

Toward a Missional Approach to Children's Spiritual Formation and Discipleship in Filipino Local Churches

Nativity A. Petallar

I want to build a preschool for little children!" This was the exclamation of ten-year-old Rita (not her actual name) when I asked the children in a focus group discussion what they could do to help children in their neighborhood.¹ Another child blurted out, "I will share the Gospel with them!" Contrary to popular belief, children are not blind to the needs around them. If given the opportunity, they eagerly desire to be part of the solution to society's ills. Unfortunately, for many years, children have been treated as "passive" recipients of spiritual nurture, aid, and benefits from well-meaning adults, unconsciously denying the children their sense of agency. David Scott argues that "children have been part of the mission of the church since her earliest days, so it is inconceivable that the more recent history of research and scholarship related to mission should give so little attention to them."² In light of the child's developmental needs and capacities, I contend that children, whether Filipino, Asian, American, African, or any other nationality can be agents of change in their communities in their own way. They should be given a seat at the table. The Lausanne Consultation on Children at Risk in 2014 cautions: "The people of God are to respect, listen to, envision, and empower children as vulnerable agents of God's mission."³ However, when children are invited to be active agents in the *missio Dei*,⁴ there should be intentional ways of nurturing their spirituality.

This essay's overarching objective is to explore what it means to have a missional approach to discipleship so children can be agents of the *Missio Dei*, considering the cultural milieu of the Philippines. The corollary aims of this essay are twofold: (1) to examine the cultural backdrop of children in the

Philippine Context; and (2) to identify what it means to be missional in discipling children so they can be change agents and participants of the *missio Dei*.

THE CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN IN THE PHILIPPINES NECESSITATING MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Filipinos in general have a positive view of children. For example, anthropologist, Landa Jocano stated that the majority of the Filipino people view children as *biyaya ng Diyos* (gifts from God).⁵ This view reflects the biblical view of the child (cf. Psalm 127:3). Furthermore, Tomas Andres, a Filipino intercultural consultant, explains that children are seen as signs of God's favor, the fulfillment of manhood and womanhood, and were gifts from above.⁶ These are manifestations of how Filipinos place a high value on children; however, the current challenges facing Filipino children seem to contradict such an ideal.

According to UNICEF, the Philippines has become a global epicenter of livestream sexual abuse.⁷ Additionally, the Philippines ranks second in Southeast Asia in terms of teenage pregnancy based on the Save the Children Global Childhood Report from 2019. An estimated 538 babies are born to Filipino teenage mothers "every single day," according to the Philippine Statistical Authority from 2017.⁸ According to UNICEF and local NGOs, there are approximately 250,000 street children in the Philippines. These children are typically found in densely populated urban areas such as Metro Manila, Cebu, and Davao, where they face various risks.⁹

It is an irony that the Philippines is considered the largest Christian nation in Asia. The Filipino religiosity does not seem to cohere with the actual lives of the people. This is the challenge facing the Christian church in the country. A missional approach to discipleship must consider the culture, the family situation, and the specific situation of the communities where children are located. Only then, can there be

5. F. Landa Jocano, *Slum as a Way of Life: A Study of Coping Behavior in an Urban Environment* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1975), 56.

6. Tomas Andres, *Negotiating of Filipino Values* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1992), 46.

7. World Hope International. "OSEC: A Modern Face of Human Trafficking," 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/osec-modern-face-human-trafficking>.

8. Philippines Orphanage Foundation, "Why So Many Orphans?" 2020, https://www.filipino-orphans.org/why-so-many-orphans-part-2/?gclid=CjwKCAjwgr6TBhAGeiwA3aVuIaoOTj4gHc9J6whqyd05b3uV9Lz-JbWWjrGX_OdISMy5p3ujmNfDERoCpBgQAvD_BwE.

9. ChildHope, "The Plight of Street Children in the Philippines: A Call for Intervention" (May 6, 2024), <https://childhope.org.ph/street-children-in-the-philippines/>.

1. I conducted a focus group discussion with eight six-to-twelve-year-old children at the First Free Methodist Church of Metro Manila on September 15, 2024 with Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from APNTS.

2. David H. Scott, "Where Are Children in Missiology? English-Language Publications over the Past Decades," *Mission Studies* 40 (2024): 211. Several missiologists and theologians have taken upon themselves the task of exploring the role of children in the *missio Dei*. Timpte observed that the exploration of children in biblical studies is minimal (see Katherine Joy Kihlstrom Timpte, *The Transformational Role of Discipleship in Mark 10:13-16: Passage Towards Childhood* (New York: T and T Clark, 2022)). 8. Fortunately, in the last ten years or so, the following scholars have published volumes of resources to add to the literature maintaining that children are important in the Mission of God: Bunge, Tan, White, Grobbelaar, Brewster, Lisa Miller, Berryman, Nye, Stonehouse, May, and others. In addition, *God's Heart for Children* explores the theological implications and practical realities of ministry to, for, and with children written by over twenty contributors, mostly from the Global South.

3. Segura-April et al., "Mission with Children at Risk - Lausanne Movement," n.p., accessed September 23, 2024, <https://lausanne.org/occasional-paper/mission-children-risk-lop-66>.

4. This paper does not explicitly identify specific ways in which children can be engaged in missions activities. I would let the readers of the paper determine that in light of their own contexts.

effective strategies not just for the children but also for their families. The current moral state of children, youth, and families is a cause for alarm and one of the most powerful forces to counter this is the family in collaboration with the church.

WHAT IS CHILDREN'S SPIRITUALITY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?¹⁰

Rebecca Nye defines children's spirituality as "God's ways of being with children and children's ways of being with God."¹¹ This definition portrays the relational dynamic between God and the child. Why is spirituality essential? Experts on children's spirituality convey that children are as much spiritual beings as are the adults in their lives.¹² In essence, spirituality is the person's capacity and yearning for relationship, that is, for a divine or transcendent being, someone "wholly" other than one's self. If children are to be active agents in God's mission, their spirituality must remain centered on Jesus, the Mission Giver, who calls and empowers them.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE MISSIONAL IN APPROACH TO DISCIPLING CHILDREN?-

In his reflections on childhood, Karl Rahner writes, "[W]hat is already present in the child has still to be realized, to become actual in experience."¹³ He uses the language of the "already and not yet." By this he means that when a child is born into this world, he already is the "man," whole, a full human being but still has a lot of things to learn. This idea presupposes that the adults around the child have a teaching and nurturing role. To disciple a child is to teach her.¹⁴ To be a disciple means to be a learner.

Scottie May offers a profound statement on how adults should teach children. She states, "In addition to teaching content to children and crafting engaging and age-appropriate lessons that are specifically for children, we must walk with children in their discipleship journey."¹⁵ The Lausanne Movement also has an emphasis on ministry to, for, and with children.¹⁶ This is realized when adults in the lives of children

do ministry to them, act as advocates for their welfare, and engage in God's ministry with them.

Figure 1 below shows how three areas relate to a missional approach to children's discipleship. I will limit my discussion on the following: to be missional is to first, be consciously aware of the *missio Dei*-to reconcile the world through Jesus;¹⁷ second, be intentional in purpose: Thus, the purpose of discipleship so that children's spiritual formation could be nurtured could focus on the following: (a) evangelism; (b) worship; (c) doctrine; (d) holism; and (e) relevance to the culture; and third, to be outreach oriented.¹⁸



Figure 1. Marks of A Missional Approach to Discipling Children¹⁹

To Be Missional is to be Consciously Aware of the *Missio Dei*

Some thirty years ago, the term missional was introduced to the North American Church through the publication of the book *Missional Church*. Guder emphasized the "essential nature and vocation of the church as God's called and sent people."²⁰ The mission of the Church begins with God who is the author of the mission. Timothy Tennent reiterates that "missions should never be conceptualized apart from the *missio Dei*."²¹ There is no mission without God. In like manner, there is no children's discipleship without acknowledging that only the Holy Spirit can move in the hearts of young boys and girls, so they grow in the

10. This section is adapted from Nativity Petallar, "Practical Ways of Nurturing Children's Spirituality," in *A Plain Account of Christian Spirituality: In Honor of Floyd T. Cunningham*, David Ackerman ed. (Global Nazarene Publications, 2023), 189-212.

11. Nye, 5.

12. Donald Ratcliff with Scottie May, *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004), 7.

13. Karl Rahner, "Ideas for a Theology of Childhood," in *Theological Investigations, vol. 8: Further Theology of the Spiritual Life II*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 38-39.

14. For pronouns referring to a child, I would vary the gender forms for ease of exposition.

15. Scottie May, "What Have We Learned? Seventy-Five Years of Children's Evangelical Spiritual Formation," in *Bridging Theory and Practice in Children's Spirituality: New Directions for Education, Ministry, and Discipleship*, eds. Mimi L. Larson, Robert J. Keeley, and Zondervan (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 21-38.

16. Desiree Segura-April et al., "Mission with Children at Risk," *Lausanne Occasional Paper*, 2014, <https://lausanne.org/occasional-paper/mission-children-risk-lop-66>.

17. This is what Zscheile mentioned in his definition of "missional" (see Zscheile, *Missional Spiritual Formation*, xiii).

18. These areas are based on the following: feedback that I got during my topic presentation at Fuller Theological Seminary last August 7, 2024, reviewing sources dealing with missional theology among others, as well as the response of my colleagues from AP-NTS when I asked for their opinion on what does "missional" mean.

19. This diagram is simply a conceptualization of a missional approach to children's discipleship. In no certain terms am I stating that this is a framework set in stone or contains everything the term "missional" encompasses. There are other marks of a missional approach, and those who want to follow through on this research may add to these areas.

20. Darrell Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 11. Banseok Cho, *Being Missional, Becoming Missional: A Biblical-Theological Study of the Missional Conversion of the Church*. Pickwick Publications, 2021.

21. Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 59.

knowledge of God and become salt and light in their communities.

The following section deals with how a missional approach to children's discipleship looks like.

To Be Missional is to be Intentional in Its Discipleship and Spiritual Formation Approaches

The 19th-century Presbyterian theologian Robert Lewis Dabney summarizes teaching children in the ways of God in a very powerful way. He writes:

*The education of children for God is the most important business done on earth. It is the one business for which the earth exists. . . . Train up him who is now a boy for Christ, and you not only sanctify that soul, but you set on foot the best earthly agencies to redeem the whole broadening stream of human beings who shall proceed from him, down to the time when men cease to marry and give in marriage*²²

Dabney's thoughts are such a powerful challenge to walk alongside children in their growth toward the fullness of life! He also challenges parents to educate children and consider this as "their primary task on earth."²³ The education of young boys and girls affect the future of humanity.

Children Need to Have a Personal Relationship with Jesus

Children's spiritual formation starts with a relationship with Jesus. The teaching of the church should be evangelistic in nature. Erickson states that "the church has four main functions: evangelism, edification, worship, and social concern."²⁴ Evangelism is not just for adults. Children, too, need to know the Gospel of Christ. Kolk documents that "Discipleship begins with evangelism. In order to be a disciple of Christ, one must first have a relationship with Jesus Christ."²⁵

To know Jesus in a personal way and walk in His ways is a child's privilege and probably the most important decision she can make in her life. This is where discipleship comes in. The adults who are surrounding the children in church should have a nurturing stance. With this supportive community around the child, it would not be hard to allow children to take part in age-appropriate mission initiatives of the church.

Engaging Children in Worship is an Expression of their Relationship and Obedience to God

When a child receives Christ as his personal Lord and

Savior, worship is the outflow of that commitment. To worship is to acknowledge the greatness of God and to obey Him. This is one of the emphases of Deuteronomy 6:1-2. MacArthur comments, "God is clear that each generation has a responsibility to teach their children and grandchildren. Specifically, God's people are responsible to teach their offspring to . . . live faithfully according to His Word."²⁶ This is one of the ways to pass on the faith to the next generation. One of Lausanne Movement's Call to Action for Children-At Risk says: "Children can be active participants in worship and service to God."²⁷ Children can worship God not just in the church, but in their homes, their schools, and practically wherever they are. Obeying God is intrinsic to worship. Knowing God and the Bible is important. But obedience is the result to knowledge.

CHILDREN NEED TO UNDERSTAND CHURCH DOCTRINE AND AVENUES FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Teaching of doctrine alone does not lead to a healthy spiritual thriving. The learners should have a personal relationship with God first and then church teachings follow. One of the necessary elements of the discipleship journey is the presence of the mentor. Gerhardsson writes, "To learn one must go to a Teacher. . . . But they also learn a great deal by simply observing; with attentive eyes they observe all that the teacher does and then proceed to imitate him."²⁸ This is a tall order for the mentor. Inside and outside the walls of the church, the mentor needs to live a holy life. In the ministry of Jesus with His disciples, He showed the example of a perfect mentor. A mentor and a nurturing church family could accomplish this. To be able to participate in the mission Dei, children need mentors who will walk alongside them in serving the Lord.

A Holistic Approach to Meeting Children's Needs Towards Missional Discipleship

A missional approach to children's discipleship should be holistic—targeting to meet the various developmental needs, viz. mental, socio-emotional, physical, moral, and spiritual. Other scholars call it "integration."

In one of Barna's studies, he concluded: "The most important dimension of our lives, therefore, is the spiritual dimension."²⁹ This understanding is also expressed in Greener's exposition of child development with spirituality as the center. Greener expounds, "From the Christian perspective, spiritual development is unique among developmental

22. Robert Lewis Dabney, *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982), 691–92.

23. *Ibid.* 691.

24. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 1060. In the framework: worship, edification (instruction or doctrine), worship, and social concern (outreach-oriented)."

25. Jeffrey Gavin Kolk, "Moving Good News Club Children Beyond Conversion to Obedient Biblical Discipleship" (DMin diss, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 31.

26. MacArthur, 6.

27. Segura-April et al., "Mission with Children at Risk - Lausanne Movement," n.p.

28. B. Gerhardsson, *The Origins of the Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979), 17; cited in Ogden, 83-84.

29. George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003), 55.

areas because it provides the epicenter that anchors the remainder of human development.”³⁰ Greener argues that “No one person, church, or program can accomplish everything that children . . . need holistically. Nevertheless, a mindset of holism must pervade our thinking.”³¹ Everyone is invited to participate in this endeavor of discipling children. John Roberto suggested that we need the following environments for children’s growth: the faith community, the family, and age groups—by (1) engaging children in intergenerational relationships, activities and church life and events; (2) equipping and supporting parents and families in sharing and practicing their faith at home, and (3) engaging young people in activities and experiences designed in ways they learn and grow.³² Doing ministries to, for, and with children with the view of meeting their holistic needs is a pathway towards missional discipleship.

Relevance to Culture and Daily Lives of Children is Key to Life Application

Filipino theologian Rodrigo D. Tano calls church leaders to understand and communicate the Christian faith in ways that are intelligible and relevant to the culture.³³ Another call to present the Gospel with the context in view is the statement of noted Filipino social anthropologist Melba P. Maggay. She exhorts against preaching without knowing the needs of our audience by saying, “With easy confidence we proceed with our one-two-three point formulation, sidestepping the differences between a full and a hungry stomach.”³⁴ Reflecting on these real issues, many teachers of children could be guilty of overlooking the needs and particular characteristics of their audience in the guise of dedicated ministry. Logan and Ridley, wrote that “by listening to the Holy Spirit, we too can discern what each person needs.”³⁵ Sensitivity to the Spirit’s leading is essential if one desires to be relevant in the life of a child. When inviting children to participate in the *missio Dei*, we must prioritize their developmental needs and provide intentional training, ensuring that their involvement is never coercive or haphazard.

TO BE MISSIONAL IS TO BE OUTREACH-ORIENTED

Floyd T. Cunningham, the resident church historian of the Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary

(APNTS) believes that “to be missional is to be outward looking.”³⁶ The outreach dimension to nurturing children is encouraging children to become salt and light in their communities. But this should be done in such a way that children will not be abused spiritually in the process. There should be “culture-sensitive evangelism.” Coercion or other forms of deceit or manipulation should have no place in the presentation of the Gospel.

Scott observed that there is an “ethical dilemma” of evangelism or mission with children.³⁷ There is a challenge of evangelism on children’s freedom to choose. To respond to this dilemma, I use Elmer Thiessen’s explanation of this. For some reason, Thiessen writes that he is using, “evangelism, or missions, or the making of religious converts, as synonymous for religious proselytizing.”³⁸ Thiessen defines proselytizing as the “deliberate attempt of a person or organization, through communication, to bring about the conversion of another person or a group of persons, where conversion is understood to involve a change of a person’s belief, behavior, identity, and belonging.”³⁹ His idea was if we care about the welfare of others, then we want to share with them the good news that we have found; however, Thiessen also says that, “Clearly, like many other things that are in themselves good, proselytizing can become bad if it is abused. And, as is well known, the higher the good, the greater the danger of abuse.”⁴⁰ This is specifically important when ministering to, for, and with children because they are vulnerable and would likely be victims of abuse if church leaders are not careful.

Kevin Lawson recommended a ministry “by” children. He notes that “One mistake sometimes made is thinking of children only as recipients of the ministry and guidance of their parents and the church rather than realizing that they too can minister to others.”⁴¹ Lawson enumerated some reasons why children need to be given opportunities to participate in the outreach efforts of the church:

First, by participating, they might experience and understand the meaning of compassionate service. Second, they need to see how God has personally gifted them and how he can use them to serve others. Third, such activities help them to see beyond themselves. Fourth, helping kids take responsibility for planning and carrying out their own ministries encourages

30. Greener, n.p.

31. Ibid.

32. John Roberto, “Faith-Forming Environments for Children,” in *Bridging Theory and Practice in Children’s Spirituality: New Directions for Education, Ministry, and Discipleship*, eds. Mimi L. Larson, Robert J. Keeley, and Zondervan (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 89.

33. Rodrigo Tano, *Theology in the Philippine Setting: A Study in the Contextualization of Theology* (Quezon City: New Day, 1981), 82.

34. Melba Maggay, *The Gospel in Filipino Context* (Manila: OMF, 1978), 1.

35. Robert E. Logan and Charles R. Ridley, *The Discipleship Difference: Making Disciples While Growing As Disciples* (N.p.: Logan Leadership, 2015), 19.

36. Floyd T. Cunningham, personal correspondence with author, August 6, 2024.

37. Initial paper presentation at Fuller on August 7, 2024.

38. Elmer Thiessen, *The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defence of Ethical Proselytizing and Persuasion* (London: Pater-noster, 2011), 9.

39. Thiessen, 11.

40. Thiessen, 88. Thiessen provides a summary of 15 criteria to distinguish between ethical and unethical proselytizing (Thiessen, 234-37).

41. Kevin Lawson, “Welcoming Children,” in *Infants and Children in the Church: Five Views on Theology and Ministry*, eds. Adam Harwood and Kevin Lawson (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 204.

the growth of their leadership skills, instills in them a sense of responsibility. Finally, participating in outreach projects shape and nurture life-long love and service to God and others.⁴²

I agree to all these reasons, but I want to emphasize that planning these things need careful preparation, training for teachers, and a culture of respect for children's freedom to choose. Anthony and Marshman wrote, "When children and students are challenged to step out of their comfort zones from an early age, they experience a dependence on the Spirit to equip and strengthen them beyond their nature and desires."⁴³ All these notions are ideal and are wonderful concepts, but the Church needs to spend time listening to the Holy Spirit for guidance and should carefully strategize before letting children participate in mission projects.

CONCLUSION

Children are part of God's overall plan. God's mission is to save the world through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Lord has invited the Church to participate in His grand plan. Both adults and children can be agents of mission. In the introduction, "I want to build a preschool for children," was the excited comment of 10-year-old Rita. Children can participate in God's mission, and that means that the adults around them have a missional challenge to disciple them in the knowledge of the Lord so they can grow spiritually and can be change agents in their communities.

A brief situational analysis of the current challenges of the children in the Philippines has resulted in a rather bleak landscape showing sexual exploitation, teenage pregnancy, risky situations for street children, and mental health issues. I am sure there are good things that are happening in local churches with their ministries to, for, and with children; however, these societal ills call for a concerted effort to nurture children. One of the things that the church can do is to disciple the children so their spiritual formation takes them to a good path, as espoused by Miller⁴⁴ in her research; and then these children can go out and become change agents in their own communities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andres, Tomas. *Negotiating of Filipino Values*. Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1992.
- Anthony, Michelle, and Megan Marshman. *7 Family Ministry Essentials: A Strategy for Culture Change in Children's and Student Ministries*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2015.
- Barna, George. *Transforming Children into Spiritual*

⁴² Lawson, 204.

⁴³ Michelle Anthony and Megan Marshman, *7 Family Ministry Essentials: A Strategy for Culture Change in Children's and Student Ministries* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2015), 30–31.

⁴⁴ Miller, *The Spiritual Child* (2015).

Champions. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003.

- Berryman, Jerome. *The Spiritual Guidance of Children: Montessori, Godly Play, and the Future*. New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 2013.
- ChildHope. "The Plight of Street Children in the Philippines: A Call for Intervention," May 6, 2024. <https://childhope.org.ph/street-children-in-the-philippines/>.
- Cho, Banseok. *Being Missional, Becoming Missional: A Biblical-Theological Study of the Missional Conversion of the Church*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2021.
- Cunningham, Floyd T. Personal correspondence with author, August 6, 2024.
- Dabney, Robert Lewis. *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Gerhardsson, B. *The Origins of the Gospel Tradition*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979.
- Greener, Susan. "A Roadmap for Reflection: The Vision of the Lausanne Movement and Mission 'To, For, and With' Children at Risk." A Paper Presented to presented at the Lausanne Consultation on Children at Risk, Quito, Ecuador, November 17–19 (2014b).
- Guder, Darrell. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Jocano, F. Landa. *Slum as a Way of Life: A Study of Coping Behavior in an Urban Environment*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1975.
- Rahner, Karl, and Translator, David Bourke. "Ideas for a Theology of Childhood." In *Theological Investigations, 8: Further Theology of the Spiritual Life II*:33–50. New York: Herder and Herder, 1971.
- Roberto, John. "Faith-Forming Environments for Children." In *Bridging Theory and Practice in Children's Spirituality: New Directions for Education, Ministry, and Discipleship*, eds. Mimi L. Larson, Robert J. Keeley, and Zondervan. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020.
- Ruger, personal correspondence with author, August 6, 2024.
- Timpte, Katherine Joy Kihlstrom. *The Transformational Role of Discipleship in Mark 10:13-16: Passage Towards Childhood*. New York: T and T Clark, 2022.
- Kolk, Jeffrey Gavin. "Moving Good News Club Children Beyond Conversion to Obedient Biblical Discipleship." Dmin diss, Southwestern

Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013.

Larson, Mimi L., Robert J. Keeley, and Zondervan. *Bridging Theory and Practice in Children's Spirituality: New Directions for Education, Ministry, and Discipleship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/fuller/detail.action?docID=6649405>.

Lawson, Kevin. "Welcoming Children." In *Infants and Children in the Church: Five Views on Theology and Ministry*, Eds. Adam Harwood and Kevin Lawson. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2017.

Logan, Robert E., and Charles R. Ridley. *The Discipleship Difference: Making Disciples While Growing As Disciples*. Philadelphia, PA: Logan Leadership, 2015. <https://www.amazon.com/Discipleship-Difference-Making-Disciples-Growing/dp/1944955003>.

MacArthur, John. *The War on Children: Providing Refuge for Your Children in a Hostile World*. Los Angeles, CA: John MacArthur Publishing Group, 2024.

Maggay, Melba. *The Gospel in Filipino Context*. Manila: OMF, 1978.

May, Scottie. "What Have We Learned? Seventy-Five Years of Children's Evangelical

Spiritual Formation." In *Bridging Theory and Practice in Children's Spirituality: New Directions for Education, Ministry, and Discipleship*, eds. Mimi L. Larson, Robert J. Keeley, and Zondervan. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020.

Miller, Lisa. *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving*. First edition. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015.

Nye, Rebecca. *Children's Spirituality What It Is and Why It Matters*. London: Church House Publishing, 2009.

Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003. <https://www.amazon.com/Transforming-Discipleship-Making-Disciples-Time/dp/0830823883>.

Petallar, Nativity. "Practical Ways of Nurturing Children's Spirituality," in *A Plain Account of Christian Spirituality: In Honor of Floyd T. Cunningham*, David Ackerman ed., 189-212 (Global Nazarene Publications, 2023).

Philippines Orphanage Foundation, "Why So Many Orphans?" 2020, https://www.filipinoorphans.org/why-so-many-orphans-part-2/?gclid=CjwKCAjwgr6TBhAGEiwA3aVuIaOoTj4gHc9J6whqyd05b3uV9Lz-JbWWjrGX_OdISM5p3ujmNfDERoCpBgQAvD_BwE.

Ratcliff, Donald, and Scottie May. *Children's*

Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004.

Scott, David H. "Where Are Children in Missiology? English- Language Publications over the Past Decades." *Mission Studies* 40 (2024): 209-30.

Segura-April, Desiree, Susan Greener, Dave Scott, Nicolas Panotto, and Menchit Wong. "Mission with Children at Risk - Lausanne Movement." Accessed September 23, 2024. <https://lausanne.org/occasional-paper/mission-children-risk-lop-66>.

Tano, Rodrigo. *Theology in the Philippine Setting: A Study in the Contextualization of Theology*. Quezon City: New Day, 1981.

Tennent, Timothy. *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.

Thiessen, Elmer. *The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defence of Ethical Proselytizing and Persuasion*. London: Paternoster, 2011.

World Hope International. "OSEC: A Modern Face of Human Trafficking," 2020,

<https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/osec-modern-face-human-trafficking>.

Zscheile, Dwight J. *Cultivating Sent Communities: Missional Spiritual Formation (Missional Church Series)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. Accessed August 15, 2024. <https://www.amazon.com/Cultivating-Sent-Communities-Missional-Spiritual/dp/0802867278>.



Nativity A. Petallar
npetallar@apnts.ed.ph

Nativity A. Petallar is currently the Associate Dean for Doctoral Studies at the Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary (APNTS) and Program Director of the PhD in Holistic Child Development. She has a Master of Arts in Christian Communication from APNTS and a ThD from the Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary. She is an ordained elder of the Free Methodist Church.