay leaders and a professionalizing of church activities, this chapter will pinpoint the grave predicament of the church and question its relevance.

The Role of Rites-des-passages in Norwegian Culture

One very important aspect of churchly activity in the LCN is religious ceremonies such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals. There is no prerequisite for having any of these religious ceremonies in the LCN; one does not even need to be a member. For confirmation, people need to be baptized and attend preparation for confirmation; but if people do not attend, there are no actual or relevant sanctions. The rites-des-passages occur at birth, at adolescence, upon marrying, and when a person dies. Other transitions can happen from one stage to another in the human life cycle. The basic function of any rite is to answer to something having happened. This often occurs at points
of unrest and upheaval. During such periods of life and nature, humans answer crisis and transition with a rite. However, it is necessary to understand the rite correctly, to fix one’s eyes on the social dimension of the rite and remember that the rite comes before religion.

In the character of the rite as an answer to something having happened lies the explanation for the ritual behavior to be worldwide and blooming. Often the massive changes in life are so heavy to bear that humans need ceremonies to actually have actions and words to be able to understand what has happened, to make the vague evident and give reality to the unreal. This can provide an outlet for evoking and processing emotions.

Usually rites are bodily in nature, employ material requisites, occur as a social happening, and fit to integrate common experiences most can remember by just naming the rite.1 A church does not own rites-des-passages, even if it owns the churchly rituals. It does not determine how a rite is understood by participants—even as an institution having by far the most rites-des-passages in Hemsedal culture.

It is the church’s message that a child by baptism becomes a member of the church, but most parents go to church on these occasions because a child has been born. The cause for the rite is not membership into the Body of Christ but rather the physical birth. For most, baptism does not mean new birth, church membership, discipleship, or anything else having to do with intimate relationship with God. It is the church’s message that God still loves the teenager at confirmation, because the church in the course of time has realized that most of the confirmands did not confirm their baptism at confirmation, which in fact was the original churchly intent. Most confirmands participate in

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preparation for confirmation in the church, because they are going to be adults; the cause is also adolescence and, for most, nothing about God confirming his acceptance of them at baptism nor their acceptance of his love now that they are old enough to make the decision to do so. It is the church’s message that God wants to enter into a covenant with the marrying couple, but most marrying couples present themselves in church because they want to give each other their affirmation of marriage. The cause of their rite is not establishing a three-way covenant with God; it is that they want to be together as a couple for the time being. Finally, through last rites, the church wants to hand over the deceased to God. However, most mourners are there in church because they want to take their leave from the deceased and pay their respect. The cause is death—and for most, not anything about heaven, afterlife, and God.

Most of the rites-des-passages have lost their theological foundation, and it even seems as if the church is satisfied with once-in-a-lifetime rites of passage. It does not see every rite as a starting point for further exploration and explanation of what the rite in the church’s opinion is all about. Any rite is a social reality in a true community of believers in Christ and has to lead to transformed relationships by the Holy Spirit, not only among the people attending church on a regular basis but especially in those having the rite performed by the church, even if they do not regularly participate in churchly activities. Every rite is a point of contact, a new beginning of relationship, a missio Dei to the world on a local scale and has the potential of being a stage for recontextualization of the gospel.

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2 Dietterich, “Missional Community,” 182.
The church cannot have any rite performed only as a kind of tradition as if it were the church’s property,\textsuperscript{3} which is commonly the case and oftentimes a prejudice by many Christians. Rather, the church must learn to accept the potential of every rite to meet also the unchurched with the peace of God. Many stream into the arms of the LCN by the masses every year; in the little church in Hemsedal, twenty children are baptized and about twenty are confirmands. There are roughly twenty weddings and about the same number of funerals. If just 10 percent of those engaging in rites-des-passages were to continue on the path with Christ after each year, soon the tiny church would need a new building to fit everyone. However, such dreams need to start with recontextualizing the gospel for this particular population.

**Professionalizing Church Activities**

An average congregation in the LCN today has about eighteen volunteers working with the congregation, the board, the minister, and mostly a part-time catechist on formatting a missional imagination working in the different projects in the catechumenate of the coming generation, ages zero to eighteen. This will not be sufficient if the goal is to form a missional imagination in the church. Moreover, it certainly will not be enough even to try to enhance an idea or attempt formation of discipleship into the next generation.

“Both Protestants and Catholics of the nineteenth-century missionary movement followed what generally can be called a ‘society model,’” essentially “missionary organizations consisting of volunteers.”\textsuperscript{4} However, since volunteer culture started to

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\end{footnotes}
decline approximately at the same time of the youth revolution in the beginning of the 1970s, it actually has gone from bad to worse also in the church. At the end of the 1970s when teaching Christianity no longer ruled supreme among the religions in the schools of Norway, and the LCN eventually woke up to a new reality of actually having to do the catechumenate without all the help it received from the school system, there has been a movement in the church which eventually became the reform of the catechumenate mentioned earlier in this discussion.

On the other hand, the continuous enterprises mostly have been carried on for decades by parachurch organizations, who have struggled as well but for the most part had the stamina to continue. The big challenge for the Church was to take over about one hour a week of Christian education from the school every year\textsuperscript{5} and try to invent some kind of curriculum for twelve years, from when the children started in school until they were eighteen years of age. Now twelve years at forty hours are 480 hours, and to those are added many other hours for the pre-school children, to end up in the vicinity of 600 hours for every child between birth and eighteen years of age. Rounding this down a bit, the average totals about thirty-five hours per year.

It was and is an impossible task. First, it all had to rely on something already existing, like the school still teaching Christianity to some degree, and also the continuous enterprises of the parachurch organizations continuing their work, what they always had been doing, and count them in somewhat to fulfill the new obligation. Still, it was not enough. There were professionalized endeavors, genuine and traditional as well

\textsuperscript{5} Undervisnings Ministeriet, \textit{Minimumstimetallet}, http://www.uvm.dk/~media/UVM/Filer/I%20fokus/Tema/Timetal/100908_minimumstimetal_vejledende.ashx (accessed February 10, 2015). The Danish Ministry of Education estimates in Norway 584 hours spread over ten years but divided among religion, philosophy of life, and ethics: and in Finland about 38 hours of Religion or Ethics every year.
as new and upcoming church activities. In other words, the Church had to employ someone to take care of some of these challenges. This began by the church employing teachers as catechists to take over preparation for confirmation from the ministers.

However, as the reform sat in at the beginning of this century, many new openings were handed to the church from the church department for tryouts and experiments; and the deanery of which CH is a part was one of the first in the country to get approval by the bishop for a Local Strategy for Catechesis. Since then it has changed a lot and, without getting too technical about it, the CH now has a 40 percent position to do the job for the local congregation. For three years this has been done by an employee of the CH laying down on average 131 hours every year covering all eighteen years,\(^6\) which per year with the help of the minister is about seven hours. Apparently there is a long way to go before we arrive to the number of hours previously employed in church education, but even longer if we really want to make an impact on the next generation by discipling some of them. This being said, it appears to be much better that the local church have this obligation, so it can control the quality of faith education in its own perimeters; but most certainly the church has to do something to turn the trends of participation, and the only way presently seems to be through volunteers.

**A Culture-Driven Lack of Volunteers**

Having on average eighteen volunteers per congregation in the LCN is worrying, but it is a trend to be observed in society as well. Volunteerism is decreasing in all areas. God’s people are sharing an essential concord, but this essential concord critiques as

insufficient the conventions of Western individualism and the current practice of volunteerism in organizations.\textsuperscript{7} In unions and associations and diverse clubs, from sports to the cultural arena to the political one, the numbers of voluntary helpers become smaller and smaller; it was never the idea with volunteerism to be efficient, only sustaining, and it was never the idea with systems to be sustaining, only efficient.\textsuperscript{8} The decrease is culture-driven by everything humans do voluntarily and seems to be unstoppable; one can read in newspapers and articles in all of Scandinavia frequently that culture proceeds from freedom alone and refers to everything that humans do voluntarily.\textsuperscript{9} Roxburgh and Scott Boren write:

In the past there were three basic reasons churches grew. The most basic reason was sex. People married and had lots of babies. . . . The second reason was that people were loyal to the organizations they joined and stuck with them through thick and thin . . . the rhythms and demands on people’s lives were much less than today. . . . [and they] spend a significant amount of time as volunteers in the church.\textsuperscript{10}

There are at least two ways of confronting the tendency in a given church of losing volunteers. One is to accept the fact that fewer people want to join and stick with a church through thick and thin and invest their lives and spare time in keeping the wheels of the congregation rolling and, in accepting this, agree to turn down the level of activities to which the congregation has been accustomed. This is often the way of less

\textsuperscript{7} Van Gelder, “Missional Challenge,” 71.

\textsuperscript{8} Peter Block and John McKnight, \textit{The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods} (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010), Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 1575.


\textsuperscript{10} Roxburgh and Boren, \textit{Introducing the Missional Church}, location 836.
resistance, the easier way for some leaders and boards, but for the remaining leaders this way means fewer people now have to do more and more,\textsuperscript{11} because covenants are no longer important, and modernity and paganism in Christianity made the church into a community, where people only stay as long as their needs are met according to the consumerist ideology surrounding them.

As a consequence, the loyalists who stuck to the covenant pact commit themselves to a different life, a pact of abandonment and connection.\textsuperscript{12} However, they just might have to accept the fact that some of the continuous enterprises will suffer a sudden death, because it is most probably those suffering from lack of volunteers. The ad hoc activities are easier to handle in the view of many leaders, and it is much easier to recruit leaders for fixed-term endeavors. For instance, this is the case when having a Christmas concert. Asking the community to volunteer for a project choir receives a response from people rising to the occasion.

Another not so probable way of keeping the numbers up in the congregation, suggested indirectly by Roxburgh and Boren, is to have the congregation lay aside the contraceptives and have many more babies than the traditional one or two in Scandinavia. The other more likely way of confronting the tendency in a given church of losing volunteers is to hire someone to do the job, which interestingly enough is another way of less resistance and the easier method for some leaders and boards. They are not unwilling to pay the economic price, and former volunteers are inclined to pay their way out of


having to be available (for instance, every Thursday evening) and have a professional do the job for them.
PART TWO

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
CHAPTER 3
THE CONCEPT OF RECONTEXTUALIZATION IN THE LIGHT OF PROJECT RESEARCH

This chapter establishes the concept of recontextualization and how it is about doing local theology in a post-Christendom paradigm. The concept of recontextualization is at its core naming something that should have been there but is obviated. It is investigated both in the teachings of the Trinity, especially through the concept of perichoresis, and then through the lens of ecclesiology. Finally, the concept of individuality within postmodernity will be explored to understand how the gospel can be translated for relevance—or recontextualized and understood in the present culture of Scandinavia, so estranged to community and entangled in consumerism.

Recontextualization of Trinitarian Theologies through the Concept of Perichoresis

Beneath the influence of the church fathers—Augustine, Bonaventure, Aquinas, and others—on the concept of the Trinity in the western Church as a doxological answer of faith to God’s historical deed of salvation in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, byzantine doctrine of the Trinity exerts a stronger emphasis on the three persons (ὑπόστασις). According to Colin Gunton in *The One, the Three, and the Many*, Johannes
Damaszenus as the initiator of the concept of perichoresis understands the Trinity as a mutual penetration of the three ὑπόστασις, whose οὐσία is common properties, but as it was done in the western tradition to translate the Greek οὐσία by the Latin substantia, which actually is a literal translation of ὑπόστασις.¹ This effectively negates the notion of the person of due weight, because it introduces a stress on the underlying reality of God, thus losing the potency of the Cappadocian differentiation between ousia and hypostasis.

While the eastern tradition had a stronger emphasis on the three-way relationship in the monarchic understanding of οὐσία, so the western emphasized the unity of the eternal Trinity.² The reformers had some reservations concerning the doctrine of the Trinity as such and towards some of the other creeds besides Apostolicum. It was the teachings of Augustine on the Trinity that finally prevailed in all churches, with an emphasis on unity.³

To the Pietists the matter of personal salvation seemed more important than the doctrine of the Trinity, and Stanley Hauerwas points out that even in this time period the personal religious experience was the focal point of dogmatic teachings.⁴ Immanuel Kant questioned the metaphysical usefulness of the concept of substance (οὐσία) as well as the number of persons in the Trinity.⁵ In liberal theology the concept of the Trinity seemed

² Ibid., 172 and 210.
³ Ibid., 190.
⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2000), 79.
strange to their idea of Christianity, and if the preexistence of Christ as well as his divine intervention is questioned it is to them better not to use the concept at all.

The historical subsequence of one another was the consequence in the Father’s creation, the Son’s reconciliation, and the Holy Spirit’s new creation (so called economic Trinity) or actually the eternal unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (immanent Trinity). The perichoretic mutual indwelling is also about acting together without subordination or reciprocated captivation, a paradoxical relationship so often discussed. It was difficult to find common concepts to describe the Trinity on the basis of Latin and Greek vocabulary. Worship expressions tended to go in the direction of theoretical descriptions of a metaphysical *mysterium logicum*. On that background, Karl Barth re-invoked the concept of the old church in his immanent Trinity and had it as basis for his dogmatics, even though there are some discussions concerning his use of τροπος νπάρξεως translated as person, which could make it fit a modernist individualistic understanding of the Godhead.

Unity of God

On the basis of divine salvation, the Church tends to confess the unity of God in the fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (*unitas in trinitate*) and the fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the unity of God (*trinitas in

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6 Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many*, 205.


8 Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many*, 191.
unitate) and hold both expressions accountable.⁹ God’s revelation happens as an act of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is based on the presumption that first and foremost, God is one in communion within Trinitarian persons. Christ is the person per se and so not merely individual but rather a person in communion, since his identity is constituted by a twofold relation—namely, his relationships as Son to the Father and as head to his Body, the Church.

As in the New Testament, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are described as creating (Genesis 1:1-2), judging (Psalm 98:9), salvation-giving (Matthew 18:11), and life-giving (Romans 6:4) and so is not three but one God testified. No deed of God can be designated exclusively to the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit: *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, says Augustine.¹⁰ When the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit is adored, all prayers are directed to the one and only God, not towards “them” but to the divine “You.”

Faith does not only confess the sameness, nor only the oneness but the identity of being (ὑπὸ ὁστασις) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is also the case with his proclamation of being the eternal “I am” (Exodus 3:14). The appropriations occur in the Father being the creator, the Son being the reconciler, and the Holy Spirit being life force and new creator: “*una substantita in tribus personis,*”¹¹ where the concept of person points to the eternal individuality of the deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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⁹ Simpson, “A Reformation is a Terrible Thing to Waste,” 83.


¹¹ Gunton, The One, the Three, and the Many, 204.
The differentiation exists in the eternal towards one another, for they are each other and in each other, in eternal fellowship and reciprocal penetration of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (perichoresis). George R. Hunsberger says, “The perichoresis, or interpenetration, among the persons of the Trinity reveals that the name of God is communion.” The church is learning that it is called to be a “finite echo or bodying forth of the divine personal dynamics,” “a temporal echo of the eternal community that God is.”

God is from eternity but is no solitary God. He is unity and fellowship at the same time, not an isolated “I” but eternal interchange of I and You and so eternal. Therefore, he is a person in the singular and a person in the plural at the same time. Through his works in creation, reconciliation, and new creation, he calls one from himself a differentiated reality ex nihilo into existence and into participation of eternal life.

An Ontology of Communion

God existing in mutual dependence can be distinguished in thought but in no way separated ontologically. The subject here is a new inconceivable kind of ontological

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12 Ibid., 163.
14 Colin Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 79.
15 Simpson, “A Reformation is a Terrible Thing to Waste,” 83.
17 Gunton, The One, the Three, and the Many, 148.
speaking of God. Although understandable to believers in what John Zizioulas calls an “ontology of communion,” it is a shared existence or of ontological dynamic. The ὑπόστασις does not come at some point into relationship with one another but are founded by one another in their perichoretic fellowship. Zizioulas says, “We may say that to think of divine being is to have one’s mind necessarily drawn to the three persons, to think of the three to be led ineluctably to a concept of shared, relational being.”

The discussion around Benedikt VIII’s supplement to Nicäno-Konstantinopolitanum, the “filiogue,” could come to a conclusion in the aspect of perichoresis but exemplifies the difficulties in saying anything about God at all—for instance, in negative theology. However, one could perceive the notion of perichoresis as a clue to the due integration of truth, goodness, and beauty while maintaining their relative autonomy. Gunton expresses it this way: “A God conceived trinitarianly, a God who contains within himself a form of plurality in relation and creates a world which reflects the richness of his being, can surely enable us better to conceive something of the unity in variety of human culture.”

At present God the Father is expatriated, excommunicated from everyday life in schools and society. He seems to be irrelevant except on special occasions like baptisms, funerals, and at Christmas. There even is a tendency that he is not really needed

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19 Ibid.
20 Johannes Sløk, Teologiens elendighed (København: Berlinske Forlag, 1979), 68.
21 Gunton, The One, the Three, and the Many, 176.
22 Ibid., 177.
23 Ibid., 226.
at confirmations and weddings anymore, where individuality has taken over the main role and the rite-des-passages seemingly works quite fine without his supposed intervention.\footnote{Craig Van Gelder, ed., “How Missiology Can Help Inform the Conversation about the Missional Church in Context,” in \textit{The Missional Church in Context: Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 41.}

In such respects in post-Christendom their “god” is a \textit{deus absconditus}, a thought well known even to Luther,\footnote{Martin Luther, \textit{Luther's Works}, eds. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1955 -1986); in particular, the Heidelberg Disputation 31.} but here talking of a God of which philosophy could not show the way to knowledge of him.

Only revelation in the Son of Man, first and foremost the event on the cross (Luke 23:26-43), makes it possible for human beings to approach God in faith and confidence (Hebrews 4:16). However, this does not necessarily mean that anyone has grasped or fully understood the divine mystery completely. In the wake of the global environmental concern of this age as well as queries about creationism versus Darwinism, the so called \textit{oikos} theology and the notion of God the Father as creator has emerged anew. Jürgen Moltmann describes what happens when God is no longer seen as an old man with a beard in the sky somewhere but someone dwelling within society:

\begin{quote}
Whenever God, the fountain and source of life and all goodly powers, ceases to be a God far away in heaven and becomes present among us, then there is no longer any want, there is no longer any struggle for power either, and no more rivalry. And where there is no struggle for power and no rivalry, the age-old fears of one another we have built up simply fall away, and so do our desperately bottled-up aggressions. We step out into free life. Our fears and our aggressions simply become ludicrous, because there is enough for everyone there. God himself is there. He lives among us and invites us through his Spirit of fellowship to become “of one heart and soul.”\footnote{Jürgen Moltmann, \textit{The Power of the Powerless} (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 131.}
\end{quote}
A Trinitarian understanding of the presence of God in the world could emerge around a creation theology where the work of Christ as well as the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is integrated. William Abraham puts the matter well:

The gospel is constituted by the mighty acts of God in history for the liberation of the cosmos. It is not a set of rickety arguments about the divine order; it is not the expression of some sublime religious experience brought mysteriously to verbal form; it is not a romantic report about awareness of God in nature; it is not a speculative, philosophical theory about the nature of ultimate reality; it is not a set of pious or moral maxims designed to straighten out the world; it is not a legalistic lament about the meanness of human nature; it is not a sentimental journey down memory lane into ancient history. It is the unique narrative of what God has done to inaugurate [God’s] kingdom in Jesus of Nazareth, crucified outside Jerusalem, risen from the dead, seated at the right hand of God, and now reigning eternally with the Father, through the activity of the Holy Spirit, in the church and in the world. Where this is not announced, it will not be known. 27

God’s “work” is to create. It is not only up to the Holy Spirit to call to faith (Colossians 2:13), enlighten (Romans 8:5), and sanctify (1 Peter 1:2; 3:21; Titus 3:5). Those who follow Christ must believe in the Spirit as God’s creational presence in all of creation. As the world is created by Christ (Ephesians 3:9) and to Christ (Colossians 1:16), it is implied that Christ is present and at work in all of creation (John 1:1).

God the creator is also the heavenly Father, whose name is holy. This is depicted in the Old Testament as consonants without vowels: JHWH and a self-explanatory “I Am!” God (Exodus 3:14). His name is set aside for churchly services, faces congregants in every service in his blessing, lifts his eyes upon Christ-followers and looks them in the eye to bless and sustain in his grace given to them as the eternal shalom, his peace. This is because of creation and redemption in Jesus Christ, and so the perichoretic revelation of God can dwell among people in love and compassion. The apostle Paul expressed this

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on the Areopagos saying, “He is not far from each one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being’” (Acts 17:27-28).²⁸

Jesus is still doing fine since he not long ago became a “Superstar.”²⁹ Although he might not recognize himself in the secular depictions that are still being performed to this day, his theater productions and film are commonly anticipated around the world even in the churches. He seems to have the goodwill of a star never fading. Both Moltmann’s thoughts around a crucified God as well as the Epistle to the Philippians defining God’s Who, What, and Where reveal much. God’s Who is in his deepest substance or perichoresis, which believers recognize in the Son of Man’s choice of infamy and poverty (Luke 9:58). God’s What is victory and highness, recognized in the degradation at the cross and the reconciliation of the resurrection (John 5:29), and God’s Where is with the tormented and convicted (Acts 2:31).³⁰

Theologia Crucis

Paradoxically, a theology of the cross gives the impression of a deity totally different than what is dominating religious representations of God. To describe a deity who lets himself be found in humility and permits himself to be mocked and tortured (Philippians 2:5-11) is offensive and provoking to traditional religiosity and is not found in any other religion. Only this gives meaning to the expression: “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians

²⁸ All Scripture has been taken from Holy Bible: New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), unless otherwise noted.

²⁹ Jesus Christ Superstar, by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, directed by Tom O’Horgan, Mark Hellinger Theatre, New York, October 12, 1971.

2:11). The biblical depiction of the suffering servant and his double nature in being both man and God (John 1), but in identification with humankind, helps believers to understand themselves as beloved creatures beyond comparison. The interplay between creation theology and a theology of the cross might be able to lead Lutherdom out of the constriction of the five solas, which has had a tendency of exclusion and alienation of the Lutheran Church.

It surely is different with the Holy Spirit. Although there is a broad interest in the spirit world, the Holy Spirit seems to fall short of that interest and is even in churches conceived as a dubious side of the Godhead with the effect that even at Pentecost the lectionary of the Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia is not in all texts concerned with what it is actually about, its supernatural aspect, even this Holy Spirit. While many religions might be concerned about the one thing that holds everything together, in Christianity here it is not something but someone—in other words, the one perichoretic Trinity. This is also the reason why recontextualization of the Trinity is essential.

Both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit fall short of the attention they ought to have in the theologies of late- and post-modernity. Even the attention those two ὑπόστασις have received through environmental concern lately and the focus on creationism concerning the Father, as well as the charismatic renewal concerning the Holy Spirit, have made little impact on the Lutheran Church as such. According to Gunton, rationalism and a Freudian concern about a kind of super-ego influence people’s understanding of Jesus’ use of the word “Father” for God, a whole concept of the first

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31 Gunton, The One, the Three, and the Many, 178.
person of the Trinity, into some distant *teos abscondicus* figure who apparently has little interest in people individually or corporately.\(^{32}\) The Church needs to recontextualize the God of the Old and New Testament as the loving Father of Jesus and all believers.\(^{33}\) It is not a small task. Most postmoderns hold that there are no meta-narratives,\(^{34}\) while accepting Christianity as an optional worldview.

It is time, however, despite the difficulty of saying anything about God without cranking the image of Him into some dilution, for a contextual theology that dares to believe in the God of the Old Testament as the Father of the New Testament and put this belief into contemporary words. It must be as Gunton suggests, “new theological foundations suggested by the Trinitarian open transcendents.”\(^{35}\) He continues describing the first of three which is also the main concern, perichoresis. Gunton writes: “I did so showing that Christology had an important contribution by generating the first of three open transcendental, perichoresis. The concept offers a way of articulating the oneness of things without derogating from their plurality. A perichoretic unity is a unity of a plural rather than unitary kind.”\(^{36}\)

God the Father and creator needs to have more concrete space in the curriculum of Lutheran seminars and universities in Norway, local catechesis and Sunday schools, and

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 155, 178, 210.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 210.


\(^{35}\) Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many*, 142.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 212.
the lectionaries and teachings of Sunday morning services.\textsuperscript{37} Likewise, the Holy Spirit needs this space as well.\textsuperscript{38} There is nothing wrong in having Christology filling meter after meter of our bookshelves, but pneumatology needs the same amount of shelves as well, since this present age is after all totally and absolutely dependent upon the works of the Spirit in our midst.\textsuperscript{39} Pneumatology is about binding together human origin and vocation, creation and redemption. It is, in its basic eschatology, helping individuals find space in community and leading them on the pilgrimage of discipleship.\textsuperscript{40} It is not enough simply to touch on the perichoretic Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

People’s theology is in their psalms, songs, and what they say. As a worshipping community it is time to focus, not only on the Father in Heaven and “my friend” Jesus the Savior but also on the works and presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst. Pneumatology can help us in recontextualizing what it actually means to be a Christian.\textsuperscript{41}

What it means to be created has to find new contemporary words and biblical expressions, and what redemption implies must be lived and taught in contemporary Christian fellowships. The Holy Spirit is the ύπόστασις who helps any creation to become redeemed and thus a new creation, by pointing to the work of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Ephesians 2:10). Maybe the perichoretic unity of the Trinity can be

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 129.


\textsuperscript{39} Gunton, \textit{The One, the Three, and the Many}, 206.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 212.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 124.
a model for the church, the fellowship of the redeemed, to become a social entity powered by loving relationship and interdependence. This is the primary work of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ, as Gunton says, “to liberate them to be themselves, to be particular persons in community and as communion.” God’s sending to the world, or the missio Dei, belongs here under the teachings about the Trinity, both understood as the Son being sent as well as the sending of the Holy Spirit, but eventually and as an eschatological sign of the sending of the Church into the world as “a sign, witness and foretaste of the Kingdom of God.”

The Church is not an end in itself, but it is a means to the end. The redemption of the whole world has been God’s intention since the days of creation. It is time to realize that the Lutheran Churches are ecumenical models and not confessional entities any longer. In accepting the changeability of the nature of the local church, something very important is gained: precisely the most central recognition in Trinitarian Christianity, that all true unity is demonstrated in pluriformity. This is on the personal side of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but also represents creation in all its splendor

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42 Ibid., 177.
43 Ibid., 229.
44 Ibid., 190.
47 Van Gelder, “Missional Challenge,” 70.
48 Dietterich, “Missional Community,” 145.
49 Robert Muthiah, The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-First Century (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 68.
and the Church of the Spirit, which from the beginning was recognized by its variety and diversity (Acts 2:1-12). Paradoxically, postmodernity is determined by globalization and greater communication possibilities than ever before yet at the same time by divisions and fragmentation, both inward and outward, in post-Christendom churches.

Nevertheless, the Triune God has the capacity for dialogue and reconciliation, concerning both individuals and groups as well as societies. Missio Dei is linked together in the understanding of God, creation, and salvation, and the LWF uses a stringent Trinitarian structure around the perichoretic unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It employs the concepts of transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment to describe its task in mission, and the baseline is a Trinitarian God who is life: the Creator of life, Christ as the life of the world, and the Holy Spirit as the giver of life.50

In parenthesis, this document also is talking about mission from the margins or recontextualization in everyday theology locally and small scale. Not surprisingly, the places where recontextualization takes place is even from the margins. Where the congregation is gathered in communion, local theology is spawned.

**Recontextualizing Ecclesiology**

The following attends to the almost eternal question of what is the church and the Body of Christ, also known as the Church. As was the case with the Trinity and especially pneumatology, so it is with ecclesiology. Comparably very few books are written directly on the subject. Therefore, the main arguments will find their equivalents in Kärkkäinen’s

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An Introduction to Ecclesiology. The Church is the people redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus, gathered in local congregations living as the people of God and sharing as his sent messengers his love for the world.51

Rethinking, reconstructing, and recontextualizing the sent aspect of being the Church is a commission that must be taken up in every generation of the Body of Christ and in every part of the world where the Church takes seriously its calling to “announce shalom” and to bear faithful, public, and embodied witness to God’s reign in its own local context. As Moltmann has put it, “The historical church must be called ‘apostolic’ in a double sense. Its gospel and its doctrine are founded on the testimony of the first apostles, the eyewitnesses of the risen Christ, and it exists in the carrying out of the apostolic proclamation, the missionary charge. The expression ‘apostolic’ therefore denotes both the church’s foundation and its commission.”52 The Church is ordinary baptized people who see themselves as followers of Christ,53 and by the grace of God they are saved by the calling of the Holy Spirit.54 These are also the ones who are willing and capable of a missional ecclesiology through their discernment, involvement, visions, and dreams.55

Implicit in a missional ecclesiology is that the local church must be a contrast to the current social order, standing in front of society as such, and in many ways though living in the world yet active in different way—thus forming its ethics around dissimilar

51 Kärkkäinen, An Introduction to Ecclesiology, location 126-133.
54 Ibid., 22-24.
55 Branson and Martinez, Churches, Cultures and Leadership, location 2476.
values, also to the extent that the contrasting becomes a thorn in the flesh of any worldly powers.\textsuperscript{56} In his catholic attempt on ecclesiology, Avery Dulles sees five models of the church. First is the institutional model, which in his view should not be the primary way of viewing the church.\textsuperscript{57} The second model is the church as mystical communion or God’s people as the Body of Christ, wanting to reach the unchurched.\textsuperscript{58} Third is the church as sacrament or sacramental sign, a detectable expression of the grace of God.\textsuperscript{59} Fourth is the church as herald, calling into the world as it has been called by God.\textsuperscript{60} Finally, there is the church as servant, which looks to serve the people of the world.\textsuperscript{61} Salvation in the Christian sense is closely connected to this church—which means that its very profile in opposition to the world is a partaking in Christ through services, common practices, persuasions, values, and social behavior of the community of saints.

Luther listed seven marks or “properties” of the serving community in “On the Councils and the Churches,” each of which might be considered a constitutive practice. First is the Word of God “preached, believed, professed, and lived.” Second is baptism, while the third is the Lord’s Supper. The fourth mark is the public exercise of “the office of the keys,” or church discipline. The fifth property is the consecration of individuals to ministerial offices. The sixth consists of “prayer, public praise, and thanksgiving to God.”

\textsuperscript{56} Lois Barrett, \textit{Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 76.

\textsuperscript{57} Dulles, \textit{Models of the Church}, location 69.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., location 1918.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., location 1264.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., location 1109.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., location 1416.
The seventh is the cross, by which Luther meant the suffering and persecution associated with discipleship.\textsuperscript{62}

It is interesting that two in particular, church discipline and discipleship, demand the greatest contextual effort but are not regarded as important as they formerly were considered by Luther himself. Almost no one in Scandinavian Lutheran Churches seems to be inclined to use some kind of church discipline, when it comes to the preparation and follow-up on churchly deeds such as baptism, confirmation, weddings, and funerals. For instance, when the parents show no interest whatsoever in anything else other than the pure act of baptism, when the confirmand does not attend the required curriculum in preparation for confirmation, or when people live together as married couples and only get married in order to have formalities met, there is no follow-up. Still, these same people who normally have nothing to do with the church often want a “sacred” funeral.

Very few ministers or church councils dare or care to venture into the landscape of barely touching on the theme of church discipline. It seems nowadays as if anything is allowed, and the low-threshold approach sets the agenda for what the Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia does or lets things pass uncommented. Constantinianism and rationalism has surely taken its toll on Lutheran congregations, and secular culture seems to have more influence on the church than the Bible, creeds, and church history. This whole paper is on discipleship and in itself is a testimony about how little this biblical concept means to contemporary Christianity in Scandinavia. It is almost a word from another hemisphere.

\textsuperscript{62} Martin Luther, \textit{Luther’s Works: Church and Ministry III}, vol. 41, eds. Helmut T. Lehman and Eric W. Gritsch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 141–165.
Today leaders frequently use as defining standards for a church the four adjectives applied to the Church in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, recited by all Lutherans and many other Christians at their Sunday worship, where the church is called “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.”63 Expressing this belief in the church in this creed means that believers are sure the church is present in this place, in the congregation, and that God’s Holy Spirit is amongst us.64 However, to think that this, our Lutheran church is one and catholic—in other words, present in all the world—is to stretch the definitions a bit, yet the most pressing concern is the matter of being apostolic in the sense of both leaning on the biblical message and bringing this message to the world.

Melanchthon and Luther in the Confessio Augustana acknowledged only two notes defining what a church is, which also appear in the contracts signed by every minister in the Norwegian Lutheran Church: first, the proper preaching of the gospel; and second, the proper administration of the sacraments.65 The church cannot make converts—only God can, but the church is on a mission from God to tell people about his fatherly love, challenging them to be disciples of Christ and leaving it up to the Holy Spirit to actually make them part of the church.66

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64 Dulles, *Models of the Church*, location 1095.

65 Ibid., location 1819. Although I came to understand this through Dulles, more can be found in *The Book of Concord: The Lutheran Confessions of 1529-1580* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1921).

It is interesting that throughout the years the church has been more and more occupied with church questions and challenges and less and less occupied with recontextualizing the gospel of the church and for the culture. This narcissistic approach\textsuperscript{67} on determining the church reveals the degree to which we are reflecting society around us,\textsuperscript{68} with its preoccupation with self and need.\textsuperscript{69} Gerhard Lohfink puts it in these words:

Formulated initially by only a few theologians, but nesting in the subconscious of a large number of people. This idea envisions a completely invisible church, deeply embedded in human society, renouncing its own existence almost to the point of suicide. . . . Is not a serious illness of the church—the fact that many Christian communities are hardly recognizable as communities and that Christians have increasingly accommodated themselves to the rest of society—being canonized with the aid of an appropriate ecclesiology?\textsuperscript{70}

It is strange that some think this God they believe in is to be especially concerned with nice church buildings, fantastic organ music, and an elevated liturgy.\textsuperscript{71} As a proponent of missional church, Guder writes: “Most importantly, our ecclesiological discipline will develop in new ways our understanding of worship as public witness. . . . We need relevant communication, language that can be understood, and music that relates to the experience of the worshiper, who as a seeker is genuinely open to God’s call.”\textsuperscript{72}

Recontextualized ways of worship, contemporary music, and relevant public witness are


\textsuperscript{68} Hunsberger, “Missional Vocation,” 85.


\textsuperscript{71} Roxburgh, \textit{Missional}, location 359.

\textsuperscript{72} Guder, “Missional Structures,” 242.
of tantamount importance. However, the question is still this: If God is most concerned about that, then why God did send “his only begotten Son,” who did not take fancy in his exalted status at the right side of the Father but humbled himself and “who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death?” (Philippians 2:6-8).

It is clear that God was up to something in the world of creation with this act of reconciliation. Christians must ask themselves why some still only work in the parameter of “calling in to church” instead of the way God did it, “going out into the world,” and like Christ, who sent his disciples to bring peace and proclaim that the Kingdom of God was near.73 The ecclesiocentric view of the church, which places the church in the center of postmodern culture as well as at the center of the gospel proclamation itself, needs a great deal of revision here in post-Christendom.74 Certainly Christians are the only ones seeing the church as the center of culture, and first and foremost preaching that kind of church is a far cry from what Jesus was all about.

One might understand why the church question emphasized looking back on the Reformation75 and the different revivals, where as a side effect all the new free churches began to appear; but this does not make the church as such a major concern of a

73 Roxburgh, Missional, location 1046.


75 Kärkkäinen, An Introduction to Ecclesiology, location 861; see also the Augsburg Confession #7 and Reformed Second Helvetic Confession #17 in Steubing, Bekenntnisse der Kirche, Bekenntnistexte aus zwanzig Jahrhunderten, 19 and 154.
recontextualized understanding of the gospel and its kerygma. Here the biblical narratives and today’s postmodern culture are of much greater importance.\textsuperscript{76} The Spirit of God is breaking new land both in the southern hemisphere but also here in old Scandinavian church landscapes, and the new land is positively not in the parameters of the traditional church but through the grace of God excavated by young Christian people\textsuperscript{77} gathering with their peers on their turf outside traditional churchly activities.\textsuperscript{78}

The activity-driven church imagination of “Natural Church Development,” “Purpose-Driven Church/Life,” Willow Creek Church, and many other megachurch imaginations have been ideals of many a frustrated pastor.\textsuperscript{79} This has been the case even in European countries yet church-growth seminars, leadership development, and big gatherings continue to summon them all for new inspiration. However, God is up to something in the neighborhoods and workplaces of all Christ-followers. Leaders just may be looking in the wrong places, thinking that all the activity-driven hustle from abroad is a way of meeting Christian discipleship and evangelism within the context of our own community. This perspective needs to be exchanged for a focus on what actually is going on in our own culture.

It is a bit blind to first and foremost adopt ideas from somewhere else in the belief that they automatically will work here as well. Doing so disregards all questions and challenges concerning context and works outside the parameter of the known. This is a

\textsuperscript{76} Roxburgh, Missional, location 1769.

\textsuperscript{77} Simpson, “A Reformation is a Terrible Thing to Waste,” 69.

\textsuperscript{78} Roxburgh, Missional, locations 1774 and 1797.

\textsuperscript{79} Simpson, “A Reformation is a Terrible Thing to Waste,” 71.
technical response and shows disbelief in the fact that God actually is at work in our neighborhoods, societies, and cultures—and probably not in the way he did it somewhere else. In other words, we just need to meet these new adaptive challenges contextually with the people in our midst.

The Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia lives within the paradigm of a big national church present in all corners of the country and with a self-esteem that far exceeds any other national church probably in the whole world and most certainly in the countries mentioned. There is a danger that this understanding of position and power might have developed into some kind of *hybris ecclesiasticus* and an unwillingness to see beyond the borders of its inward churchly activities and a certain degree of validation of what it has done up until today and plans on continuing to do.

**Recontextualizing Individuality in Light of Concepts of Postmodernity**

Individuality is a modern phenomenon in the western world. History shows that the way of thinking changed from being concerned with the group to being concerned with the self. Many philosophers have tried to shed light on this development from many different approaches, and even some churches have succumbed to the temptation of making individuality the a-priori of epistemology.

**History of Individualism**

In the Old Testament, over and against the mainstream of the classical Christian doctrine, election related God’s eternal choice to the whole people of God. Individuals were only chosen or called in order to serve the people of God (Hosea 4:6). Even in the New Testament, although individuals come more to the fore as objects of divine election
(Matthew 4:19), it was and is the church depicted by the body (Romans 12:5), the building (1 Corinthians 3:9), the temple (Ephesians 2:21), the wine (Mark 2:22). These are corporate realities, the grand toll of space compared to the individual. John the Baptist, who has a role in between the testaments, gave his prophetic message neither to peoples in general nor to the individual as such but rather to the members of the people of God, Israel (Mathew 3:2). He was concerned solely with Israel’s turning back to God as a people in his hope for the Messiah (Matthew 11:12).

In practical theology even today, what Aristotle would call *phronesis*\(^80\) is implied in how the Christian faith is the refinement of character through discipleship in a community of virtue, the communion of saints. Augustine opened his *Confessions* with this prayer: “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord. Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”\(^81\) Modern readers often have taken the prayer as a private confession, says C. C. Pecknold. However, for Augustine it was not the cry of an individual but rather the cry of humanity.\(^82\) Like Augustine, Scandinavian church members have to relearn how to see discipleship as something for a group.

However, this battles against the moral and political virtue that reigns supreme in liberalism: first and foremost, liberty, which is understood as the maximal freedom of the individual from harm or coercion by another.\(^83\) The moral and political virtue supreme in


democracy is equality, understood as the maximal extension of the franchise and equality of opportunity (to all the common goods like education, to ownership of property, to career advancement). These two ethics rest on two understandings of what it is to be human. The understanding that the freedom of the individual was the greatest achievement in human integrity has a complex history. According to Graham Ward in *Politics of Discipleship*, this travels down hundreds of passage byways from the Protestant Reformation, the personalized mysticism of sixteenth-century saints, Cartesian skepticism, and John Locke’s understanding of the human being as a tabula rasa to Stuart Mill on liberty.84

Being Danish means to be under influence of Søren Kierkegaard. When Newbigin talks of “plausibility structures,”85 one can understand the whole situation of the churches in Scandinavia, as being in a plausibility structure of Kierkegaardian dimensions. Kierkegaard had a missionary endeavor in “reintroducing Christianity into Christendom,” and to him faith was the highest passion, truth was subjectivity, and inwardness formed the stage of choices; he was preoccupied with the individual “hiin enkelte”86 and became the father of existentialism. He wrote: “Har Subjektiviteten ikke selv gjennem- og udarbeidet sig af Objektiviteten, saa vil al Raaben paa en anden Individualitet blot være Misforstaaelse, og har den gjort det, saa vil den Subjektive vel vide Besked om sin egen Gang, og om de dialektiske Forudsætninger, i og efter hvilke han har sin religieuse Existents.”87

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84 Ibid., location 3362.
86 In English, this term means “every single man.”
87 Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Crumbs*, ed. Alastair Hannay (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 56: “If the subjective individual has not worked himself through and out of his objectivity any appeal to another individual will simply be a misunderstanding, and if
Discussions on Modern Individualism

It is interesting to see how distinct approaches to the understanding of the gospel can end at almost the same place. It is similar to following two lines finally ending in a point on a circle. Both the so called existential interpretation and some of the megachurches’ view on future prospects for their success as church, understood as a gathering community, exemplify to a grave degree how enlightenment and rationalism have taken their toll on the understanding of church by very different people.

Existence is seen individually in late modernity. Robert N. Bellah puts it this way: Lying at the heart of this tradition is what we could call “ontological individualism,” that is, “the belief that the truth of our condition is not in our society or in our relation to others. But in our isolated and inviolable selves.” The nature of being is without context but seems solely to be inward gazing. Walter Brueggemann emphasizes:

That autonomy in knowledge, moreover, produced autonomy in action and ethics as well, so that the individual becomes the norm for what is acceptable. The end result is a self-preoccupation that ends in self-indulgence and that drives religion to narcissistic catering and consumerism, to limitless seeking after well-being and pleasure on one’s own terms, without regard to any “other” in the community.

Egoism puts the “I” in the center of all concepts. Everything that exists revolves around it. As a result, it becomes disconnected from any direct social, ecclesial, or ethical significance.

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he has done that, he will, as subjective, doubtless know what course he is on and the dialectical presuppositions in which, and in accordance with which, he has his religious existence [translation mine].”


Some Modern Aspects of Individualism

The realm of individual values exists without the need for rational or other grounding facts, mediated solely as a matter of personal preference based on one’s experience. Such existential individualism abounds today. With this view on individualism, society now is to be interpreted as some kind of contract between individuals whose freedom and “right” to pursue their own private ends and maximize their own self-interest, or their libido, is restricted only by the freedom and “right” of other individuals to do the same. The postmodern notion of the social, therefore, comes into view hand in hand with the modern discourse of individual “rights” or what is called humanism—but in this case, emphasizing the value and agency of human beings individually. David Lowes Watson comments that “we find narcissism . . . and individualism . . . masquerading as personal salvation and religious experience . . . as a privatized soteriology and spiritualized discipleship . . . leaving the powers and principalities of the present world unchallenged.”

When everything is about individuality as a matter of personal preferences in secular society, community, even in a church, becomes redundant. It is interesting how John Milbank argues that the invention of the secular was actually a theological construction. He asserts that just as the anthropology that undergirds it was theologically endorsed, so the secular “had to be invented” as a “sphere of autonomous, sheer formal power.” Along the same line of thought George Lindbeck says, “Liberals start with

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90 “Watson, Covenant Discipleship, 180.
experience, with an account of the present, and then adjust their vision of the kingdom of God accordingly, while post-liberals are in principle committed to doing the reverse.\textsuperscript{92} So they opt for the Kingdom of God to adjust experience in the spiritual sphere, where God is King and has absolute power.

Only insofar as the Church in a post-liberal sense recontextualizes the Kingdom of God will it be a visible and vibrant fellowship, a substantial culture, representing a form of life that exemplifies social imagination in its own right as a counter-culture. Only then will it be an alternative to individualism, which is so characteristic in the modern paradigm and its institutional offspring. Discipleship cannot avoid posing a threat to postmodernity, for it bears public and personified witness to the peace of God by inviting persons into a fellowship that most certainly will come between the individual and the state. By offering an economic alternative, it rivals dominant capitalism and only can be viewed as traitorous, sectarian, and extremist.\textsuperscript{93}

This means turning one’s back on modernity and postmodernity in the sense mentioned and becoming a counter-culture. Roxburgh and Boren put it quite distinctively when they argue for what they call “open space” spirituality:

This kind of space spirituality, though, is hard for most of us to imagine. We have been shaped by a space spirituality that is founded in the rootlessness of modernity and postmodernity. In that worldview, mobility and anonymity are essential so that individuals can recreate themselves in some empty space without accountability or authority. In space spirituality there is little need to recognize anything concrete or historical. In this space we can have private, individualistic experiences with God, and the church’s primary job is to promote such


experiences. In this space there is hope of ultimate freedom without coercion so that people are free to determine their own identity and are free from any concrete sense of community or roots. With space spirituality there is little need to understand our context.  

Having been used to the limited individualistic and egoistic spirituality, which for so long has formed the church, it is now time for the church to accentuate the open space spirituality, where individuals have to take into consideration both God and the other in forming their life and getting formed themselves.

Individualism and the Missional Church

Speaking of the Church is not easy in postmodernity. Kärkkäinen speaks precisely to this point. He writes: “In an individualistic, postmodern cacophony of differing voices and pluralism, it does not sound appealing to begin talking about a collective called the church, especially since the term church for better or worse reasons has been loaded with so many unfortunate connotations from authoritarianism to coercion to antiquarianism.”

Prejudice and the incitement to remember the negative from church history has made people forget what the Church is actually about, namely the relationship among the members and between members and God.

The Church is the Christologically essential dwelling for communion with God and the school of discipleship in which human communion with God increasingly comes to shape believers’ actions, behaviors, and relationships. Communion is an ontological category for humans. As the Trinity, even God exists in communion.

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94 Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, location 789.

95 Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, location 32.
So the virtues believers live into in that context of God and neighbor find their place not just within an individual human life but within the particular historical and social context in which they are grounded and formed, preferably as early as possible in any individual’s life. Personal or group stories are reoriented in baptism in a church. Indeed, as Hauerwas has pointed out, the Christian story helps believers to tell their story more reliably. To be a follower of Christ means opening up to others the strange new world of God that one has discovered and offer an invitation to live into this new fellowship. It also means that salvation is more a matter of enculturation or language acquisition than an act of mental agreement, the sheer implementation of individual will, or the modification of one’s aptitude.  

To be church, and practice the discipleship virtues essential to such a Christian existence, provides a harmony that surpasses the separation and division intrinsic to individual existence. Such harmony is an affirmation of personal existence, albeit in the mode of communion with others. The ecclesiological significance of the individual comes to the fore in dissimilarity from a merely biological existence in which people in postmodernity exist as disconnected individuals. It is only in the church where human beings are made persons in communion.

This communion is twofold, first and foremost in baptism and then also the Eucharistic fellowship. Through baptism, faith, and discipleship in a church, sole biological existence gives way to existence in koinonia. Baptism is not the formation of new and isolated individuals but the formation of a new people, the Body of Christ, by

96 Stone, Evangelism after Christendom, locations 735, 2743, 3138, and 3350.

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the power of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, baptism signifies the transformation of individual selves through their initiation into the friendships and practices of an eschatological Christian community, the horizons of which are ever-expanding even in Scandinavia.\textsuperscript{97} As Zizioulas says, “Communion which does not come from . . . a concrete and free person, and which does not lead to . . . concrete and free persons, is not an ‘image’ of the being of God. The person cannot exist without communion; but every form of communion which denies or suppresses the person, is inadmissible.”\textsuperscript{98}

The church receives its institutional life, its reality, its truth, as a God-given gift precisely because it receives Christ’s mystical presence in the Eucharist as the redemptive call to the fellowship to reconciliation and communion. The distinctions that Christians of the first millennium made—between Christ’s historical body (ascended to heaven), his sacramental or mystical body (Eucharist), and his true, ecclesial body (church)—were extremely important. Distinctions can be made to divide as well as unite. In the church the Eucharist can be viewed in a way that has the potential to separate its reality from its mystery and also has the potential to make Eucharistic devotion more individualistic rather than more communal—incidentally, which led to the challenge of calling the church the \textit{corpus mysticum}, while the Eucharist now had come to be called the \textit{corpus verum}.\textsuperscript{99} \textbf{When the} shift away from the view of the fellowship nature of the Eucharist towards a more individualized understanding of Eucharistic devotion happened, where

\textsuperscript{97} Jones, \textit{Embodying Forgiveness}, 167.

\textsuperscript{98} Zizioulas, \textit{Being as Communion}, 18.

\textsuperscript{99} Pecknold, \textit{Christianity and Politics}, location 1162.
believers have to get things in order with God, it made it possible to differentiate the mystical from the real, where the Eucharist was the real and the church was the mystical.

However, the crucial transformation and supremacy of a recontextualized gospel is that its aim is not the salvation of the individual alone or the freeing of the single person’s soul from suffering, sin, and death. The indispensable part of a recontextualized gospel is the idea of salvation for the whole baptized and Eucharistic community of people gathered in the church, of which the individual is nothing more than a member.

It is helpful to recall that the original meaning of the Greek word *leitourgia*, referring to worship or the Sunday services, is an action by which a group of people become something corporately in their “working together,” which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals—essentially, a whole greater than the sum of its parts.100 “The eucharistic community,” says Zizioulas, “frees it from the causality of natural and historical events, from limitations which are the results of the individualism implied in our natural biological existence,” and “manifests the Church not simply as something instituted, that is historically given, but also as something constituted, that is constantly realized as an event of free communion, prefiguring the divine life and the Kingdom to come.”101 This is precisely what it means to live as a disciple on a pilgrimage, to live as sojourners in a foreign land, just as throughout the story of Israel and the Church. Any idea of a purely individualistic, private, or anthropocentric shalom as a consequence of salvation is self-contradictory nonsense.


Shalom is by its very nature only reasonable in a community of saints—and moreover, extends to all of creation. The Eucharistic economics of the Church do not idolize or fetishize nature; rather, they affirm that true salvation is in fact cosmic in scope, and it enacts a participation in Christ in which the holiness of all nature is affirmed as proclaiming God’s glory. True discipleship is ultimately covenant community, called into existence and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and bears exemplified witness to God’s redemptive perseverance; and in so doing, he changes the world.¹⁰²

The challenge for many churches is the reduction of conversion to the moment of entrance and an obsession on that moment of entrance as the goal of the church in the minds of many people. However, faith is a disposition formed over time and handed down in community through discipleship, and it is only by being drawn into communion that individuals become “persons” in the first place and thereby transcend the modern constitution of the self as individualized being.¹⁰³ Hauerwas is exactly right, therefore, when he says, “The first words about the Christian life are about a life together, not about the individual.”¹⁰⁴

However, a Christian life together or community is not a society; it is smaller. What people have agreed on in this fellowship is to some degree complex and exclusive and may or may not serve the society as such, which neither is the intent. Rather, it is a

¹⁰² Stone, Evangelism after Christendom, locations 4418 and 5328.

¹⁰³ Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 27-65,

covenant community, to the degree of committing themselves fully to the guidance and supervision of the biblical testimony and God the Holy Spirit.

When Peter Block and John McKnight write about an abundant community, they imply that a competent community knows that it exists not only as individuals but also collectively as a group responsible for a full and associated life. It is the alteration from consumer to citizen that happens in a church. As each association makes its individual members more powerful, in the same way an association of associations greatly amplifies the power of each association, which in the end makes each individual member more powerful in turn. In Block and McKnight’s view, community means “people in relationship,” whereas an association means “people in powerful relationship.”

A competent community finds its own local way through ever-increasing connections among people who seem to be connected arbitrarily in ordinary church life in order to make a better future together, and so they belong to the imagination of the “people of God” (Deuteronomy 27:9; 2 Corinthians 6:16). The reference to being children of God means having a father to son/daughter relationship, which according to Jewish belief belongs only to the people of God and its members (Deuteronomy 1:31). Each individual (in the singular) should examine his or her own conscience amidst God’s people (Deuteronomy 8:2), but all (plural) are to bring their brother or sister back amidst the abundant community (Leviticus 35:25), where failure and sin is an everyday occurrence, just as confession and forgiveness should be (1 John 1:9). In an abundant

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105 Block and McKnight, *The Abundant Community*, location 1200.
106 Ibid., location 2645.
community members are able to do this, for they are filled with the Spirit.\textsuperscript{107} John H. Yoder puts it like this, when talking of the individual: “In this context the good news is stated in terms of forgiveness, acceptance by God, and acceptance by other people.”\textsuperscript{108}

This hope is no longer to have a “church” seeking to fit itself to the world nor a collection of loose individuals, each trying by themselves to be “enough Christian” in their respective locale. When Constantinianism is finally put to rest, it will mean a rediscovery of the church as a fellowship congregation, where members are secure against the special misrepresentations of seeking authority for a clerical elite, which so often is the case at the moment. Hopefully, the Scandinavian churches soon will be up against the canonization of existing structures and the glorification of Christian individualism, both taking place at the cost of the Sunday morning believing congregation. It then can encourage with the New Testament for the church to exist as a new kind of social structure, a new kind of human community, a new kind of counter-culture—indeed, as a new third option. Since the church is the one fellowship of Christians in which the terms of membership, to the extent to which they are honored, make people less rather than more egoistic, they have the potential to view the individual as part of a community. This is where a proposed theology of discipleship for youth comes into view, which is discussed in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., locations 975, 1200, 1315, and 2645.

CHAPTER 4

A PROPOSED THEOLOGY OF DISCIPLESHIP FOR YOUTH

For Jesus the preaching and the coming of the Βασίλεια τοῦ Θεοῦ went hand in hand. So in his preaching the acquisition of a space for the reign of God in the world was the center of his own existence. It had to be real and tangible and needed a concrete place in the world—not just any place, but the local special place.

Although Jesus proclaims the reign of God by calling it forth, never did it remain at the level of mere words and proclamation in the κήρυγμα. It had to take on flesh. It required not only ears but eyes, nose, tongue, and sensatory organs—all for the benefit of his followers and disciples.¹ According to Jesus, the Kingdom of God is not only present in his own activity but also in the commotion of his disciples when he sends them, and even in the community of his disciples as such without him being present.²

¹ Gerard Lohfink, Does God Need the Church? Toward a Theology of the People of God (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1984), 131.
² Lohfink, Jesus and Community, location 878.
Jesus and His Followers as Models for Today’s Youth

Jesus included among his disciples Simon the Zealot, who later betrayed him to the religious and civic leaders in society (Luke 6:15). He spoke the words of new life to Peter, who at the most crucial moment refused to know him (Mathew 26:69). Jesus talked about believing in him to Thomas, who had a hard time believing without seeing (John 20:26). However, to all of the disciples the call had been simply this: “Follow me!” (Mark 1:17; 2:14). There were no prerequisites, except for the ones he knew some would have a hard time with, such as double-mindedness and getting priorities straight (Matthew 19:21; Luke 9:59; Mark 10:25), and to most the preconditions were too much. None of the disciples were called into a one-on-one relationship with Jesus. All of the others were there: the twelve (Matthew 10:1ff), the seventy-two (Luke 10:1ff), the 120 (Acts 1:15).

It is not that Jesus did not speak with them individually; rather, the living together happened in community, which is the most decisive aspect of his discipleship. Following Jesus was lived, experienced, and understood in the context of fellowship (Matthew 5-7; Mark 13:3; Luke 19:37). It is not often described how Jesus talked to his disciples individually, without the rest of the disciples being near and even able to listen to the conversation; but on the other hand, not many could have reported it besides John.

Clearly living together and the experienced context of fellowship were key aspects of discipleship with Jesus. The disciples naturally anticipated that to walk with him and share his life would lead to their salvation, but they also had the prospect that being with the anointed one could be to their advantage in the long run. He was always there, at least in the Gospels; and if not, he came (Matthew 14:25). The way of being their Rabbi was also different than most other rabbis at that time. He walked with the disciples, taught them
in public (Luke 21:37) with them at his side, ate with them (Mark 2:15), and slept beside them. They were in fact very close, almost to the point of being family, so it comes as no surprise that he calls them “friends” (Luke 12:4; 15:15; 21:5).

**Jesus Meeting Individuals**

When Jesus did speak with people individually, he communicated very clearly as to their needs and way of life after having met him. After being cleansed and healed, some were sent away by Jesus just with the imperative: “Sin no more!” (John 5:14; 8:11). Others are called out of their everyday life and sent into the world, with empty pockets and a message (Matthew 4:19; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). Others became messengers without even being sent (John 4:8; 5:9), and some even received Jesus’ restraining order of not telling what he had done for them (Mark 9:9; Luke 8:56).

To be summoned to discipleship, therefore, is to be called into a corporation of other disciples as a “sign, instrument, and foretaste” of a new social order as well as a contribution in and being an agent of that new community. Disciples were on the same road and on a pilgrimage, partaking food and table fellowship, sharing means and whatever they brought into the company (Acts 4:32). Many times they were leaving family, history, and network behind for the sake of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14; John 1:43).

Jesus did not call his disciples into solitude and isolation. That is not the point of discipleship. He called them into a new family of brothers and sisters, which in itself is a sign of the arriving Kingdom (Revelations 1:9). Jesus called them to engage in the

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ministry of the Master and to grow closer to all others in this new association of followers. They saw it all when they witnessed what he did concretely to reveal something of this Kingdom of God: healing the sick and crippled (Matthew 15:30), casting out demons (Luke 4:33) and ruling over nature (Mark 4:39), preaching the Word of God and the new gospel about his Kingdom (Luke 20:1). They did all of this in the process of calling even more followers and disciples—but also losing some, to whom the cost in this life was too high (Matthew 8:22; Mark 10:21).

The new family of Jesus’ brothers and sisters extended far beyond the circle of the actual twelve disciples and even the numbers that the biblical text picks up here and there in the New Testament (Mark 2:15). Something new was happening everywhere he went in Israel. The gospel of the reign of God was believed, and many of those believers were women (Mark 15:41).

Sharing in the Life of Jesus

The disciples shared in Jesus’ life. In particular, they shared in his persecution by the Pharisees and scribes (Matthew 9:3; Mark 2:16), his repeated rebuke of their understanding and explanation of the law (Matthew 5:20; 23:13ff; Mark 12:38), and the blessing of being sent to the world with the peace of God (Luke 10). They also suffered the defeat of not being there with him at his crucifixion (John 13:36). Many of his disciples then met him several times after his resurrection from the dead, finally saw him at the ascension to his heavenly Father, and shared fellowship and ate with him. For

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4 Lohfink, *Jesus and Community*, location 526.

5 Ibid., location 543.
about three years, the twelve were the disciples of Christ. During this time, they also were
trying out what it meant to be exactly that—first in his presence and then without him
being there all the time. Eventually, he sent them out to extend his work (Luke 10).

**Family of God**

Jesus’ way of presenting the Kingdom of God is not directed to isolated individuals
but to the circle of disciples, the new family of God, the people.\(^6\) Jesus did send his
disciples by themselves in Luke 10:1-12. He sends out a group of seventy disciples two by
two into the neighborhoods and communities to live by some simple rules, which they
certainly had been practicing in their own fellowship. In so doing he creates a new
language for being missional in any local setting, in any home receiving the *shalom*.

With those thirty-five nameless pairs consisting of the seventy disciples, looking
for the peace of God in every house they enter as a reality of the coming of the Kingdom
of God in that particular time and concrete space, only God knows how many houses
heard the gospel on behalf of this commission. Luke 10 then is the prerequisite of the
sending of gospel workers to the whole world. According to Jewish rite, on two
testimonies a proposal will stand (Matthew 26:60ff; 1 Timothy 5:19). The *shalom* they
brought has some eschatological meaning, as it is urgent but also pointing to the big feast
at the end of time, which is already but not yet fulfilled. Besides the healing presence of
*shalom* is the importance of their being sent, physically as well as spiritually, which
predicts the reign of Jesus over all powers in the Kingdom of God. As the sent represents
the sender, the word of Jesus will be heard in their testimony and received by some yet

\(^6\) Ibid., location 786.
rejected by others. So was the case with Jesus himself. Being a disciple of Jesus is also about continuing the work of the Lord. His work is about being sent. This means leaving places of acquaintance, control, and sanctuary (see also Philippians 2:1-11).

The disciples were in a way nobodies when they were called out of everyday life. They were ordinary men and women, and they were sent to real people without names throughout commonplace residences and gathering places. This is also the way of the Kingdom of God and so also the future of God for his entering any community. According to Roxburgh, it is strange that churches seem to see it so differently.7 By sending and commissioning his disciples, Jesus wanted them to understand as well that they now were sent as friends rather than servants (cf. John 15:15). By then he made them participants with himself in the mission of God on which he had been sent. The rigor of the charge to the sent disciples cannot be understood unless the background of the new missional family of Jesus is considered. Neither can the radical character of Jesus’ injunction be understood unless its social context is kept in mind: the circle of disciples, the new family of Jesus’ brothers and sisters, the new Israel that is to be gathered, are themselves the sons of peace, Shalom-bearers.8

Jesus looks toward the future of his Church, the community of his disciples. They are to continue to break bread together (Acts 2:42), as they have done so often with him and with the sinners, outcasts, and stigmatized that society rejected (Matthew 9:10ff; Mark 2:15ff; Luke 5:30ff; 1 Timothy 1:15), whom he all welcomes into his company. They welcomed him and his disciples as well. Ultimately, after the resurrection, these

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7 Roxburgh, Missional, locations 1997, 2772, and 2417.

8 Lohfink, Jesus and Community, location 682.
common meals have a new meaning, a meaning defined by the cross and the holy
sacraments. If the practical implications of being a Christian can be understood as central
to the *missio Dei*, perhaps it would be for believers’ own good if they were reminded
from time to time that the basis of that practice is friendship with Christ. “As his friends,”
David Burrell points out, “We are liberated from having to prove ourselves by
accomplishing great deeds. We are already accepted as intimates.”

In the missions commandment (Matthew 28:17ff) Jesus asks his followers, some
of whom were doubting, to make disciples (aor.imp.), by baptizing (participle) and by
teaching (participle) them all he had told them, and this they were to do “to the end of the
world.” The baptizing and teaching are means to an end, namely to make all peoples
disciples of Christ, as they were themselves, to accept others into this new counter-cultural
fellowship of followers, pilgrims, sojourners, and strangers in the land. True disciples of
Jesus chose to become like strangers in the towns and villages, so as to depend first on
God’s provision and then on the hosts. Joachim Jeremias has observed:

> Gerade weil Jesus dachte dass das Ende nahe war, hätte er gewollt das Volk Gottes
der Heilszeit zu sammeln. Den das Volk Gottes gehört den ausgesandten Gottes, so
wie auch die Menge der Nachfolger dem Propheten gehört. Dies müssen wir sehr
genau zum Ausdruch bringen: die einzige Bedeutung der ganzen Wirksamkeit Jesu
ist das sammeln des eschatologischen Volk Gottes.¹⁰

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¹⁰ Joachim Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie* [New Testament theology] (Gütersloher, DE: Verlagshaus G. Mohn, 1971), 167. “Precisely if Jesus thought the end was near, then he must have wanted to gather the people of God of the salvific age. For the people of God belong to the emissary of God, just as the crowd of disciples belong to the prophet. We must express this very pointedly: the sole meaning of the entire activity of Jesus is the gathering of God’s eschatological people [translation mine].”
*Missio Dei* is primarily about being sent and understanding oneself as a sent one to be on the way; but it is in fellowship with others, with God, and in the church as a community of believers that the individual becomes fully realized.

**From Followers to Leaders: Transition in the Church of Today**

There are many gods in the world, many of whom function as pastors and ministers, making lots of so called disciples of their particular church or ideology. However, followers of Jesus are called to make disciples of Christ, not their own disciples; the latter only will make the Church suffer losses and accusations of doublemindedness (James 1:4; 4:8). There always will be other gods, other loyalties, other authorities\(^\text{11}\) challenging the whole concept of the Kingdom of God, many of whom will not be recognized by Christ on judgment day (Matthew 10:15; 11:22ff; 12:36)—certainly to their own surprise, which is very tragic.

Taking seriously Jesus’ idea of the circle of disciples as the prefiguration of eschatological Israel, the disciples understood themselves as the true Israel.\(^\text{12}\) Like “the saints,” “the disciples” is a self-designation of the earliest Christian communities (cf. Acts 6:1-2, 7; 9:1, 19, 25-26, 38; 11:26; 13:52). To make disciples of nations then only can mean to have the number of Christian communities in the world increase, until one day all nations have become the Church.\(^\text{13}\) Today’s leaders cannot be blind to the fact that this would be a kind of Christian sharia, as if it were utopia. The apostles were to take

\(^{11}\) Walter Brueggemann, *The Word That Redescribes the World: The Bible and Discipleship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 92: point 3 and in 4 “other gods, other loyalties, other authorities.”

\(^{12}\) Lohfink, *Jesus and Community*, location 1011.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., location 1720.
care that there emerge everywhere in the world communities of disciples in which Jesus’ praxis of the Kingdom of God or, the social order of the true Israel, could be lived in radical contemporary fellowship with Jesus. Hauerwas again offers helpful insights into what this could mean: “We are not Christians because of what we believe, but because we have been called to be disciples of Jesus. To become a disciple is not a matter of a new or changed self-understanding, but rather to become part of a different community with a different set of practices.”¹⁴ This is supported by the community Jesus had and the one he left behind. Both are disciples of Christ and calling others to follow Him in community among themselves (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 10).

The missional purpose of making disciples of Christ is the big common goal of all co-workers in the church, from children’s Sunday school to the elderly homes, from churchly inwardness to evangelistic outreach. God’s mission is still calling people to be followers and join the new community of similarly disposed Christians on the pilgrimage. Essentially, this is who all followers of Jesus are. Nobody has ever in life achieved the goal of having arrived to the finish line—so to speak, be finished with discipleship training. Moreover, the Lutheran “already” and “not yet” makes our status clear. Christ-followers are already Christians but are not yet there in the Kingdom of God; rather, they are situated at this point merely by his grace towards the Church, the fellowship of believers, the service-celebrating congregation as even “sign, instrument, and foretaste” of the Kingdom of God.¹⁵

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In order for Christ-followers to become Christian leaders, discipleship is required. Through discipleship training people can evolve into mature Christians but what is experienced is certainly not enough, in light of what has been done until today in the Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia. There is a need to develop sequencers, where new Christians are guided through a prolonged time of apprenticeship leading to spiritual maturity; and for many, this includes the opportunity of being involved in discipleship training as leaders. It is necessary to have different approaches. In particular, this is important when it comes to what is involved in the discipleship process of every individual—like one-on-one follow-up, small group fellowships, and larger clusters of disciples—as well as in the mere content of the teachings to which these developing Christians are exposed.

The contemporary ministry of the Church stops short of the sending by Christ, its commission to the World, its missio Dei. Too few are being cured or raised from the dead. There are too few physical and social lepers being cleansed and brought into the intimate family of Christ, and too few demons have been cast out. All in all the Church is coming up short of what Jesus wanted his disciples to do, for he expected them to do even greater things than what he did (John 14:12).  

Although leaders in the state-church arrangements have tremendous opportunities in their daily work to meet people who are members, they have not yet taken a stance with regards to Jesus as their Savior. These “sleeping members” certainly will come for different reasons (about 80 percent of the population are still members in the churches in

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16 Brueggemann, The Word That Redescribes the World, 101. “Jesus, moreover, authorizes the church’s enactment of wonders that replicate the wonders of Jesus.”
Scandinavia), and the rest of the population is an open mission field now and in the future. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says it very clearly in The Cost of Discipleship:

Jesus must therefore make it clear beyond all doubt that the “must” of suffering applies to his disciples no less than to himself. Just as Christ is Christ only in virtue of his suffering and rejection, so the disciple is a disciple only in so far as he shares his Lord’s suffering and rejection and crucifixion. Discipleship means adherence to the person of Jesus, and therefore submission to the law of Christ which is the law of the cross. ¹⁷

In a Lutheran context in Scandinavia suffering and rejection and crucifixion are not the first things happening to a true disciple. The greatest concern would be ridicule. Submission to the law of the cross then means having the audacity of belonging to a counter-culture, even the service-celebrating community of Christ, which in many ways sets new parameters for platforms of life and ethics.

Therefore, the ministerial agenda in the churches of Scandinavia will be to look to the post-Christendom attempts, experiences, dreams, and visions of young disciples of Christ. This means listening to what God is talking to them about and as leaders being facilitators in developing new approaches to discipleship in our particular space and time. Looking, listening, and facilitating is the task of collaborating with what God is up to in the neighborhoods and Christian communities. This will point the way forward for the Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia, when it comes to an effective discipleship approach for the future.

Recontextualization as a Local Theology of Discipleship

Recontextualization is necessary if the Lutheran Churches of Scandinavia will be relevant as representatives of the Kingdom of God in their hemisphere. This

recontextualization process must start with a local theology of discipleship, where the local church in its daily theology gives a glimpse of what it means to be a counter-culture through the way it is “sign, instrument, and foretaste” of the Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{18}

*Everyday Theology* expresses it in this way:

> Culture is always cultivating our spirits in one way or another, sensitizing or desensitizing us, and enlivening or dulling our capacity to attend to various aspects of reality. Many of us may be unaware of the effect that culture is having on our spirits. Yet disciples cannot afford to sleepwalk their way through everyday life. Those who confuse the real world with pathetic imitations can hardly be effective ambassadors for Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{19}

In a Lutheran church, sleepwalking to the myth of previously achieved grandeur no longer can be sufficient for developing church life and a living community; neither can the false security in numbers concerning sleeping members or nominal size hold spirits high for very much longer. It is time to face the task of being true disciples of Christ in a post-Christendom Scandinavia.

**Synthesizing the Theological Discussion with Discipling**

Christian creeds are unique narratives of what God has done to inaugurate the Kingdom of God in Jesus of Nazareth, crucified outside Jerusalem, risen from the dead, seated at the right hand of God, and now reigning eternally with the Father, through the activity of the Holy Spirit, in the Church and in the world. As Bryan P. Stone writes:

> One can clearly see the effects of this shift in the case of the historic creeds of Christianity, which typically have to do with how we are to understand Jesus’ dual nature and his relationship to God and in which nothing at all is mentioned about servanthood, enemy-love, forgiveness, prayer, simplicity, and radical discipleship. We likewise look in vain for any reference to Jesus’ attitudes toward

\textsuperscript{18} Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 119.

\textsuperscript{19} Vanhoozer, Anderson, and Sleasman, *Everyday Theology*, location 341.
power, wealth, and hypocritical religiosity. In other words, the creeds mention nothing at all about the actual content of Jesus’ reign-of-God preaching.20

Continually citing those creeds do not help the congregations of Sunday morning attendees understand what Jesus and the coming of the Kingdom actually were about. He did not come to start a philosophical quest for the ones being able to understand his dual-nature or the perichoretic relationship in the Godhead. However, by asking “What would Jesus do?” Christians are called to explore in reality the kind of discipleship that faithfully can represent the Kingdom of God before others in the everyday Christian life as a witness. It is certainly more than reciting that one believes in Christ. It is to express what this means in sorting out the challenges of one’s contemporary time and space. This means the church living out servanthood, loving one’s enemy, forgiveness, a devoted prayer life, simplicity, and radical discipleship. Doing so can show a counter-cultural mindset and attitude toward power, wealth, and hypocritical religiosity.

To synthesize the theological discussion on perichoresis with discipleship has a lot to do with community. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that perichoretic community is something for God and a far cry from something people can experience. Discipleship community, on the other hand, is something for Christians coming together in their following of Christ, where God is a natural part of this communion. This sort of relationship eventually will lead to a mutual interdependence among the community.

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In Lutheran Scandinavia, the concern always has been about forming and reforming the church (*ecclesia semper reformanda*).\(^{22}\) The church is on a mission from God to tell people about the Father’s love, challenging them to be disciples of Christ and leaving it up to the Holy Spirit to actually make them part of the church. Recontextualizing its ministry also to the church means taking up once more the difficult branch of knowledge known as church discipline, or what the old ones would call φρόνησις.\(^{23}\) where it is implied that the Christian faith is the refinement of character through discipleship in a community of virtue, the communion of saints. Refinement means searching for what once was meant by churchly virtues and a Christian understanding of what it implies to be a brother or sister in the Lord. Refinement of character and elucidating churchly values cannot happen solely on the fringes of congregational life but must be reconsidered as a vital principle for any recontextualized church taking its discipline seriously—and this goes as well for any house fellowship wanting to really be something more than a “happy-clappy fellowship” of some homogeneous unit. So every church to which discipleship is of tantamount importance must be able to present recontextualized ways of worship, contemporary music, and relevant public witness to its own space and place to its society.

Often a “god” has been presented in a way that has displaced God solely to the individual mind and will, to the effect of a collapse between church and individual, which

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\(^{23}\) Socrates and Aristotle think of this concept as practical wisdom or moral understanding, according to Karl Vorländer, *Philosophie des Altertums: Geschichte der Philosophie I* [The philosophy of old times: History of philosophy I] (Hamburg, DE: Rowolt, 1963), 120-130.
in the end has led to the transposal of Pentecost and what figuratively speaking is in effect a new Babel with a “cacophony of different voices.”

That Babel epitomizes postmodernism in the best way, seeking to render the neighbor irrelevant; but in a sense, postmodernism is actually modernity come home to roost. The Church should be opposed to both. A recontextualized kerygma means laying distance between its life and the consequences of them, both concerning rationalism and liberalism on the one hand and the narcissistic preoccupation with individuality, which is so at the forefront in postmodernism.

In modernism, one influential theological movement of liberalism is described as religious individualism and subjectivism, where the reign of God does not come to a fellowship but instead comes to one individual at a time. Another thought, actually from that same period, greatly emphasizes the opposite. According to Newbigin, this was set forth by Gustav Warneck, who insisted that the ties that hold even society together should be preserved as much as possible and that the aim should be the conversion and baptism of whole communities rather than of individuals.

Some scholars have engaged in post-Constantinian self-indulgence in the faith or what one could call postmodern monasticism, trying to peel off all the sinful layers in order to become a perfect self. It is therefore time that terms like “novices” or “catechumens” and others describing a recontextualized discipleship be dusted off and used in the church again when talking of baptizing children, children’s ministry, confirmation, and youth work in the local church. What the church needs most urgently is a recontextualized catechumenate for all ages between baptism and adulthood. In the case of this doctoral paper, such ideas

24 Kärkkäinen, An Introduction to Ecclesiology, location 32.

apply to those up to the age of eighteen and advocate a discipleship program prone to present the gospel relevantly—in other words, recontextualized.

Theological Principles for Ministry Strategies

The ministry in a church has to do with many aspects of Christian life. God makes covenants, and the church needs to have a covenant identity. Also, God is a God of communion, and so communion has to be the basis of any church. Churches have sacraments as holy deeds to tie its activities together. God renders his people peace in every blessing, and it is up to the church to communicate the biblical shalom: first and foremost, by re-narrating the biblical truths; and second, by gathering the Sunday morning congregation of believers.

The church has a covenant God. Covenant identity implies plurality and is in opposition to individuality. Concerning individuality, liberals start with experience, with an account of the present as experienced by the individual and then adjust their vision of the Kingdom of God accordingly. Post-liberals are in principle committed to doing the reverse, recontextualizing the vision of the Kingdom of God.26 In other words, a covenant fellowship of post-liberals in a church starts with the Kingdom of God in space and time and then adjusts its view on individuality accordingly. Only insofar as the church in a post-liberal sense recontextualizes the kerygma of the Kingdom of God to this time and space can it be a visible and living fellowship able to present substantial art, music, and literature, and thus represent a form of life as an exemplified social imagination in its

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own right as a counter-culture. In this way, it serves as an alternative to individualization and characteristics in the modern paradigm as its institutional offspring.

The church has a God of communion. The Bible talks most clearly about a change of heart (Numbers 19:17; Deuteronomy 6:5; Psalms 10:17; 22:15; 51:12; 147:3; Proverbs 16:9; Matthew 13:15; Luke 8:15; John 14:1; Acts 8:37; Romans 10:8; 1 Corinthians 14:25; Philippians 2), which is the consequence of the redemptive work at the cross. Even God had to change himself and be something which to humans is incommensurable—essentially, the God-man Jesus Christ who died on the cross. The double paradox is that God became man and died on the cross, and with that in mind believers also have to be something else than a predestined “self.” In a recontextualized *kerygma* the church emerges as the Christologically essential dwelling for communion with God and the school of discipleship in which human communion with God increasingly comes to shape actions, behaviors, and relationships. Communion is an ontological category for humans, for even God exists in communion.

Since churches have sacraments that take shape as baptism and the Eucharistic fellowship, the crucial transformation and supremacy of a recontextualized gospel is that its aim is not the salvation of the individual alone or the freeing of the single person’s soul from suffering, sin, and death. The indispensable part of a recontextualized gospel is the idea of salvation for the whole baptized and Eucharistic community of people gathered in the church on any given Sunday for worship and on all the other arenas for communion locally, in all of which the individual is nothing more than a mere member.

God renders peace in every blessing communicated at most services in the church. A recontextualized understanding of faith is in the line of thought as a disposition formed
over time and handed on in community through discipleship. The church then only would be a covenant community to the degree in which the members are committing themselves fully to the guidance and supervision of the biblical testimony and God the Holy Spirit.

Re-narrating the biblical truths and life in the congregation is essential to Christian life in the church. In a recontextualized understanding of an abundant community people are able to do this, primarily because they are filled with the Holy Spirit but also because they have a new understanding of what it means to be “church.” To arrive in this new space they have been re-narrating the myths of the origin of their tradition, and by engaging in rituals that relate the individuals more deeply to their community and tradition they have started to recontextualize the gospel.

To gather the Sunday morning congregation of believers is crucial for relationship to God, neighbor, and self. This ultimately means recontextualizing its understanding of being a community of saints and how this community acts and what it says. Only then can it embrace its counter-cultural aspect and be a true church of Christ.

**Schreiter’s Model of Recontextualization**

Recontextualization or doing local theology is the primary challenge of the present time—and, in fact, should always be. For the local church, it consists of an outward focus engaging in semiotic studies of the present culture, which means reading cultural texts to determine its signs, codes, and messages.²⁷ Also, the local church in its inward focus must “reappropriate” its own tradition for interaction with the present culture. Reappropriation in this respect, according to Schreiter, must involve three things.

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²⁷ Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 78.
First, it entails examining the relation of theological forms like rites-des-passages to their cultural contexts, identifying what makes them bearers of the concerns and the responses to those concerns. Second, this allows the church tradition to develop into a series of small theologies for the sake of an appropriate encounter with the culture. Third, this facilitates the laying of groundwork for a more contemporary theory of tradition and issues of change within that particular tradition. All this must be seen, guided, and evaluated through the lens of a biblical hermeneutic to lead through one’s words into recontextualization.

Most important assumptions shaping Schreiter’s presentation are that ideas can shape culture as much as culture shapes ideas. Religion has an exceedingly complex set of relations to a culture, involving legitimation, socialization, conservation, and innovation; yet religion is both a view of life and a way of life. The sociology of knowledge also should concern itself with a sociology of meaning and of symbolic forms. So it is assumed that a form of thought can and will live side by side with other forms. Finally, the relationships between forms of thought and social conditions are such that they rarely allow for exhaustive description. Schreiter’s presentation concentrates only on those connections instructive for developing local theologies.

In searching for local theologies Schreiter encounters four challenges, as he thinks that leadership in the older churches, like the Scandinavian Lutheran congregations, can be

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
“keenly sensitive to the problems of the gospel in new situations.” First, “cultural diversity among Christians in any denomination is a fact,” which is why a principal responsibility for bishops is maintaining unity but not necessarily uniformity. Second, “closely related to the question of the range of diversity is the possibility of syncretism in the local church.” Syncretism in different periods of the church has challenged its leaders, as it does today with the idea of reincarnation. Third, “a step back from the possibility of syncretism makes the headship deal with the discontinuities that arise in local theology in any given culture.” Such discontinuities may lead to different hermeneutics in a denomination, which has to be regarded as an adiaphora. Fourth, “the purpose of the encounter of local theology with the tradition is to test, affirm, and challenge new expressions of faith.” It is important not to lapse into some kind of cultural romanticism, whereby any cultural form is automatically accepted as a recontextualized gospel.

The investigating of what role tradition plays in Christian fellowships for some time has been an issue in the Scandinavian Lutheran Churches. To some, tradition became but an ornament of churchly structures, an aesthetic preference of some old leaders who preferred to retain some linkage with the past, but this kind of authority was implemented along non-rational and at times coercive lines, falling into the pit of thinking that one’s own ideals and new plans were the only ones suitable for the local congregation. The power that this sort of tradition had to guide church life derived from a source other than the local contemporary Christian community itself. Thus, it is apt to lose its influence, which in fact is happening at the moment. In a certain way, the twin

32 Ibid., 101.
33 Ibid.
principles of rationality and innovation, so important to late-modernity, ran into serious obstacles in reappropriating the role of tradition in these kinds of churches.

Tradition withheld this way was an oppressive and hindering force in the Christian fellowship, but the solutions offered by reason and by innovation were not without fault either and could be one-sided as well. However, seen together, they all could make an introduction to a suggestion of a theory of tradition adequate to recontextualize the gospel in the LCN. Three aspects of tradition need to be studied, according to Schreiter: first, what it provides for a community; second, its essential aspects needed to function; and third, what perspectives are there for interpreting it.34

Tradition contributes important things to the development of the Christian fellowship. It provides “resources for identity” with the local congregation,35 as one is aware of the common tradition. It is a communication system “providing cohesion and continuity” in the local church, being aware of what has happened previously and has led to where the congregation is at this point of time. Also, it provides “resources for incorporating innovative aspects” into that particular church, as tradition is the base upon which new thoughts and things can and will develop. Tradition gives identity to a group and helps that group understand limitations and boundaries.

The thought of “group boundary” gives one of the most fundamental forms of identification by dividing the world into “us” and “not-us.” A local church is “us” and those in the community not belonging to this particular church are “not-us.” Paired with group boundary is worldview, the grid whereby a society like a local congregation

34 Ibid., 105.

35 Ibid.
decides what needs to be explained and how to explain it. Together they form a matrix within which both the whole congregation and individuals find that selfhood called entity.\textsuperscript{36} Tradition is the “repository of the lore”\textsuperscript{37} about group boundary as well as worldview, usually transferred to the young of a Christian community in preparation for full participation in the church as adults. This transmission takes place as one thought through rites-des-passages in the church at birth, through educational efforts in children’s work, at confirmation, and through the give and take of daily living in community.\textsuperscript{38}

A recontextualizing church, on the other hand, would want to concentrate on the cultural texts that speak of identity, which often can be found in connection with communal celebrations or what are considered rites-des passages surrounding birth, puberty, marriage, change of leadership, and finally death. There are rich cultural texts in this regard.\textsuperscript{39} In other words, a relevant church concentrates on the cultural texts surrounding the different acts of communal celebrations and rites-des-passages and not only the acts themselves.

\textbf{Five Criteria for Establishing Christian Identity}

What follows is Schreiter’s proposal for a set of five criteria for establishing Christian identity. In his opinion, the five criteria have to work in tandem.\textsuperscript{40} While failure

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 104-105.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 117.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 104-105.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 62.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 118-163.}
to meet any one criterion can produce a negative judgment against the theology developed, all five are needed to arrive at a positive decision.

The First Criterion: The Cohesiveness of Christian Performance

Cohesiveness is one of the factors giving identity to a community, such as the local church. Cohesiveness is the glue that binds theory and praxis together to communicate oneness. Creeds and Christian texts have cohesion and oneness as an ideal.

A study of the church tradition indicates that in the interrelation of its doctrines and symbols, there is a marvelous cohesiveness. The cohesiveness manifests a consistency in teachings and life of the church and it seems that the laws of transformation in semiotic systems may be more useful, ultimately, than any given philosophical logic in tracing the cohesiveness of a symbolic expression of the tradition. Another way of approaching the building up of this cohesion is the notion of a hierarchy of truth: some truths of the Christian faith are more central to the general belief of any church than others.41

The Second Criterion: The Worshiping Context and Christian Performance

One of the most powerful formulations of criteria for construing Christian identity in the tradition has been the principle *lex credendi, lex orandi* (the law of believing, the law of prayer). In a worshipping community prayer is the backbone, and publicly it communicates what it believes to others just by being participants in prayers. Here is another way this sort of Christian performance has been expressed: “Folkets Sanger Er

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41 Ibid., 118.
dets teologi,” or “People’s theology is in their songs.”42 What a Christian community sings radically cements what it believes. In this way, singing consciously goes much deeper than hearing alone.

The worshiping context of any Christian community is not given over solely to enthusiasm, which has to be part of the parcel but it is safeguarded by the place accorded to the Scriptures in that context. Perhaps the richest of cultural texts that give evidence of how a people build up and maintain themselves can be found in art (music, poetry, plastic arts). The organ has been dominating church music for centuries, as have the paintings and figurative explanations in most older church decorations, giving substance to the words spoken and prayed. The law of prayer has been invoked to ascertain Christian identity in the past as it will in the future.43

The Third Criterion: The Praxis of the Community and Christian Performance

The third criterion is the praxis of the community and Christian acts. It proposes that what Christians do is central to who Christians are. The concept of praxis reaches beyond mere action to include the reflection upon that action.

Along with prayer is the public Sunday morning service, celebrating different rites-des passages, and congregants’ contact with other people in society. “By their fruits shall you know them,” instructs Matthew 7:16. In this way, the competence of Christian

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42 Per Harling, Blott en dag, Lina Sandell og hendes sanger [Just one day: Lina Sandell and her songs] (Oslo: Verbum, 2004), 13.

43 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, 118-163.
faith is seen through Christian performance and in the crossroads between activities in the church and society.\textsuperscript{44}

The Fourth Criterion: The Judgment of Other Churches and Christian Performance

Catholicity and unity are traditional marks of the Body of Christ. Any local church must be willing to stand under the judgment of other churches in the matter of its Christian performance. The Lutheran Church is catholic in the sense that it has congregations all over the world. However, when it comes to unity, challenges have surfaced in the wake of recent discussions around ethics—in particular, many national churches’ stand especially on sexual matters has led to the neglect of communion.

The local church must be willing to answer to the neighboring congregation. It is for the sake of Christianity and is of enormous importance that neighboring churches work together and accept most differences in theology and practice. No local church can build its success on transfer growth and similar aptitudes.\textsuperscript{45}

The Fifth Criterion: The Challenge to Other Churches and Christian Performance

Any local Christian community’s theology should impel it to move outward from itself—in essence, to be a missio Dei congregation. Sometimes that contribution comes in the form of technical challenges, but the missio Dei community must look at different adaptive challenges to be able to develop its own recontextualization. Then by achieving its mission, it contributes to the cohesion of the tradition and its authority.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 119.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 120.
One concrete way in which this is carried out has been by the sending of evangelists and missionaries or by making workers available to other churches. It will be more and more necessary to work together as congregations in bringing the gospel message out locally as well as abroad. In working together, one eventually will challenge another’s theologies and practices.

From Identity to Experimentation

The dramatic proliferation in the number of identification models now making up the church, and especially the many different voices and factions in most local churches all seeking a Christian identity, gives a particular urgency to developing a greater sensitivity towards a local theology and towards the special context of the local church. Consequently, it is necessary to develop a recontextualized understanding of being church in space and time. To this end, the experience many place on the “cultural rootedness of theology” ricochets on a local Christian fellowship when it dares to engage its own church’s tradition. Recontextualization means entering into dialogue to test, affirm, and challenge its own understanding of the gospel at this point of time. However, once the matter for theological reflection has been located within the sign system of the local church, one is ready to begin the recontextualization process with the larger church tradition. Bold leadership is required in defining the challenges, at times being technical but most probably adaptive. The local congregation then positions itself to turn to other local churches for dialogue.46

It is another challenge thereafter to make the results of the dialogue with tradition and other churches available for development into a local theology by a community of believers.

46 Ibid., 74-75.
through the recontextualization process. When church tradition is the beginning point of developing a local theology, one likely deals with a translation model of local theology rather than a contextual one. In theology, translation models conform to speaker-oriented models, whereas contextualization models are examples of hearer-oriented models.\textsuperscript{47} Those engaging in recontextualization need to ask themselves which perspective is guiding their descriptions: translation or contextualization models, inner or outer perspectives, speaker or hearer orientation. All of these have a certain role in the recontextualization process. Keeping in mind the standpoint and the tenacities of the perspective can help in developing the kind of richly textured theology needed to respond fully to the gospel in a concrete situation, and thus in turn will help doing local theology or recontextualization.\textsuperscript{48}

As the Eucharist first was celebrated by Roman Catholics with the priest facing the people and participation in both bread and wine, the altar as sign in turn shifted in the code from being the point where God and humanity met in sacrificial communication to the social table of the Eucharistic meal. In this shift of the code (how the Eucharist is to be celebrated), relationship to the sign thus changed. The Eucharistic elements began carrying its messages about the presence of Christ in the community in a different arrangement—for example, around a table and no longer by an altar, communicating sacrifice. To respond effectively with a local theology in the recontextualization process, it is necessary to be aware of signs and codes and how these change, sometimes communicating something new.\textsuperscript{49}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 31, 60-61.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 67-68.
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\end{footnotesize}
One way of describing codes is to envision them as answering these questions: “How are things done?” “How is this to be understood?” Codes provide the basic rules for the exercise of the sign function. They are the “grammar” of cultural texts in how to understand art and decoration of a church and in how things are done in the rites-des-passages. The signs stand for a partial or entire message, and they become the conveyers of the messages, which inform on an intangible level the identity of any given local church.

The Eucharistic bread and wine are signs of the presence of Christ in a Christian community. Ministers as a sign have been read as Christ, as representative of the Christian people and as mediator of the boundary between God and humans that is shown in different clothing and predominant roles and positioning in the space of the church building.

The removal of the communion railing in many new church buildings marked a rearrangement of the boundaries between God and humankind. The boundary now has been moved outwards to become the perimeter of the church building rather than one dividing its interior. When the Eucharist began to be celebrated with the minister facing the people—at times behind the altar, having now been transformed into a table—the sign function of the Eucharist underwent change. The sacrificial element of the Eucharist was weakened in favor of the meal aspect. The altar as sign was shifted in the code from being the point where God and humanity met in sacrificial communication to the table of the Eucharistic meal. The minister became just another one of the congregants around an almost round table. In this changing of the code, how the Eucharist is to be celebrated, relationship to the sign thus changed. The Eucharistic elements began carrying their messages about the presence of Christ in the fellowship around the table differently; “communion” is now the key word. The meaning of the altar shifted from a place of
sacrifice to God to a cozy table with a shining clean tablecloth and an open Bible and candlelight, where God is the nice fellow sharing in the table-fellowship of equals.

All such experimentation shows that shifting boundaries are precarious, precisely due to their ambiguity or the different understanding or misunderstanding of them. They represent power that has not been sorted out into the signs and codes of the system of understanding by all Christians or by people using the services of the church occasionally. Therefore, by explanation, they are able to become significant sources of transformation and correspond to what Victor Turner has called “liminal states.”

Essentially, they serve as thresholds between two worlds, the world of the congregation and the world of the people, just using the different services of the church.

Theology for many centuries in Christendom was predominantly a sporadic enterprise, developed to meet certain needs as they arose in, for instance, the rites-des-passages. The apprehension in many congregations with initiatory rites into discipleship as a way of dealing with challenges of Christian identity offer promising places to start. Experimentations around birth and adolescence, in fact the whole period of anyone’s first eighteen years, have to follow the identification progression of anyone joining the local congregation, so that both experimentation and identification are part of a necessary recontextualization process.

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51 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, 66-68.

52 Ibid., 74.
One tool in the recontextualization process could be the development of smaller Christian fellowships within the local congregation. When people realize that their membership gives them their own voice in answering to the challenges of the gospel, and when leaders listen to what their Sunday-morning congregation says to such biblical challenges, then the dimensions of the religious symbolic universe begin to shift. “Local theologies are, in many ways, the expressions of popular religions.”\textsuperscript{53} To enter into the unknown landscape of recontextualization, one must listen to the Christianity of those in the local congregation in order to find out what God is up to and how he is moving in people’s lives. Only then can local theologies be developed and so the redeeming powers of the Holy Spirit come to its new expressions in the recontextualization process.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 143.
PART THREE

A MINISTRY STRATEGY FOR ENGAGING YOUTH
CHAPTER 5
INNOVATION OF DIFFUSION STRATEGIES FOR THE CHURCH OF HEMSEDAL

Part Three presents a ministry strategy based on the interviews, the recontextualization process, and the initial experiments. This strategy used the Missional Change Model (MCM) in order to locally recontextualize the catechumenate. A Mission Action Team, with me as coach, spoke into awareness the findings and monitored changes through repeated adapted Appreciative Inquiries (AIs), experiments, and participation counts, with the intent to innovate and diffuse ways of recontextualizing discipleship. It made use of a methodology of an action-reflection-action process and looked at challenges presented by new praxis, interpreted them and the feedback, and proposed experiments—which have been evaluated. After experimentation there was assessment to continually recontextualize the gospel within youth culture in the church.

This particular chapter presents the practical part of this project. It looks at Hemsedal youth, ages fifteen to eighteen, through interviews implemented through an MCM model, to try to understand their choices when it comes to church life and other life-worlds. This was done through AIs in order to initiate missional experiments to the
effect of presenting possible new arenas for discipling them as well as monitoring their participation in existing arenas of a recontextualized Lutheran missional church model.

To understand how systems themselves change, which is an absolute necessity for the CH as well as for the LCN, it is helpful to look to the theory by Everett M. Rogers still used today. According to him, the benefits of transformation are adapted into a system through the gradual diffusion and implementation of innovations. Rogers says, “There are four essential elements in the diffusion of an idea: (1) the innovation, and (2) its communication from one individual to another, (3) in a social system, (4) over time.”¹ An “innovation” is an idea perceived as new to a social system, and “diffusion” is the process by which it is implemented into a particular social system, first by dialogue and then by communicating it to the whole group. The rate of implementation is the relative speed with which an innovation is implemented by members of a social system and by the whole group such as, for instance, a local church or a denomination.² Most necessary innovations have the need of substantial time for thorough implementation, and over-adaption can occur when an idea is implemented too quickly within an unfounded state of affairs.

The Missional Change Model

The MCM is a never-ending circle of events and contains five steps following one another in a long run. It consists first of “Awareness” and basically answers this question: “What is going on here?” It seeks and finds language to speak into existence the current reality. This is done through intensive communication events, both in one-on-one

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² Ibid., 146.
dialogue and in groups, as leaders engage people in dialogues and discussions about the need for missional transformation of the church.³

The MCM consists secondly of “Understanding.” It looks to cultural resources and gathers information regarding local sociology and anthropology and seeks to make sense of the current state of affairs. Dialogue and discussion serve to bring together both affective and cognitive aspects of the mind, heart, and soul into a coherent pattern of understanding.⁴

The third phase of the MCM consists of “Evaluation.”⁵ This is a process that uses the Bible and Christian tradition to describe how scriptural resources can speak into the current reality. Essentially, what is happening presently in the congregation is assessed in light of the two previous stages of Awareness and Understanding.

The fourth step in the MCM is “Experimentation.” This involves experimenting within the ministry context in light of this question: “How do we commit a bit of ourselves to begin discovering and joining in what God’s up to locally?”⁶ Here people begin to identify actions that they believe will move them toward becoming a missional church. The critical word is “action,” because participants in the MCM will experiment through action.

The fifth and last step before starting the circle over again is “Commitment.” During this stage, people responsibly determine whether or not they have embraced a

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³ Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, location 1505.

⁴ Ibid., location 1537.

⁵ Ibid., location 1548.

⁶ Ibid., location 1557.
new way of being. After tipping 20 percent of an organization into this mode, people commit to getting others involved in the process of moving through awareness to understanding and into evaluation and experimentation towards a new commitment.

Mission Action Team

The primary adaptive challenge in the CH was to meet the confirmands with a contemporary pedagogical curriculum and follow up after confirmation. This challenge is also a national challenge. It is neither about meeting some ad hoc needs of youth nor about having reference frames in the congregation, such as continuous enterprises where the youth might fit in. Rather, it is first and foremost about making them followers of Christ, his disciples.

The lack of discipleship among post-confirmation youth, ages fifteen to eighteen, in the Church of Hemsedal was addressed by forming a Mission Action Team. The MAT has taken a set of specific actions and tested if these actions actually diffused new discipleship approaches after a traditional Lutheran catechesis. All of this was viewed as a part of a recontextualization process of the gospel in the whole local congregation of one Scandinavian culture.

To address this, it is important to understand what was going on among former Hemsedal confirmands. Qualitative research was prepared by this MAT. The team used a local and for this age group adapted Appreciative Inquiry among some thirty former confirmands in order to reflect on the local catechesis and its follow-up. Other Scandinavian research material that pertains to this particular age group was included as

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7 Ibid., location 1568.
The MAT then evaluated the research practically and proposed some initial approaches and experiments. This whole discussion concluded with what in Hemsedal has led to local theologies or recontextualization through the work of this particular MAT.

The MAT was put together in the autumn of 2013 and consisted of an employee in the youth department of the CH and two young leaders with a special gift to communicate to youth, with the process supervised by me as the local minister. This MAT did adaptive Appreciative Inquiry interviews as a part of an action-reflection process among the target group. The first round was initiated in the 2013-2014 winter season, and the MAT also initiated experiments, all of which are relevant to the catechumenate and especially led into the focus on the follow-up with fifteen to eighteen year olds. The action-reflection process was supervised by some leaders of the Lutheran Church in Norway: first the local dean, then a mentor who is dean emeritus, and finally the director of church development in the LCN and member of the National Church Council.

After the initial interviews something key became clear, something that has been observed for some time. The youth group in Hemsedal, KULH (Christian Youth Group Hemsedal) has strayed from the good path of being a club for young Christians, where they can meet and have fellowship but where the Word of God was ever present and taken seriously in all their gatherings. Unfortunately, over the course of time, within at least the last five years, the average age of participants became lower and lower. Also, key figures in the local Christian youth culture in the valley left to study somewhere else, so that lately only people below the age of those in high school would take charge and serve as leaders for the other youngsters. Devotions became rare, and prayers even rarer.

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8 See the discussion in Part One of this project.
The leaders decided not to participate actively any more in the seasonal Youth Mass of the congregation but rather opted only for passive attendance. Consequently, the confidence and self-understanding of being a Christian have diminished among most of the young ones.

Sadly, it became obvious that KULH no longer could be counted to serve as an arena for the catechumenate in Hemsedal, which for ages had been a continuous enterprise in the local church and a very strong one that gave Christian identity to a great number of the adults present in the congregation even today. Another thing became clear in the AIs among this age group some years ago. In the new adaptive AIs for the youth it became apparent that they sort of drift along without considering thoroughly their personal Christian identity and the Christian identity of their club. Similarly, they do not consider expectations from the minister, the local church, nor its prayer-house congregation called Normisjon in whose house they have their gatherings every Saturday evening. On the national scale, they expressed in the interviews that they suffered under the yoke of having to do most themselves, without help from their local church or the local organizations. 9 This stands in contrast to preceding years, in which KULH always has managed to take care of its own business, and it almost has been a law that no adult should ever intervene. The parochial church council and the organization Normisjon, as well as the minister did not intervene—until recently, when they had elected as their leader someone who is not even a member of the church nor had been preparing for confirmation. So Normisjon had a talk with the leaders of KULH to discuss the situation and how to proceed from there to help secure Christian content in their meetings. Another

aspect of this problem became clear during the interviews. The groups are suffering numerically, and it seems that the recent low threshold approach to the youth in Hemsedal has become too low and thus uninteresting.

Former and present confirmands do have other potential arenas where discipling can occur. First and foremost, it is noticeable to mention the work of the team “TimeToGo,” which for some years has joined the minister in preparation for confirmation both in the biweekly catechumenate and in the confirmation camp as well as the gathering of all confirmands from the whole deanery. It was arranged in coordination with the MAT that both present as well as former confirmands could meet with those teams every Wednesday for Bible study and personal talks. The MAT also arranged meetings for the gender-based small group fellowships with the team “TimeToGo,” exclusively for present confirmands—and until now, only two groups. The big thing, and the first thing, the MAT initiated were bigger gatherings with invited guests and a band prior to KULH’s meeting every other time and approximately twice a month. However, the youngsters had to adjust to this new approach, and recent reports show that the skepticism at the beginning now has turned to more openness towards this and the new leader.

Every congregation must have a Local Strategy for Catechesis and a combination of continuous enterprises and broad ad hoc happenings, especially if the church wants to disciple post-confirmation youth. In this lies the key to change the destiny of the LCN. However, the changes must come from within, from a local theology and recontextualization of the gospel.
Appreciative Inquiry Interviews

Within the framework of missional formation of the CH, the minister only holds responsibility for the technical areas. This side of formation seems to be learning to speak about the church in a new language and actively using tools that were not available previously in this local church—for example, the two questionnaires, *lectio divina*, and AIs. Such conversation, which Branson discusses, has been going on for some years now between leaders in the CH and especially the young people around the age of confirmation. Branson emphasizes how it “describes adult Christians as those who can account for initial and ongoing conversion in all five areas: 1: religious, 2: affective, 3: intellectual, 4: moral, and 5: sociopolitical . . . adult Christians need to be transformed from irresponsible to responsible practices in covenant life with a local church.” In this respect, the significant habits being innovated in the church are gratefully not solely the minister’s projects.

Roxburgh says, “Culture change is never achieved through top-down processes; it happens as people are empowered to name their own realities and develop experiments in which they test out new habits and practices . . . missional transformation enters deeply into the DNA of a church when it is cultivated as a process from among the people

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10 Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 94.
themselves.” Missional transformation happens when congregants embrace new habits. The new habits the CH needs to embrace involve being a “sign, witness, and foretaste of God’s dream” and how it belongs to someone else other than humans and systems. The minister only has the grace of being the facilitator. This means opening up the possibility of experimenting in the different areas of discipleship, where God himself is the Father of sprouting small group fellowships, like “Light House” and other fellowship groups that avoid “an all-or-nothing proposition” (\textit{koinonia-ecclesiology}). It also has meant creating space for “Sunday for All,” “Skiers Church,” the “deacons work amongst seasonal workers,” servant ecclesiology, the team “TimeToGo,” and the choir “Soul Children.” Most recent is the discipleship project addressing “concrete practice within a new social order,” which is so fresh it does not even have a name. It has been a blessing observing all of this and feeling free to let it blossom and develop.

That the world is changing is beyond discussion. The CH’s need to change as well is not obvious to everybody, and some want the church to remain what they think it always has been. For this segment, change is not viewed as for the better. Others, liminal people, cannot wait for change to occur within the church; and they do not need the

\begin{enumerate}
\item Roxburgh and Boren, \textit{Introducing the Missional Church}, location 1494.
\item Ibid., location 1119.
\item Lohfink, \textit{Jesus and Community}, location 603.
\item “Light House” is an American concept gathering skiers and snowboarders.
\item Kärkkäinen, \textit{An Introduction to Ecclesiology}, location 911.
\item Dulles, \textit{Models of the Church}, locations 1416 and 1433.
\item Lohfink, \textit{Jesus and Community}, location 701.
\end{enumerate}
church, the board, the headship, or the minister to start new projects and experiments. Change for them is not only some felt necessity but something in which they currently engage on a regular basis.

The primary framework around imagined situations,²² concerning most church work, seems to have its referential frame in the Lutheran division of the concept of Spiritual and Temporal Regiment; the church invites in, and for people it is free to come into the spiritual regiment but believers must take part in the temporal regiment. However, often congregations would rather not, and this is why we do not go there voluntarily to present for instance something in the slopes called a “Skiers Church.” The culture there is merely about a “voluntary association of free individuals.”²³ Any minister needs to address the issue of contextuality, as it is framed by Van Gelder, who makes this comment: “That point is developed in Lutheran theology this way: the finite is capable of the infinite (finitum capax infiniti). A church, and its congregations, that is missionary by nature inherently seeks its contextuality: it seeks to become adaptive to every context in which it finds itself.”²⁴ The minister has to do this by talking about the “and”²⁵ in the Spiritual and Temporal Regiment and by presenting missional imaginations from the CH’s own people, especially emerging from the AIs instead of seeking to form some “producer-consumer model” of church.²⁶

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²⁵ See also Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 121.

²⁶ Hunsberger, “Missional Vocation,” 85.
The primary framework of leadership concerning this vision has to do with a genuine reservation of intervening and keeping to what traditionally belongs to the minister’s affairs. The many leaders in the congregation take care with their particular task and nothing else. The board tends to the more technical issues and refrains from discerning spirituality, what is or is not from God. Dietterich cuts through this:

Because of perceived limitations of time and energy, the goal is to get through the agenda. Uncritical compliance (going along with recommendations of the leader), easy compromise (seeking the lowest common denominator), or majority rule (overriding minority voices) are considered the most practical ways to make decisions. Yet if missional communities are called to discern and to participate in God’s creative, redemptive, and transformative activity within the concrete circumstances of contemporary life, a much different approach is needed. God’s will and God’s truth . . . require open conversation in which we listen for the Spirit in the midst of communal dialogue. The Holy Spirit works through group processes—the interaction of the two or three gathered together in the name of Jesus Christ.

As God’s Spirit is among God’s people, there is no way around for the charismatics taking responsibility when it comes to leading the church. No one can stay liminals forever and just perform in their own gifted way, being non-responsive or for that matter irresponsible towards the church and its structures, which in Scandinavia is the Lutheran Church. There is simply no better mission field than the Lutheran Church.

Data Interpretation

All the interviews were carried out over a period of three years, from 2012 to 2014. Many had been asked to participate. In fact, all confirmands in the period between 2009 and 2014 were invited to take part. The outcome was that three people born in 1990,

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27 Dietterich, “Missional Community,” 175.
three from 1992, three from 1996, eleven from 1997, and two from 1999—all of whom are anonymous—participated in the local AI.

This first stage of Appreciative Inquiry sought an overview for what it was like growing up in the congregation in Hemsedal. Participants were asked to reflect on their entire experience at the church and to remember a time when they felt leadership was at its best or perhaps were engaged as leaders or cooperating to provide leadership. Primarily three leaders were mentioned by almost all participants, and three others by almost half of them. While reflecting on their years of growing up, almost all participants did attend a local Sunday school and the S-club during the week as well as the children’s gospel choir and the youth club KULH. In assessing their personal involvement, almost all were merely participants in these events, but a third of them had experiences as leaders on the board of the youth club. Those who had served in leadership, or observed leadership closely, were asked to think specifically about what was valuable. Those who answered saw that it was important for leaders to give time, include all children, and to be able to practice leadership in their own lives and style.

These responses signify that in Hemsedal outstanding leaders and their accountability had an enormous impact on the children growing up in the valley. Respondents highlighted the values about how leaders manage their time and the need to see all people, especially the quiet ones. For those interviewed, such character traits and generous grace modeled true leadership.

The second stage of Appreciative Inquiry sought to discern values that gave foundation for positive activities in the church. Participants were asked what they thought was the most valuable aspects of our congregation’s leaders. Half answered that to
engage children and showing goodness made a difference to them; and some felt that their love, sharing values, and giving time were very important. When asked to specify which activities, characteristics, and ways of interaction were most valuable, more than half answered that roominess for an event is most important. Almost half esteem engagement and high creativity. About one-third esteem willingness, happiness, sacrifice, and outdoor activities. When asked to describe personal narratives from their upbringing in the congregation that they have adapted, three out of five reported being happy about the milieu and the possibility of joining a Christian youth club, and one out of four said they liked the testimonies of older Christians. When a question about what characteristics of different approaches had been most important to them, one out of four mentioned that Christian content, good planning, and continuity have meant a lot to them. These responses underscore the engagement and love of certain leaders as well as their creativity in putting together a program to meet many different children where they specifically were in their lives.

The third stage of Appreciative Inquiry sought to discern values facing the community. Participants were asked what they thought were the most important ways congregational leaders encourage and form the church’s engagement in the community. More than half said that encouragement and the personal example of leaders have led to congregational engagement in the community. In looking back at the time the participants were confirmed, they were asked if overall they were satisfied with follow-up by the leaders or if something could have been done to increase this engagement—for example, personal follow-up, follow-up in small groups (two to three persons), or bigger events for youth. When it came to the personal follow-up, two-thirds were satisfied with the ways it
had been handled, while one-half thought that follow-up in small groups would have been appropriate. Most had the opinion that the leaders could have arranged bigger events for the youth, but all in all they were all satisfied with what had been arranged for them by the church. These responses reveal an overall satisfaction with how leaders of the church were an example to follow for the community in the valley but also touched on their limitations in bridging the gap between how they had always done things versus the new digital world of the youth.

The final stage of Appreciative Inquiry contemplated the future. Participants were asked about their three primary wishes for future leadership in the congregation. About half dreamed of good leadership and a good minister, and almost a third imagined more adult participation in the youth group KULH. Regarding the idea of improved leadership, one-third said they preferred dialogue between the congregational board and youth and including engaging youth in the services. They felt that love and community, continuity, and discipleship were important as well. Finally, they were asked to name some of the leaders who had meant a lot to them, and not surprisingly the people mentioned at the beginning surfaced again, with all of them mentioning the leaders of the Children’s Gospel Choir and almost all reporting having had Sunday school (SSK) and children’s activities (Skl) for more than thirty years.

These responses demonstrate the importance of positive, long-lasting leadership. However, there is also anxiety about who takes over when those beloved leaders have to pass on the baton. Remarkably, this is the first time the minister is mentioned in the questionnaire answers, which indicate that he had not meant a lot during their childhood.
Missional Experiments

Besides the branches already functioning before I arrived to the Church in Hemsedal, more people have been involved in spiritual formation during my time of ministering here. This primarily has happened through seven experiments occupying up to about one hundred people, professionals as well as many volunteers, in small group fellowships: “Light House,” “Sunday for All,” “Skiers Church,” Diaconia among Seasonal Workers, “TimeToGo,” “Soul Children,” and most recently the new discipleship project that is the focus of this discussion. Many have had to lay aside some dogmatic questions and accept theological differences and ecclesiological challenges. These experiments together with the five reforms in the LCN, and especially of the Sunday morning service will form the priorities of the coming years for the CH.

Despite having a high confession, some think they have come of age and do not attend the Sunday morning services in the CH. Rather, they maintain and nourish their Christian life in “directedness to the other” within small groups. Gunton explains:

According to the New Testament, human community becomes concrete in the church, whose calling is to be the medium and realization of communion: with God in the first instance, and with other people in the second, and as a result of the first. . . . It should scarcely require repetition that communion depends upon atonement: upon the reconciliation of relations lost at the Fall. . . . But reconciliation is a restoration, and not the gift of new being: the reintegration of the disintegrated, the restoration by the Spirit of a directedness to the other rather than to the self. The need for reconciliation, the redirection to community, is also the reason why ecclesiology must be at the centre of our understanding of the human condition.28

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28 Gunton, The One, the Three, and the Many, 217.
Apparently, if the CH had a congregationalistic ecclesiology, many of these reservations of the “modus vivendi for a postmodern post-Christian world” of the CH could be addressed, and as such people of the church no longer would be part of the state apparatus. Neither would there be these liberal bishops. Hopefully within the next few years, some of these issues will be solved.

Nevertheless, it is of tantamount importance to have watchmen and caretakers over the church for the sake of recontextualization, reintegration, restoration, reconciliation, and redirection. Gary Simpson says, “A missional ecclesiology takes the context seriously, as it explores how God’s Spirit forms and sends the mission community in a particular setting.” There are many more individual ecclesiologies in the CH, presenting a “symbiotic relationship” among others with the consumerist challenges mentioned by Roxburgh, who writes: “Privatized Christianity shifted from a theocentric to an anthropocentric focus with ecclesiologies shaped by human need.” However, Lois Barrett offers a solution: “The contemporary voices of the Radical Reformation have an important contribution to make to the formation of a missional ecclesiology in a post-Christendom context.” In light of these words, it is very

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29 Kärkkäinen, An Introduction to Ecclesiology, location 46.
30 Barry Harvey, Another City (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 9 and 146.
31 Gunton, The One, the Three, and the Many, 217.
33 Ibid., 75.
34 Roxburgh, “Missional Leadership,” 196.
interesting to see if the CH can gather all factions and individual Christians,\textsuperscript{36} in the post-reality of separation of state and church, so “both person and community . . . given their proper due” reflect the image of a perichoretic God.\textsuperscript{37} Also, it will be fascinating to see if a missional ecclesiology and a “believer’s church”\textsuperscript{38} in some way completing the reformation actually can offer solutions for the LCN locally.

This might be due to the fact that a whole 84 percent of the Hemsedal community can vote for board members, which in turn can have some perceptive implications. For instance, there is the implied rule of residents “taking their turn” on the board without being someone who knows too much about Christian community and the CH.\textsuperscript{39} This is a natural consequence of the nation-state relationship and carries the possibility of change with separation between state and LCN. Someone first needs to confront the CH leaders with this issue in the hope of offering a new, alternative vision. Board members need to know that some of them might be needed in the Spirit-empowered leadership group.\textsuperscript{40}

In Hemsedal at the moment there are these exciting experiments that have been running for some time. Technical and adaptive challenges already have been identified. For the most part, there has been an active response through these experiments. The leaders of the different experiments shared their experiences in working with various

\begin{footnotes}
\item[37] Kärkkäinen, \textit{An Introduction to Ecclesiology}, location 1465.
\item[38] Ibid., location 589.
\item[39] Ibid., location 153.
\item[40] Ibid., location 183.
\end{footnotes}
challenges and presented their actual experiment. Sunday for All was reported as being a successful meeting place the first Sunday of every month for all Christians in Hemsedal. Skiers Church leaders stated that after a period of strong engagement they found themselves in a transitional phase, and they finally assimilated with the “Light House” community underlining the fact that most necessary innovations have the need of substantial time for thorough implementation. Unfortunately, over-adaption occurred in this case. The idea was implemented too quickly without a foundation and was out of pace with both minister and church board. The Seasonal Workers Project was recounted as coming from being one person supported by the church project, but the next year would see some changes in that respect, which eventually was taken over by another MAT. The “TimeToGo” team conveyed that successful meeting places for the youth in the valley would continue for years to come. Finally, the “Light House” community said that after an initial hard start and identification process, they now experience acknowledgement from valley dwellers as well as their original target group of young skiers and snowboarders only having loose connections to church.

New Arenas for Implementing Discipleship

If the CH is to be a missional church, it is ostensible that even with the success and solid foundation the experiments are finding it is still very important to make connections among the different groups of Christians in the valley. This will require creating new “associations” and looking for locations, functions, and interests, as described by Block and McKnight.41 At the same time, as the board and other leaders start to dialogue, new

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41 Block and McKnight, *The Abundant Community*, location 1521.
experiments might emerge even through potential conflict.\textsuperscript{42} The minister’s primary task then would be to raise questions about the CH’s adequacy in its society in the valley, outrageously defined by consumption,\textsuperscript{43} in order to spawn dialogue with the purpose of knitting the Christian activities in the valley together. This would help to create links among the different factions, and the minister would be able to be a facilitator for the older as well as the newer experiments in Hemsedal.\textsuperscript{44}

In the CH, there is a grave need for recontextualization. Branson and Juan F. Martínez write:

> Christians confess that the Bible has a transcultural message. But it was written in concrete cultural settings, and we read it from within our own cultural reality. An important task in the process of multicultural church ministry is to read and study the Bible, taking into account both the biblical social context and our own context today. The hermeneutical task applies both the Bible and to the community reading and interpreting it.\textsuperscript{45}

The concepts of “cultural settings” of the text and “our own cultural reality” leave theology of today with the very important hermeneutical task of applying both text and context to each other anew and thus engaging in recontextualization.

All of these statements are even more interesting as many of those actually performing the experiments do not attend the Sunday services very often, unless these are (so to speak) specially made for them, which then sometimes happens.\textsuperscript{46} Some think of

\textsuperscript{42} Roxburgh and Romanuk, \textit{The Missional Leader}, 135.

\textsuperscript{43} Block and McKnight, \textit{The Abundant Community}, location 291.

\textsuperscript{44} Roxburgh and Boren, \textit{Introducing the Missional Church}, location 1182.

\textsuperscript{45} Branson and Martínez, \textit{Churches, Cultures and Leadership}, location 2566.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., location 2768.
church as a kind of ideology or social imaginary—“We are!” or “liturgy: substantial” or “relations between generations”—but that in reaching different people the church building and its services and sacraments are out of the picture, so there seems to be little accountability towards history and personal relationships within the main body of the CH. Most of them do not think that they can make people attend the services, but they can meet them (i.e., “hang out”) in other settings with different mandates. They want to be used by God, follow Jesus on a daily basis, and even take up his cross to be led by the Holy Spirit into new places.

However, the framework seems to be a more personal relationship with the Lord and adhere to a more Pentecostal ecclesiology characterized by the restorationist desire to go back to apostolic times, independent of the local CH and more dependent on looser fellowships of, in their view, appropriate ecclesiologies in homogeneous units of ecclesiastical house fellowships consisting of young people, where “faith is the character of living in the zone of in distinction that messianic time announces.” It seems they still have a way to go to understand what Simpson means when he instructs that “a missional ecclesiology requires the church to start with biblical and theological foundations before proceeding to designing organizations or assessing the viability of our present

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47 Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*, 187; see also Branson and Martínez, *Churches, Cultures and Leadership*, location 2787.


49 Block and McKnight, *The Abundant Community*, location 1366.

50 Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, location 767.

51 Lohfink, *Jesus and Community*, location 814.

denominations.” Those deeply committed Christians who reside in the valley, gather in small groups, and disregard the importance of Sunday morning services that focus on high confession neglect the reality that communal life depends upon atonement and redirection, which is so central to Lutheran theology.

It is important to point to the fact that the neighborhood is the community; in Hemsedal there is no difference between the neighborhood of someone from the congregation and the neighborhood of the church. There is also no difference for anyone living here between where they live and where they work, since the proximity is simply too small in the valley. There are some who live here and work outside the communal borders, but they are quite a small minority. All in all, where one lives is where one works and goes to church.

Missional formation is important because if the CH does not recontextualize, it will lose its connection to society and in turn become redundant. Missional formation involves connecting with all Christians in the Hemsedal community to encourage learning and growing as a part of their discipleship formation. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier writes: “As Christian educators, we are to prepare people not only for an initial encounter with Jesus as Savior but also for an ongoing process of turning from sin to God. Conversion . . . is an ongoing journey into the mystery of the reign of God. . . . adopting a new worldview so that we ally ourselves with the values and life of commitment associated with the realm of God.” In particular, this will require supporting hospitality towards strangers by a

54 Gunton, The One, the Three, and the Many, 217.
55 Conde-Frazier, A Many Colored Kingdom, location 2794.
competent community, on the “search for a face-to-face community,” as the church learns to be an abundant community.

Additionally, the plan is to develop and implement missional praxis that involves more and other people in spiritual and missional practices, as it still is “our vocation: to convert the hostis into a hospes.” This will be done through coaching meetings with the leaders of the Spirit-shaped experiments and new experiments that the minister can facilitate. The vocation must lead the CH to do also what Newbigin advises—when he writes about the only hermeneutic of the gospel being the life of the congregation who really believes it and lives by it, and that the task of leadership is to lead the whole congregation in a mission to the whole local community, to claim its whole public life, for God’s mission. For instance, shaping is happening in the reform of the Sunday morning services here in Hemsedal but also beyond the local in a different kind of communion, implemented on the first Sunday of advent 2012 in all of Norway, a foundation on which the worshippers are open towards experimentations of a new kind now and in the future. In this way, the CH is becoming able to pinpoint different working groups in the future in preparation for each Sunday morning service, which includes what others have called a “social imaginary.”

56 Block and McKnight, The Abundant Community, location 1716.
57 Van Gelder, “Missional Challenge,” 44.
58 Dietterich, “Missional Community,” 177.
59 Roxburgh and Romanuk, The Missional Leader, 151.
61 Pecknold, Christianity and Politics, location 2328.
62 Branson and Martinez, Churches, Cultures and Leadership, location 1085.
While the importance and application of fostering a missional imagination has a ministerial priority in the CH, it seems to stem from somewhere unexpected: the young people from the KRIK milieu. They appear to be more in touch with the Spirit’s motion in the Hemsedal community and culture, and definitely they play important roles in all of the experiments and this way of living out their missional imagination. Imagination is also about dreams and visions (cf. Joel 2:28). If it is missional or situated in a Christian environment, and relies on “the open-ended adventure of the Spirit’s presence,” it will lead in turn to a new kind of church, hopefully a missional church. This has to do primarily with discipleship formation, already used by the church fathers in a “formation of a people around a specific set of habits and practices,” so that the Hemsedal experiments make a difference to the Church’s witness.

It is important for the CH, being the one congregation in the valley and in the process of developing fellowships for seasonal workers and foreigners in an integration camp (ecumenical services and teachings), to be aware of our predicament of being powerful. The parishioners are engaging people from other countries with another theology and tradition. The “Light House” fellowship seems to become an independent project promoted by people of a more foundationalist tradition (primitivism) than the

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63 Yoder, *Body Politics*, 60.
64 Franke, *The Character of Theology*, 141.
65 Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 123.
66 Ibid., 119.
69 Ibid., 128.
CH, which implies that we are not at all a homogeneous unit. It is unclear whether the big state Church is able to admit and even encourage the variety of postmodern faith commitments—as if someone could really speak for the Norwegian Church. It is possible that the established Church will fall back in modernity’s restraints of Constantinianism and from a position of power and knowledge either cut off these new developments or just let them live their own lives, ignoring the missio Dei of the whole congregation today. The temptation is certainly at hand. It is not hard to embark in an Augustinian epistemology and think with the heart,\textsuperscript{70} and it is not hard to repeat the creeds of the fathers and to follow the readings in the Bible subsequently over a sequence of two years, which seems to be a foundation of being a “peculiar people.”\textsuperscript{71} So far, it has not helped much, as the Norwegian Church has done most of it for centuries.

Small Group Follow-Up

It is important to have an arena, where follow-up after beginning on the good path of following Jesus is possible. Primarily, the team TimeToGo, with the help of others living in the collective, in their residences, made arrangements to help the new converts and others on the way. It was arranged in coordination with the MAT so both present and former confirmands could meet with those teams every Wednesday for Bible study and personal talks. The MAT also arranged meetings in gender-based small group fellowships with the TimeToGo team, exclusively for present confirmands. There were two groups. They gathered on a weekday every week, where they made room to hang out with the

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 136.

\textsuperscript{71} Rodney Clapp, \textit{A Peculiar People} (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996), 121.
youngsters, every other week. Mostly in the wintertime, they first went skiing and then had a social gathering in the house with different games; every other week they had small groups with two or three leaders, each studying the Bible and discussing Christian issues the whole evening, and all together singing and praising God to finish the evening followed by refreshments.

People living in the house were experimenting from day one. This had not been tried before in the valley nor had the leaders any experience together in leading small groups. They came to the pattern mentioned above after about one year of trying it out and talking to the youngsters. This was also the first year with the team TimeToGo. Eventually, they came to the conclusion that leading small groups for that particular age of confirmation was easier when the youngsters were divided into groups of same sex, and so they made a group of male youngsters and one of female youngsters. Experience showed that talking about different issues concerning being young and new in the faith-walk seemed easier when they did not have to consider what the other gender felt about their responses. Overall, this increased and improved openness.

During the years of TimeToGo in the CH more and more youngsters attended the different weekly meetings in the collective. Many of the board members of KULH felt better equipped to lead the youth group through the gatherings they were offered, where they first of all did not have to lead themselves and had young adults to help them find a way of being a young Christian. Solid leadership was modeled for them. As a result, this house became the epicenter of modeling discipleship in the valley and in the CH.
Monitoring Discipleship Formation in the Five Present Arenas

Monitoring discipleship formation in a valley in the countryside is primarily a challenge, because after high school the young people must leave the valley in order to educate themselves in almost all areas of education. Monitoring participation and Christian growth is not feasible. However, observed over a period of time in the five arenas collectively, and seeing the results of the discipleship progress individually, may give some indication of formation in Christian growth. The five arenas are KULH, two TimeToGo arenas, Big Gatherings, and finally Preparation for Confirmation.

With respect to KULH, as mentioned earlier, there has been decreasing participation that has led to poorer leadership and eventually to intervention by the minister, board, and leadership of the prayer house. Eventually, they came up with a technical solution: paying a young leader in 50 percent employment to sort out the challenges in the youth group. Another 50 percent position is on hold to be of assistance in that respect. In the questionnaire, some of the teenagers asked for exactly this. They were not a majority but represented to a large degree those who had experienced the challenge of being on the board of KULH and thus had a strong voice. Hopefully, this technical solution will lead to an increase in participation and certainly a wider focus on Christianity in the youth group, but it would be a far cry to talk of discipleship formation in this large group.

TimeToGo, on the other hand, has the potential of being the main contributor to discipleship formation among the confirmands, due to the meetings on several occasions in bigger and smaller groups every week. There is yearly about twenty-five confirmands in the valley. Many of them attend the gatherings arranged by KULH, and some of
them—especially the ones on the board—meet with the team every Wednesday and with the MAT every other Friday. Those two teams and their two arenas have a very strong discipleship focus and split the youngsters into smaller groups for follow-up and discipleship formation. The number of groups has increased since it first started some five years ago, and this year there will be six different small groups with solid leaders who are developing their leadership skills coming out of the Bible school at KRIK.

About three years ago, the MAT initiated bigger gatherings with invited guests and a band prior to KULH’s meeting every other time and approximately twice a month. It was quite a slow start, with KULH being in a transitional phase and thus quite reluctant to participate, but the MAT and the new employee in the youth department have been listening to the results of the AIs. It is hoped that arrangements like these will find their footing in the future.

All the time the arena confirmation preparation has been on the schedule of almost every teenager in the valley, and sometimes even all of them. Again the team TimeToGo must be mentioned as one main contributor to discipleship formation within that period of time and approximately eight months. They spend time together with the minister learning about Christianity, which is the focal point. However, the fellowship and interaction between the confirmands and the leaders is of great importance, and especially the confirmation camp has had a considerable impact on the confirmands, when it comes to a decision for Christ. Experiencing a sleepover at camp and hearing young able Christian leaders witnessing about their own decision for Christ in the course of time have led to many conversions, resulting in the follow-up challenge for the local church. One year
there were twelve conversions, and the next year there were twenty-four. This builds a foundation for further discipling with some, and preferably all, of the other arenas.
CHAPTER 6
IMPLEMENTATION OF CHURCH YOUTH WORK
AFTER CONFIRMATION

This chapter offers a new approach for discipleship in the post-confirmation age group, to be piloted in the Church in Hemsedal. The model seeks to complement the catechumenate of the Lutheran Church in Norway. This chapter also looks at the phases to develop recontextualization of the gospel for this age group, which are still to be investigated, as well as the assessment of this particular project to the wider church.

Changes in the Catechumenate of the LCN

Since 2010, the method of the catechumenate in the CH has changed in two ways. First, the whole approach has transformed from a dogmatic approach implemented throughout the years by Luther’s Small Catechism to a more ethical approach initiated by the narratives about Jesus meeting people and then coming to the dogmatic results. Second, and most importantly, the team efforts in the CH by TimeToGo changed the whole concept of confirmation lessons, both for the minister or the catechist and the confirmands themselves. It transformed from being done by one person to be done by a group and changed from didactic class teaching to cooperative learning. Ultimately, the
young adults had a great impact on the confirmands through the activities, as already mentioned in Chapter 5.

Understanding what is going on in the catechesis of the LCN and seeing the possibilities of changing a few things in the way the confirmands are presented with the gospel is the first step. The form and way in which they are educated needs to be recontextualized, in order to make it possible to change the trend going on for such a long time. If not, it will result in the end of the folkchurch in the country, as these recontextualized changes need to occur on a local basis.

Recontextualization means finding and implementing local theology. This has happened in the CH, but it will not be the same anywhere else. Hemsedal does not resemble any other valley community; and even if it did, the model is not transferable. Other valleys must find their own way through recontextualization of how to change the catechumenate in their particular ministry context in order to format discipleship structures for the future. Likewise, congregations located in cities must find their own way through recontextualization of how to change the catechumenate in order to format discipleship structures for the future.

Models of Post-Confirmation Follow-up

While it is possible to describe what has been going on in a certain valley in the countryside when it comes to post-confirmation follow-up, a kind of model can be deduced. However, it is only a model. Leaders in their own context have to find their way of doing things in order to make disciples of Christ.
Therefore, the hope of this particular project is to show how it has been done here and maybe offer some inspiration for others to dare to explore such recontextualization and to venture on the path of change for the love of future generations. While examining a model can offer insight, it does not do the job; rather, it is merely a tool to think for oneself and to examine what is possible and necessary, to listen to the Spirit speak into existence people and structures for a particular space and time.

Applications of the Missional Change Model Nationwide in the LCN

Leadership is about facilitating the congregational imaginaries of being “church” in a certain place and time, with the particular people present and their gifts. This has happened in the CH, and it continues to happen even through leadership change. The indispensable 3 percent has long since been surpassed, and the local church is looking at about 20 percent, in which case there is no stopping the local recontextualization. Essentially, the question is whether this will be possible for a nationwide church like the LCN.

In the congregation in Hemsedal things will continue changing anyway, partly due to the sociocultural shift of young, bright, affluent people moving into the valley and partly due to discontinuity\(^1\) and the disintegration of old structures in the CH. New dreams already have outgrown the structures and systems.\(^2\) AI interviews combined with the World Café conversations will aid in any congregational formation. Branson says, “Congregational formation . . . . takes shape in the interplay with historical and

\(^{1}\) Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 160: “You must recognize the difference between change and transition.”

contemporary church materials and our own autobiographies,” by and in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit’s guidance and strength are indispensable in a situation of discontinuous change. Leaders need to proceed by initiating this combinational arrangement and determining the uncertain road, as Roxburgh and Romanuk advise, of God’s life-affirming future in a “World Café” setting. To this end, it is important to be aware of the traditions of communication in the local church—which have been one way from the pulpit—and foster the exchange of ideas, dreams, and visions.

Margaret J. Wheatley of The Berkana Institute offers some wisdom. She writes:

The need for new leaders is urgent. We need people who can work together to resolve such pressing issues as health, poverty, hunger, illiteracy, justice, environment, democracy. We need leaders who know how to nourish and rely on the innate creativity, freedom, generosity, and caring of people. We need leaders who are life-affirming rather than life-destroying.

To actively lead the conversations demands an open mind and an ability to listen. This means hearing and understanding with the heart what is being said, helping the dialogue flourish or maybe even shifting the direction.

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4 Branson, Memories, Hopes, and Conversations, 103.
5 Heifetz and Linsky, Leadership on the Line, 134.
6 Roxburgh and Romanuk, The Missional Leader, 204.
9 Brown and Isaacs. The World Café, 189.
10 Branson, “Ecclesiology and Missional Leadership for the Church,” 118.
Such leaders face the challenge in their local church to make all understand the cycle that Richard Pascale, Mark Millemann, and Linda Gioja describe:

First we learned to keep a low profile, fly below the radar and generally value minimalism. Help happen what wants to happen. Assume resistance and legitimize it as a valid response. Don’t try to change it. Go with the innovators and early adopters. Small-scale, short-term efforts. . . . When 3 percent of a total population accept an innovation, it won’t go away. When that number rises to 15-20 percent, it cannot be stopped. Second, circumvent resistance by reframing. Third, “Be the change you want to see.” If we want to see more risk-taking, we must ourselves take more risks. Fourth, listening and questioning are more important than speaking and advocating.11

Many in LCN congregations may want to go back to “Egypt” and perceived superficial, empirical stability.12 Others might be tempted to remain as liminals on the threshold of disembedding, and the local church actually might lose some who cannot adapt.13 Still others cannot wait for those who are slower to accept change to join them, and these might be lost as well.

What the local church needs to do is to find the 10 to 15 percent of emergents. Leaders focus their “change efforts for the first eighteen months at getting about 10 percent of their churches or system members through the stages for the Missional Change Model and into the commitment stage.”14 Leaders who want to drive the congregation safely forward,15

12 Heifetz and Linsky, Leadership on the Line, 48.
13 Ibid., 71 and 99.
14 Ibid., 83; see also Roxburgh and Romanuk, The Missional Leader, 103.
15 Heifetz and Linsky, Leadership on the Line, 12.
towards the commitment stage,\textsuperscript{16} ought to schedule those extra hours every day for themselves to engage in this ministry work.\textsuperscript{17}

**Phases of Diffusion**

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the four essential elements in the diffusion of an idea are innovation and the stages of its communication from one individual to another, in a social system, and over time.\textsuperscript{18} All the experiments in the CH started with an innovation, idea, or vision by young people in the congregation—except for Sunday for All, where the initiators were two different adult women with partly grown children. The innovation then was communicated to me, as the minister, and I took part in facilitating the experiment. Communication slowed when it came to the CH, with the board’s reluctance to participate and accept the rate of diffusing the innovations. According to Rogers, the rate of implementation is the relative speed with which an innovation is implemented by members of a social system and by the whole group.\textsuperscript{19}

In the CH most experiments are still going on and no longer can be described as innovations or experiments, as they are now a substantial part of church life in the valley. Most necessary innovations have the need of substantial time for thorough implementation. Other experiments have undergone significant changes throughout the years due to difficulties in funding and reluctance from churchly as well as parochial structures. The phase of diffusion for initial CH innovations lasted about five years, after starting in 2010.

\textsuperscript{16} Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 104.

\textsuperscript{17} Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 15.

\textsuperscript{18} Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 19-20.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 146.
An Action-Reflection-Action Process by Church Leaders

The CH has made use of a methodology consisting of an action-reflection-action process. This consists of looking at challenges presented by current praxis, interpreting them and AI feedback, and proposing experiments, which in turn are evaluated. All experiments were thus a result of some visions and felt needs after observing the activities in the church. The interpretation and the feedback led to the many experiments, all of which are still running. However, after evaluation, some have undergone considerable changes, with most experiments of that time going from being an experiment to becoming a regular component of the church’s activities. After further experimentation, there will be assessment to continually recontextualize the gospel within the culture in the CH.

Critical Challenges of Present Praxis

Reluctance to attend Sunday morning services is shared by most of the youth and leads to a deficiency of church attendance. In summing these youth and young adults with the other groups not attending the Sunday morning services, a total of at least fifty people would be the result, and these young ones essentially could be considered the future of the CH. However, when there are consumer-oriented and homogeneous unit-oriented services, they show up. Sadly, most of the congregation stays away on these occasions.

Paul at the beginning of his first letter addresses the question of group-thinking in Corinth, particularly the ones who apparently think of themselves as the real Christians (1 Corinthians 1:12) as opposed to the followers of Peter, Apollos, and Paul himself, and he certainly does not approve of it. Apparently spiritual immaturity thrives among those who
have really high opinions of themselves, back then just as now. Hebrews 10:21-25 also
discusses, among other central aspects of spiritual formation, the habit of not attending the
regular gathering together of Christian believers for worship—especially in the light of the
second coming of Christ. Together, these two Scriptures show how important it is to be
just one people of God in any place, being in the countryside or being in local
communities of any city. Anything else is doublemindedness of the church and under no
circumstances commits to the unity of the church. Christians might have all sorts of
excuses for not living unity, but they will remain excuses and always blur the testimony of
the church.

Naturally, not all congregants are in the same phase in the CH, even though all are
in the same church. Andy Crouch puts it like this:

> We find our brainpower drained by issues of boundaries and allegiances during
this transition time: Which culture do we belong to or react against or withdraw
from or seek to transform? The dominant—but fading modern culture or the
fledgling, emergent, divergent postmodern ones? To speak of Christian identity
and the identity—culture dilemma in the midst of seemingly parallel cultural
universes is to press one of the hottest buttons in the church today.²⁰

Any local church must find its way through late-modernity and in some cases even post-
modernity, but it must be their own way. Phases are different as is the culture in which
the local church is situated, and no one can teach Christians how to interact and
recontextualize. Leaders have to find out for themselves.

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Sweet (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Emergent YS, 2003), 103.
Since “society is losing the art of fostering community,”\textsuperscript{21} it must be up to the church as counterculture or alternative social order\textsuperscript{22} as individuals to act humanely and be community,\textsuperscript{23} despite hermeneutical differences,\textsuperscript{24} not as an end in itself or something to complete or expand\textsuperscript{25} but as a way of showing the grace of God to the world.\textsuperscript{26} God is working in the midst of his Church, even though individual members of the Body of Christ might find themselves in different phases in their local congregations. The role of a leader—in between the now and the then—is to allow room for revelation of dreams and visions given to the congregation about where God wants the CH to go. People being in different phases need to understand this fact, why others are where they are at present, and that we are all not static objects but rather living entities of the revelation of God’s grace to the local community, who actually have a divine future. Roxburgh states it well:

Whatever emerges in terms of new forms in the years ahead, a missional church will have at its center an apostolic identity and an apostolic leadership. An apostle is a leader who thoroughly understands the crisis through which we are moving, and grasps the kinds of actions that must be taken in order to engage the community of God’s people with the missio dei. . . . the true apostle understands these key elements: God’s Spirit is among God’s people (the ordinary men and women in local gatherings). Therefore, God’s future is among God’s people, not in some individual leader’s plan. The role of leadership is to create environments that release this missional imagination of the people of God so that they can discover God’s plan and put it into action in their local contexts.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{21} John O’Donohue, \textit{Eternal Echoes} (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 164; see also Roxburgh, \textit{The Sky is Falling!?!} 73.

\textsuperscript{22} Lohfink, \textit{Jesus and Community}, location 701.

\textsuperscript{23} William Stringfellow, \textit{An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land} (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1973), 56.

\textsuperscript{24} Newbigin, \textit{Foolishness to the Greeks}, 56.

\textsuperscript{25} Hunsberger, “Missional Vocation,” 95.

\textsuperscript{26} Roxburgh, \textit{The Sky is Falling!?!} 170.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 172.
Concluding these ecclesiologies in the CH, the old concept of *ecclesiola in ecclesiam* has a plural in Hemsedal, *ecclesiolae in ecclesiam*, at least when it comes to Sunday morning service attendance and when presuming that a congregation first and foremost is people celebrating the Sunday morning service together. It is possible to identify even more ecclesiologies in Hemsedal; but each of them only has a few followers, and they are seemingly so far away from the LCN theologically that a divine intervention would be in order to help them play any role in the CH. When assessing current missional priorities, there is enough ecclesiological work to be done with the groups mentioned above and the adaptive challenges they each face if recontextualization is to continue.

**Interpretation of Challenges in the Catechumenate**

Being one local church celebrating the Sunday morning service together is the most fundamental challenge of any church in this world, and in some people’s perspective a type of utopia. Extending the idea to convene all ages, and so also the confirmands, seems to be totally outside possibility for them. Local traditions as well as attitudes brought into any Christian society from the outside have to be held up against the testimony of the Bible. This will and must implement change in the course of recontextualization.

Fostering a missional imagination is the most important ability of a missional leader, and the idea has been an inspiration ever since Rodney Clapp and especially Newbigin developed the dynamic “people of God” notion in which the Church is seen

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29 Clapp, *A Peculiar People*; Newbigin, *The Open Secret*; see also Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, locations 1678 and 277. It is also the most recent emphasis of World Council of Churches (WCC) documents. For example, World Council of Churches, “New WCC Statement on Mission and
first of all as a pilgrim people on the way. Clapp describes how young Christians benefit from living together in community and says, “Christian discipleship is better off with the apprentice-model than with the manual-model.\textsuperscript{30} The team TimeToGo actually lives together with other people from KRIK, with about eleven people in a house. Increasingly, this house has become the enigmatic epicenter of spiritual formation in the church community. The leadership of the youth group in the CH is being discipled there every Wednesday by the team and others from KRIK. People gather there for prayer meetings every Thursday, all this remarkably without the board of the CH having arranged anything in that respect. The team and the minister prepare and help each other with the confirmands, the confirmand camp, and the follow-up of the confirmands’ decisions to follow Christ. In this way, the team-leader and the minister together foster a missional imagination among the team members. Future plans are to run a course in discipleship formation, the youth Alpha Course\textsuperscript{31} for both confirmands and the youth group KULH.

Most of the people serving in the area of missional formation are people who were not raised in Hemsedal, which raises questions about the right (i.e., “our”) local theology and ecclesiology “in Hemsedal” and the need for recontextualization in that area as well. Roxburgh and Romanuk elaborate on potential anxiety in the congregation when examining such issues. They write: “The cultural narratives of fear and anxiety, loss and

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\textsuperscript{30} Clapp, \textit{A Peculiar People}, 121.

confusion are as much inside the community of God’s people as they are in the neighborhoods and communities in which we live.”

The importance and application of fostering a missional imagination must receive priority in the CH, but this seems to come from somewhere unexpected, and the young people from KRIK seem to be more in touch with the Holy Spirit’s motion in the Hemsedal community at large. They are the ones who play important roles in the different experiments like Sunday for All, TimeToGo, and the diaconal work among the seasonal workers. Imagination is about the ability or the force of seeing a picture, to use the ability to dream, and to see things that have not yet materialized. The discernment of what in the end is from God is the most important part of the fostering process; ultimately, 10 to 15 percent of emergents have been found who want to drive the CH forward; and the issue of charismatic gifts has been addressed as well, in sermons and teachings in order to educate and build bridges among the different factions of the CH. In fact, more and more one senses a movement, in the different factions towards one another, and in their hospitality a willingness to accept differences in ecclesiology. Together they are focusing on being a witness in the valley, their eyes turning from inward differences to outward challenges.

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32 Roxburgh and Romanuk, The Missional Leader, 181.
33 Hunsberger, “Missional Vocation,” 86.
34 Kärkkäinen, An Introduction to Ecclesiology, location 141.
37 Ward, Politics of Discipleship, location 3938.
Feedback from the Group

People are important, and people as leaders are more important to those who need leading. Most of the values communicated through the AI among former confirmands tell a good deal about the immense love driving these leaders to invest time and efforts in children’s work. This is particularly evident in the continual enterprises, starting out with Sunday school to the S-club to preparation for confirmation.

It seems not so much to be a matter of content in preaching and witnessing. The young ones crave models, ideals, and prototypes showing them a way of following Christ. Almost all participants in the AI did attend a local Sunday school and the S-club during the week as well as the children’s gospel choir and the youth club KULH. In fact, during all of their childhood the church had an enterprise in which they could participate. To them, when it comes to the fundamental values, it communicated importance from their leaders to give time, include all children, and to practice leadership themselves. Half of the participants stated that when leaders engaged children and showed goodness it made a difference to them, and some felt that their love, sharing values, and giving time were very important, and that space was most important. Overall, the participants in the questionnaire were all satisfied with what had been arranged for them by the church, even though half of them opt for good leadership, a caring minister, and general improvement of leadership. Three out of five are happy about the milieu and the possibility of joining a Christian youth club, and more than half think that the encouragement and example of the leaders were not only important to them but have led to the congregation’s engagement in the community, thus having a constant and positive role as church to play in the greater community.
Possible Catechumenate Experiments

A longer process in the CH has resulted in concrete experiments among former confirmands. First are the meetings in small groups every week for the young people between fifteen and eighteen. These are also offered to participate in the youth group KULH. There are gender-specific gatherings for them in the house collective as well. When they are approaching adulthood, they are also welcomed into the group of young Christians called “Light House,” whose vision is to hang out with all kinds of snowboarders and jibber-skiers in that particular milieu in the valley. Bigger gatherings are arranged time and again for the youth club KULH. Many of our young people have been offered a position as helpers in the continual children’s work of the congregation, from Sunday school and onwards, as well as in the preparation for confirmation and especially the confirmation camp. Some of these are developing their leadership skills to a degree, which is hopeful for the creation of further leaders in the church. Some of the youngsters are in a solid one-on-one relationship with young adults, who model a kind of discipleship structure to be enhanced in the future in the church. The congregation eventually realized the necessity of developing a position for youth work, which has just been implemented.

There are even more possibilities. It is important to develop a structure in the congregation of discipling young converts more concretely. It is very good with the efforts depicted above, but more frequent and organized one-on-one experiences over periods of time, like for instance three years, are important. Jesus spent three years with his disciples, one on one and in groups of three and four (Matthew 17:1; Mark 13:3), twelve (Matthew 10:2; Mark 11:11; Luke 6:13; John 6:67), seventy (Luke 10), and 120 (Acts 1:15). There is no reason to think those who follow Christ in any way could do better otherwise. In fact,
we have not lived up to our potential in this respect for many years and now reap the fruits of it, as described at the beginning of this project. The LCN has worked for centuries on discipleship structures, to the effect of eventually minimizing the time spent down to some fifty hours within the time of preparation for confirmation. Having lost many hours of Christian education in Scandinavian schools has left the local church with a tremendous mission of edifying coming generations in knowing the Christian God; and time has shown that the organizations formerly fulfilling some of this are on the defensive and will probably no longer be of such assistance to the LCN, as they have been up until now.

Evaluation of these Experiments

If one deduces that what is written above is merely a matter of education, it is necessary to remember what the AIs revealed. Primarily, they demonstrated the great need to spend time with the next generation—namely, being willing to set aside personal needs and wants and follow Jesus in spending year after year with a smaller groups of children and young people, to the effect and with the intent of forming Christian disciples. The change in the CH certainly would not have taken place without the young adults coming out of the Bible school at KRIK, living in the house collective in the middle of the valley, and having invested their lives in the confirmands and youngsters between ages fifteen and eighteen. Similarly, this probably would not have been possible for them, without having the advantage of building on the foundation, which had taken place during the years of growing up in the congregation, with all the continuous enterprises having run in the congregation for generations.
Continuous enterprises and spending time seem to be the focal points of making disciples for Christ. These are carried out primarily by young willing leaders preaching, edifying, and modeling the content of the gospel, who have been discipled themselves. Not surprisingly, this has been possible in this particular valley of Hemsedal, with a strong evangelistic DNA in the congregation and a Bible school that has remained open towards the local church. Unfortunately, there are not many areas in the Scandinavian countries that have this kind of setup.

Notwithstanding, all congregations need to develop their own local theology and recontextualize the gospel into their particular community, following the missional steps discussed earlier in this chapter in order to discover what resources God already has placed within their context for use in such endeavors. Ultimately, it is necessary to listen to what God is up to in the neighborhoods around the church, both building and congregation. More ears than just those of ministers, board members, and church leaders are necessary.

**Assessment**

Assessing the recontextualization process in every local congregation is necessary to develop local theologies. Church leaders need to be open to what God is up to in the neighborhoods, a reality which is registered by every possible member of the church. Church leaders need to work together with all factions of the congregation—whether they be organizations doing children’s work, different kinds of Bible schools, diaconal work in the community, or some kind of outreach carried out by Christians burning to bring the gospel to the community. If the local church is not able to be and act as one body in any
given community, the message of Christ will suffer under doublemindedness from the side of that particular community.

As the Church is diminishing throughout Scandinavian countries—and most certainly, in Lutheran congregations—all Christians have to bond together and find ways to bridge their theological differences in order to recontextualize the gospel message to today’s generation in their particular place. The recontextualization process can help Scandinavian Christians to find a common way ahead. Doing local theology is up to the leaders of every congregation, but especially the minister. If ministers do not do it, in the current context of Scandinavian churches it simply cannot be done, since nobody from outside a specific community is able to run the recontextualization process for that particular society.

For the LCN, it means giving authority to every minister and local church board to embark on this difficult and challenging journey. When it comes to edifying and forming its members and maybe gaining more, the church faces challenges that cannot be solved by any congregational meeting or General Assembly inventing some renewal or by copying some new attempt from another entity. Those who have tried this in Norway certainly must realize this after their previous failed attempts. Change must grow from beneath. It must spring from the local congregation. It must be done by every minister and every board throughout the country for and to themselves.

There is no other way than venturing through the recontextualization process to develop local theologies. One neighboring church may succeed, while the next may not. There is no easy fix from any program or manual nor a way of mirroring what others have done before. The solution involves taking stock of the resources available in the
specific congregation and finding ways of being and modeling Christian lifestyles and discipleship for that particular community.

There is no way around investing in people hours, spending time with them and sharing life with children and young people. We cannot stop doing this, especially at the crucial time of confirmation, which seems to have been some kind of policy up until now. When youngsters reach the post-confirmation age, such investment actually needs to be expanded in most congregations. In Isaiah 6:8, the Lord asks, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” The perichoretic God wants his people to go, as a congregation, consisting of willing disciples.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Lutheran Church is in dire straits on a global basis. Trends for the Church are alarming for all churches in Europe, but attention is drawn to the Lutheran Church in Scandinavia especially, and the CH particularly. On all fronts the Scandinavian Lutheran Churches are declining, and congregations hunger for dramatic changes in all areas. Looking at the Norwegian Lutheran Church context as an example, times of changeability and adaptation are at hand. In reality, the LCN is a communion of traditions that has developed into so many different directions, which also is the case of the other Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia, so much so that the label “Lutheran” gives little meaning. The Reform of the Catechumenate in the LCN is one way for church leaders to react to the changes and especially to address the lack of discipleship of post-confirmation youth, what also could be called the Follow-Up Challenge. In some congregations in the LCN, this has led to a combination and supplement of continuous enterprises and broad ad hoc happenings.

Consequently, this paper has discussed the wider dynamic happening at the local level in the Church of Hemsedal, which has engaged in a missional project to address the issues mentioned above. This project was divided into three parts. Part One presented the ministry context and the nature of the adaptive challenge: that we did not know how to engage young people in effective discipleship formation. Part Two reflected theologically on the findings from the interviews in order to recontextualize the gospel locally. The biblical and theological foundations of discipleship and the concept of recontextualization both were examined. For the purpose of this discussion, recontextualization was defined
as doing local theology in a post-Christendom paradigm. Part Three presented a ministry strategy based on the interviews, the process of recontextualization, and the initial experiments. This strategy used the Missional Change Model in order to locally recontextualize the catechumenate.

The ministry strategy made use of a methodology of an action-reflection-action process and looked at challenges presented by new praxis that now exists, interpreted them and the feedback, and proposed experiments—which in turn were evaluated. After experimentation, there was continual assessment to recontextualize the gospel within youth culture in the CH. It looked specifically at the Hemsedal youth, employed a Missional Change Model, implemented by a Mission Action Team. One adaptive challenge in the CH was to meet the confirmands with a contemporary pedagogical curriculum and then follow up after confirmation. This challenge is as well a national challenge. Some missional experiments have been initiated and, besides the branches of work already functioning, more people have been involved in spiritual formation during this period of time. This primarily has happened through seven experiments: Light House, Sunday for All, Skiers Church, Diaconia among Seasonal Workers, TimeToGo, Soul Children, and the new discipleship project.

There are as well new arenas for implementing discipleship. If the CH is to become a missional church, ostensibly even with the success and solid foundation the experiments are finding, it is still very important to make connections among the different groups of Christians in the valley. This will require creating new associations and looking for overlapping locations, functions, and interests. Additionally, the plan is to develop and implement missional praxis. This will be done through coaching meetings with the
leaders of the Spirit-shaped experiments and naturally new experiments that the minister and leaders can facilitate.

The importance and application of fostering a missional imagination in the CH primarily stem from the young people in the KRIK milieu. They appear and play important roles in all of the experiments and are living out their missional imagination. Another arena is Small Group Follow-Up, where consistent contact after beginning on the good path of following Jesus was possible. Primarily, the team TimeToGo, with the help of others living in the collective, arranged this in coordination with the MAT so that both present and former confirmands could meet with those teams weekly. The need for coaches, co-wanderers, and mentors continues.

The expansion and implementation of church youth work after confirmation has started, and this project offers a new approach for discipleship in the post-confirmation age group, piloted in the CH. This way of thinking seeks to complement the catechumenate of the whole Lutheran Church in Norway. It also looks at the still to be investigated phases to develop recontextualization of the gospel for this age group as well as the assessment of this particular project to the broader Church. Of course, this means changes in the catechumenate of the LCN.

From 2010, the method of the catechumenate in the CH changed in two ways. First, the whole approach transformed; and second, most importantly, the team efforts in the CH by TimeToGo altered the concept of the confirmation lessons, both for the minister or the catechist and the confirmands themselves. This also brought transformation through the impact the young adults had on the confirmands as they engaged in each of the above mentioned activities by their collective.
Any other city and place must find its own way through recontextualization of how to change the catechumenate in that particular place in order to re-imagine discipleship structures for the future in their society. There is no copyright. It is a kind of a model, but it is only a single example; somewhere else leaders have to find their own way of doing things in order to make disciples of Christ on their behalf. The hope of this particular project is to show how it has been done in the CH and to serve as an inspiration for others.

In addition, the applications of the MCM model nationwide in the LCN is necessary, because a leader these days needs to be a host. A host is one who convenes people, who convenes diversity, who convenes all viewpoints in creative processes where intelligence as Christians can come forth. Leaders ought to schedule extra hours every day to engage in this ministry work.

In this respect, one must accept some phases of diffusion. For example, the phase of diffusion for the first innovations in the CH, which started in 2010, lasted for about five years. Then an action-reflection-action process by church leaders is necessary. All of our experiments were thus a result of some visions and felt needs coming from inside the congregation. After further experimentation, assessment remains crucial in order to continually recontextualize the gospel within the specific local culture. When assessing current missional priorities, there is much ecclesiological work to be done. Interpretation of these challenges leads to the point that fostering a missional imagination is the most important ability of a missional leader.

Continuous enterprises and spending time seem to be the focal points of making disciples for Christ—carried on by preaching, edifying, and modeling the content of the
gospel by primarily young willing leaders, having been discipled themselves. This has been possible in this particular valley, but there are not many of this kind of setup around in the Scandinavian countries. In the end, assessing the recontextualization process in every local congregation of the LCN is necessary to develop local theologies.

Doing local theology, working through the recontextualization process is up to the leaders of every congregation, and especially the minister; if these do not do it, it will and cannot be done, because nobody from outside any Christian community or faction is able to run the recontextualization process for that particular congregation. This is about looking at the resources available in that specific congregation and finding ways of being and modeling Christian lifestyles and discipleship for that particular community. There is no way around people hours. In other words, those who follow Christ need to be willing to do what Jesus did: invest time and life in children and other people. As Lutherans, we cannot stop doing exactly this at the crucial time around confirmation.


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