INSTITUTE FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

Episode 5: Viva la Iglesia!

Part One—Movement

Megan DeWald: The land we now call California became a state of the United States in September of 1850, and as part of the so-called Compromise of 1850, it entered as a so-called "free state," which meant that the enslavement of human beings was not legal in the state. Before then, that land was part of several successive manifestations of Mexico, which itself had gained its independence from Spain by 1821. Before then, the land we now call California was under Spanish colonial rule, and before then, it was subjected to other European countries during successive periods of so-called "exploration." Before then, the land was home to upwards of 500 different indigenous communities—the Quechan, the Mojave, the Shoshone, hundreds more—with evidence of human habitation in the land we now call California going back at least 19,000 years.

We tend to accept that we live in a world organized into discreet countries, and we accept that those countries are divided by imaginary lines that humans have drawn and determined are borders. But if we think about it even a little bit, we know that these imaginary lines are indeed imaginary because we've changed them throughout human history many, many times—very often, through violence. Meanwhile, people have always been on the move, figuring out how to survive amid all the chaos of history and the conditions of the land.

Migration is nothing new. Relative to history, our present-day borders and systems of immigration are what are new. California is now home to the largest number of immigrants in the United States—people who were born in Mexico, the Philippines, China, Vietnam. Half of all of the children in California have at least one parent who is an immigrant, and immigrants make up a third of the labor force in the state.

In Norwalk, California, there is small community of immigrants from Latin America and their children and even some of their grandchildren, who gather for worship and life together early on Sunday mornings and throughout the week. They call their community Esperanza Viva Iglesia Christiana—Living Hope Christian Church—and they are a community on the move, trusting and following the Holy Spirit, who is also always on the move—no matter the borders or boundaries we impose. Thanks be to God.

And welcome to *Disrupting Ministry*, a podcast from the Institute for Youth Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary. I'm Megan DeWald. In this podcast, we bring you stories of faith communities who are disrupting the status quo in the Church by developing innovative forms of ministry with young people. In this episode, we introduce you to Esperanza Viva Iglesia Christiana in Norwalk, California and their ministry of empowering and upholding the dignity and self-respect of every person in their immigrant community.

Part Two—Love, Translated

Carmelle Beaugelin: In Eliseo's application, he talks about how a lot of these young people are living in kind of a third space, culturally, that they are in a space in which they're very connected to their Latin American roots, um, especially with their, their parents' generation, um, having been first or second generation, um, you know, residents of the United States or citizens, and, but having a very strong Latin American cultural identity, and then the tension that a lot of these young people feel between, um, that, you know, identity and their American identity and living in that space.

Megan: This is Carmelle Beaugelin, Program Coordinator for the Log College Project, the Institute for Youth Ministry's grant initiative that has helped 12 churches from around the country design, test, and implement new forms of youth ministry in their contexts. We were talking here about the application we received from the Rev. Eliseo Morales from Esperanza Viva, which drew Carmelle's attention immediately because of her personal connection to the experience of being a child of immigrants. Carmelle's parents both immigrated to the U.S. from Haiti, and settled in Miami. She grew up speaking English, Creole, and Spanish.

Carmelle: And this is where I speak a little bit on a personal note, too, is I come as someone who was raised in a Spanish-speaking community, um, worshiping community, who also identified growing up as a third culture kid. I know what the meaning of living in that tension is. And what makes Esperanza, a community like Esperanza Viva so unique is that oftentimes in the conversation around youth ministry, the youth ministry models that are centered are oftentimes, uh, at least in our context are, you know, Mainline and white. (*Mm-hmm, mm-hmm*). And these kinds of things, for example—the idea of a siloed ministry, peer-to-peer models, you know, if you are familiar with Kenda Dean's writing, she talks about the Mickey Mouse, one-eared Mickey mouse model, which is the congregation is the big circle in the middle, and then the youth ministry is that little circle, that one Mickey Mouse ear on the, uh, on the side, that's the youth ministry. And it's just kind of the way, you know, it's part of it, but it's kind of its own thing. And if you were to cut it off, you know, you still have an intact circle.

It's not that simple, oftentimes in, um, multicultural communities, because for a second generation, um, you know, young person in this country, we are oftentimes not just young people and teenagers receiving information, but we're also many times the teachers for our parents. And that conflict, that cultural situation, oftentimes complicates these traditional ways that we understand youth ministry to be.

Megan: In other words, those who have had the largest platforms in the youth ministry world in the United States have tended to view the white cultural experience as the norm, even the standard-bearer for how to do youth ministry. This means that organizations, events, resources (including our own, by the way)—all of these have tended to promote and conform to the practices common in predominantly white churches and communities. We've already talked about a lot these practices in other episodes of this season of the podcast, but these practices include things like ministry programs segmented by age, like "youth group," a church having a dedicated person on staff to direct those programs, and a job description that aligns with particular programmatic outcomes, like high attendance. But in Eliseo's context at Esperanza Viva, with some parallels to Carmelle's experience as a young person in Miami, these white cultural norms don't really operate.

Carmelle: Yeah, I was, I was very taken by that particularly because that youth ministry context speaks directly to the youth ministry context in which I came from, and I didn't see many of these spaces and these programs address youth ministry in the context in which I grew up in.

So, the thing that was driving us into doing a Log College Project was this, this desire to explore what it would look like to challenge the peer-to-peer model of youth ministry, to challenge this idea of youth group, where everyone's stuck in a room and eating pizza and maybe doing Bible study sometimes, right? Um, we, we, part of Log College Project was that we wanted to elevate the understanding of intergenerational youth ministry, um, especially in regards to this idea of the peer-to-peer model. But what research does, especially when it's, I believe, research done well is you allow the data and you allow the experiences, particularly if it's ethnographic, you allow those stories to inform the hypothesis. You have a hypothesis, and you do the research and you start digging. And as you dig, you find that it's not as, you know, black and white as it seems, that there is gray area. And one of those is this idea that youth group, um, is for *every* context or that youth group is for *no* context.

And for a community in which, um, young people are very much siloed away from adults, reality of-, of spiritual experience and et cetera, et cetera, youth group may not always be the most fruitful thing but for other communities in which there is so much, um, adult responsibility placed on young people, sometimes that occasional, only-young-people event, um, or thing can be a great place to breathe because you can be a teenager. And you can just hang out with other teenagers and talk about things that you care about, without having to translate all the time and do those things all the time and be a teacher all the time.

Megan: There is a unique kind of emotional labor of love that children of immigrants very frequently perform on behalf of their parents or caregivers. The child grows up in this in-between space, straddling two cultures—that of their parents' origins and that of the place they now reside—often not feeling like they fully belong in either space. Nevertheless, in many cases, the child takes on the role of translator for their parents—both in regards to language and also culture. Sometimes they can learn the ropes of their current context a bit more easily than their parents, but this is also complex to navigate, for both parents and children.

I'm also the child of an immigrant. My mother was born in Tegucigalpa, Honduras and immigrated to the United States when she was 20 years old. Like Carmelle's parents, she also initially lived in Miami, where she met and married my white, American-born father. My mom was fluent in English and communicated almost exclusively in English by the time I came on to the scene—at that time, my parents were living in a very white suburb of Salt Lake City, Utah, so I grew up speaking only English. Even so, there were many moments as I grew up where I played the role of cultural translator for my mother, and, depending on the commonplace chance of encountering your everyday racism and xenophobia in America, there were plenty of times when my mother said something to someone in plain English, only for them to look to me to translate what she had just said. (My responses to that have gotten much saltier the older I've gotten; but, for that matter, so have my mom's).

My point is: this layer of identity formation in this in-between space, on top of all of the other kinds of identity formation going on in young people, is very tricky and delicate. A kind of third culture emerges within these young people, a mash-up of the other two, and experiencing connection with other young people in that third space can be life-saving. When I spoke with Eliseo, who also became the Design Fellow for the church in the Log College Project, he said that this desire to make space for this third culture for his young people was a large part of the motivation behind his decision to apply.

Eliseo Morales: The more I read into it, the more I realized, this is something that, um, speaks to us because, given that our parents and grandparents come from a different country and we were all born

here in the United States or have been brought from those countries at a very young age, where we don't really know that culture, um—the only thing we have more than anything is the language—um, we see church a little bit differently than our parents and our grandparents. So, I mean, our parents and our grandparents grew up in a church for the most part. And they know, at least I think they know, what a youth ministry is supposed to look like. (*Mm-hmm*)

But when we do youth ministry, sometimes we butt heads with them, but we're still kind of in that umbrella of like, this is, this is the church, this is how we do it, this is how we see it. So, the Log College Project really gave us that almost independence that we were seeking to say, 'okay, this is something that we're going to do. And it's not so much dependent on your understanding and your resources, but on something that we can do by ourselves guided by our own understanding, by our passions, the way we see the world. And then if it so happens that we can get it, then it's our resources as well.' So, that's how it started, and the more we talked about it, the more we said, 'you know what, we can do this, so let's do it.'

Megan: It's probably pretty obvious by now, if you've been following this podcast, that our primary takeaway from the Log College Project has been that *context matters* in youth ministry. Not in the abstract, not according to some broad categories like "urban," "rural," "small church," "multicultural," etc. While there is certainly value in understanding common themes and challenges within these broader categories, we are learning again and again that it is the nitty-gritty details, the particular humans in all their particularity, the unique and specific history and present realities of a place and its people—these are the keys to your context in ministry. And part of our role as leaders—a key responsibility in the new job description for youth ministers—needs to be that we are required to become the best students of our contexts that we can possibly be.

Eliseo embodied that for us throughout this project. He knows in his bones the stories and experiences that his young people and their families live with. And it was evident at the outset of this project that he had cultivated an enormous amount of trust and credibility in his context. While some of our churches struggled to get the 5-7 key people to commit to the intergenerational Design Team we required as part of this journey, Eliseo immediately had a team of, like, 20. And it was also crystal clear that his context called for the very thing that we had been challenging in our research—a youth group. But here, it was gonna look very different than the "youth group" model that is so prevalent in predominantly white churches.

Eliseo: So, when we started doing this project, my biggest goal was to expand their mind, expand their understanding of how the world works, or at least how the world can work. So, as we went forward with this project, it was really getting them to see beyond the limits that, that our culture puts on ourselves, that our parents put on ourselves, and really see what it means to follow God in our own understanding. Not that it's a different God, but we see the world differently than our parents. (*Right*) We speak to God differently. Even the language that we pray is differently. It's interesting because some of the, the younger, or the ones that were brought in from a different country, um, they still pray in Spanish. And the way that they connect with God is still in Spanish, but the ones that were born here, um, pray in English, even though they speak Spanish perfectly, understand it perfectly, read it perfectly. So even then we see that divide of it's the same God, but the way we connect with God is differently. (*Right*) So, for me, it was getting into accept those differences and say, it's the same God, we just connect with God differently, and that's okay. We can try and figure this out.

So, it was a very good time of exploration for all of them and for me as well, to really be okay with this diversity that we find, even within our own personal group at the church.

Part Three—Origin Stories

Megan: In February of 2019, which feels like a lifetime ago now, I was able to visit Eliseo in Southern California. I had traveled from winter in New Jersey to this beautiful, sun-soaked wonderland, and we met up for coffee. I got lost on the way and was very embarrassingly late by the time I finally found Eliseo, who was just glowing in the sun at this outdoor table, and I immediately began questioning all my life choices that led to me not living there. Eliseo is also a graduate of Princeton Seminary, and he told me that day how he just couldn't wait to get back to California. This was his place, there were his people, and this was the work God was calling him to do.

Eliseo: So, Esperanza was started in 2012, and it was birthed out of this desire to truly accept ourselves as an, uh, Hispanic immigrant community. Um, and we felt that for the time being, um, being part of a Presbyterian church kind of limited that just because a lot of our members were, uh, or came from a context that didn't really understand the Presbyterian polity, um, maybe not even all of the theological understandings. So, my father who was a minister of a Presby-, an established Presbyterian church, um, uh, left that position to start this new worshiping community. And for a while, it was a transient community. It started off in a home and when it outgrew the home, it went to, thankfully, the chapel of the hospital that a close friend allowed us to worship in there on Sundays with the understanding that after our worship services, we would actually go and visit the people who were in the hospital and just, you know, talk to them. If they wanted to pray, we would pray with them. During the holidays, we would sing songs to them. So, it was a very mutual relationship that I think was great, especially for the youth, who found themselves in the chapel of a hospital, and on almost a weekly basis, they, they experienced what it meant to give pastoral care to people in hospital.

Megan: They kind of, they became chaplains, sort of, in that context, would you say?

Eliseo: Yeah, They really did. And there was no, um, going around it because it was almost a requirement, but we joyfully did it. So that was a really good experience for me, for the church, and for the youth as well.

Megan: Another theme we've been exploring in the Log College Project is the concept of youth agency. Again, in prevailing models of youth ministry, young people are often viewed as the ones we are ministering *to*—or sometimes, even *at*. And we've been experimenting instead with what it looks like to minister *with*, *alongside*—honoring the gifts, the passions, the capacity, the agency of young people themselves. Once again, Eliseo and the folks at Esperanza Viva were way ahead of us, their young people serving as hospital chaplains in the earliest days of their church's existence. And when the need to adapt to a different space arose, the church responded with trademark flexibility.

Eliseo: When we outgrew the chapel there, um, we were looking around for churches, but again, because we are a Hispanic community, money was tight, resources were tight. And thankfully, there was, um, a minister in Norwalk who said, 'well, you can come and worship in our space. And the only thing is, you know, we'll charge you cheap rent. The only issue is, you know, you would have to worship at 8:00 in the morning.' (*Mm*) So that, because that, that church had four other worshiping communities in it that all divided, you know, their time on Sunday. So, we said, 'okay!'

Megan: So, you got the, the early shift.

Eliseo: Yeah, we got the early shift, but I think a lot of us were used to that, especially in, in the work that a lot of our members have (*mm-hmm*)—a lot of retail, a lot of are customer service-based. So many of them were like, 'Oh, it's just another, another work day. That's fine.' (*Right*.) So, we went to Norwalk, California, and that's where we found ourselves, and many, in like a lot of Southern California cities, um, Norwalk is very diverse, but also leans towards Hispanic. (*Mm-hmm*). And so, we found ourselves very much at home. There was a few families who have to drive all the way from L.A., and that's usually at that time, maybe a 20, 25-minute drive, but they don't mind; for the most part, all the other churches or all the other members come from different cities. And we all meet in Norwalk, California.

Megan: A few months after we met up in California, Eliseo brought his Design Team to Princeton Seminary for our Design Lab event, where we brought together all the Design Teams from all 12 churches to workshop their ministry ideas and build community with one another. Eliseo was nervous about bringing his team. He had struggled during his time as a student to really find a place of belonging at the seminary, and he was very protective of the people on his team, especially wanting to make the experience a positive one for his young people.

Eliseo: And then the cultural shock of taking them to, to Princeton. (*Sure*) Remember, we come from East Los Angeles, Los Angeles, Norwalk, or all of these, you know, immigrant-based cities. So, when we go to Princeton, a very privileged, a very affluent, very white community, it's very, um, it's a huge culture shock for them. (*Absolutely*) And I know for me, it was as well. So, it was very good for them to, to experience that. But also, you know, the, the differences in theologies that they spoke with some, some of the kids there and things of that sort that really expanded their mind and what I was trying to do for that year and a half before we went to Princeton, they saw it in action. They saw the, um, the needs of other communities. They saw how other communities work, and that they really just enjoyed it. And I think my, my favorite memory of that entire experience was how at chapel, one of the hymns that we sang was in Spanish, and how was, I was more aware than they were, they were just singing and in the language that they know, um, and every, not everyone, but, but a lot of people were struggling to pronounce the words perfectly. But in my mind, I was saying, this is, this is our song (*Right*) And we belong here. And that made me happy.

Megan: With this sense of belonging, this upholding of human dignity, this deep knowledge of their ministry context, the team from Esperanza brought all of this to bear in identifying a concrete need in their community.

Eliseo: So, our original idea was, um, to address some of the needs of the youth. Um, again, we were focusing on youth, and we realized that in some of our experiences, um, essential items were hard to come by. Um, for example, deodorant, tampons, pads, um. Things that were of good quality that we always had to get, you know, the second name brand of it (*mm-hmm*) because we couldn't afford, you know, the higher quality things. And it wasn't so much the name brand; it was also that, you know, some products are better for your skin. Some products are better for, for you (*right*). But we couldn't afford it, so we always had to go to the 99-cent store to go and buy things that were not as good for us as it should have been. They did the job, for the most part, but there were always better things.

So, for us, those things were luxury items that we couldn't have. So, we realized, okay, what if we provided those things for the youth of the community? So that, one, you know, self-care/health is important, but also confidence—the confidence that your deodorant isn't going to run out midday, um,

or that your family doesn't have to worry about, you know, especially in, in, um, larger families where, you know, your four kids and each kid requires, you know, a deodorant or things. It becomes expensive after a while. (*Absolutely, yeah*). So, if we can alleviate that essential need to families that need it, then, you know, confidence goes up, um, financial resources become more available. So, we said, for us, this is essential. It might not be essential for more affluent community, but for us, this, this means a lot. So, we were going to buy those essential hygiene, high quality products, and then find a way to deliver it to those kids.

And we decided the best way to do that was to create an entire space that young people can come, hang out, and, um, do their homework, so free Wifi, because some houses don't have free Wifi or good Wifi. So, provide good Wifi so that they can do their homework, uh, browse the internet, hang out, relax. And then, in one way or another where it's not embarrassing to them to get these three items, to get them. So, that was our essential idea.

Megan: Enter 2020. The global pandemic shut down any hope of gathering in person in an enclosed space, but Esperanza faced an additional—and quite unexpected—challenge to this ministry idea. Here's Carmelle.

Carmelle: Conversation—one of the first conversations I had with, uh, Eliseo after everything going on with the pandemic, probably maybe like two or three months into it, we were talking about like ways to move forward and ideate and spend money. And he says, you know, um, 'I don't know if our idea's going to work anymore.' So, I'm thinking he's going to talk about the usual things—building space, people can't meet. And, but the reason why his idea, he was explaining to me, won't work anymore is because individuals that they, they were wanting to, um, uh, support through their original idea were making so little money before the pandemic that the unemployment actually boosted their economic situation and they don't need these toiletries.

Megan: And by unemployment, you mean like the stimulus checks and...

Carmelle: The stimulus checks and different things and, and, and receiving, and actually receiving unemployment for, so all of the, you know, economic things that they're, that they were creating their ministry to address was no longer, um, the situation at this time.

Eliseo: That's where we said, okay, we have to rethink this thing. And ironically, but still not, you know, great is that because a good amount of our members were furloughed or laid off because of COVID, the unemployment benefits that they received, were better than the pay that they were getting at their job. (*Wow, hmm*) So, I was talking to Carmelle about this, that our community saw an actual growth in their income (*right*) because a lot of these immigrants are sometimes underpaid, uh, underpaid (*yup*) for the work that they do. And because of the unemployment benefits, they got paid more than what they would make full-time, um, at their jobs. So, for that time, when the unemployment benefits were there, the need of that community, of our community that we first saw was no longer there, right, because they could afford all of these things that once were hard to come by or to, or to buy. And so, we had to rethink, 'okay, if this isn't no longer a need for a community'—and it wasn't just our church, it was also, you know, Norwalk in general, um, well, was it that we had to do new or different? What are the needs of our community, um, that we could address with this grant? So, we had to re-envision our, uh, our approach and our ministry.

Megan: There's so much to unpack here—the deep brokenness of an economic system that preys upon the labor of those it simultaneously oppresses and disenfranchises, the ways that young people are directly impacted by these exploitative practices, the ways that the church often perpetuates cultures of toxic charity rather than demanding transformative justice, etc, etc. But rather than dwelling in the theoretical here, I want to draw our attention to how the team at Esperanza responded.

Eliseo: We said, okay, so what's, what's another way for people to keep moving forward? And we decided, or we, we thought, I thought, and when speaking to, to the rest of the youth, we all agreed that one of the things that we lack a lot is education on how to better ourselves (*mm-hmm*) as people.

All immigrants come from a different world where the, the financial institutions are different. Um, you know, the way we, we save money, the way we look for retirement is very different here in Mexico, or here in the United States than it is in Mexico. (*Right*) So, when people come from other countries, they really don't understand how the economic system works here in, in California, here in the United States. So, when, when we get money, um, we either put it in a savings account, or we spend it. We never think about stocks, we, never think about CDs. We never think about these things because no one educates us on those things—not in school, not in church—so we don't know these things, and we don't know how to ask these questions. We're never going to really lift ourselves up from that. (*Right, right*)

We decided, okay, what if we educated young people to understand savings, to understand checking, to understand bonds, to understand stocks, to understand things that will really not just educate them, but also project them on a better path than their parents. It's not that their parents made mistakes. It's because the parents just didn't know; they come from a different world. Um, so that's how we started saying, okay, if we want to keep the dignity of a person, it's not just giving them handouts, it's empowering them to do something good for themselves and for the community. Um, so that's where we're kind of leaning towards, is empowering youth to see, to, to understand is this new world that their parents have brought them in. And then to have those young people, um, influence more young people because, you know, young people listen to themselves more than they listen to their, their parents and to adults.

Megan: Imagine: a youth group where the children of immigrants from Latin America and young immigrants themselves gather to empower and uplift one another in their third culture space, through education on economics. A space to be seen, heard, loved, and supported that honors youth agency and upholds the dignity of each person present. And lest we make the grave error of thinking that economic education has nothing to do with forming disciples of Jesus Christ—I suggest we return to the Gospels themselves, which have Jesus talking money and labor and love of neighbor and stranger baked into every story and encounter. "Give us this day our daily bread," Jesus teaches us to pray, "and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

Part Four—Context Rules

Megan: Throughout this project, we've been conducting research by listening to the stories and perspectives of the people in these churches, hoping that the patterns and themes that emerge might provide insight for other faith leaders who are passionate about youth ministry. You've already met Aqueelah Ligonde and Kesley Lambright in past episodes, and today you get to hear from our final researcher, Seth Vopat. Seth is a 20-year veteran youth ministry practitioner and currently serves on the

Ministry Team at a Disciples of Christ church called Lee's Summit Christian Church just outside of Kansas City, Missouri. He comes from an American Baptist background and is a graduate of Central Baptist Theological Seminary. In his work with Esperanza Viva, Seth was really compelled by Eliseo's leadership among the layers of identity within the congregation.

Seth Vopat: I remember my first interview with Eliseo and just engaging about his congregation and learning more from him and just being amazed at his ability to just navigate the different levels of tension that is going on in congregation, where the adults are more comfortable worshiping in Spanish and yet the younger people in this congregation were having a hard time always connecting with that. And so, having him just share about that and trying to bring them together as a community and not just can perpetuate this okay, well, I'm just going to work with the youth over here and that way, you know, we can worship in English. And then when, um, with adults, he doesn't try to separate it out, but he tries to bring that community together. And I think just, there's a lot of beauty in that.

Megan: I wonder if the leadership gifts that enable Eliseo to hold these identities and realities in tension go back to his own experiences a cultural translator in his family of origin. His own lived experience as a third culture kid has given him the special skills of holding others' experiences alongside one another and honoring them for what they are, without falling into the trap of asserting the dominance of one set of needs or one group over another.

Seth: I love your use of the word translator. I think that, yeah, a very good observation. He's definitely a translator, and I think, um, even for the young people in this congregation, they are translators as well for, um, the adults in their congregation as they try to help them navigate living in our tension-filled society right now.

Megan: Ok, so we've already added one key responsibility to the new job description we're envisioning for youth workers in the 21st century—that we are required to become the best students of our contexts that we can possibly be. Perhaps the second key responsibility is to fully own and develop the special skills of being a translator within those contexts. Such a responsibility would require us to develop fluency in the stories and experiences of the different people in our contexts, drawing upon our powers of empathy to be able to interpret others with respect and grace, and then being able to clearly communicate those ideas to other people in the ways, the language they can best understand. That might sound like a tall order, but it's something Eliseo is doing every day. It's something his young people—and many children of immigrants—do every day.

Seth: I just think this congregation and what Esperanza Viva is doing is, um, quite incredible work. Um, as they try to help communities of adults navigate with their young people together, what does it mean for us to be followers of Christ and be authentic to who we are? And so, I think that's one of the biggest questions for me in this moment is how ultimately will they answer that? Especially as you reflect on worship, um, for this congregation. You know, is it successful for them if they get on the same page and everything's in English? Part of me hope says, I hope not, that they find value in keeping some of traditional roots, um, from their Spanish culture. Um, so at the same time, how do we, how do they move forward? Because I think that's also the question we're asking in this moment in our country is how do we move forward when we're this divided?

Megan: I don't know if the tensions of English and Spanish here really rival the divisions in society, but I get what Seth is saying. Perhaps part of the healing work we have before us in order to transform the way we make space for and understand one another is to start with our contexts—not in the abstract, but in

the particular, the specific, in and among the people God has given us to know and to love. Here's Carmelle.

Carmelle: The moral of the story is, for those of us who are doing ministry in any context, your context, whether it's a similar geographic area, whether it's a similar demographic, whether it's a similar, you know, socio-economical situation, your community is unique. And so, what we learned alongside Eliseo and what we hope that we will continue to learn through other, uh, other Log College, um, cohorts, and as we continue to work with communities that are not necessarily the dominant, um, white churches that we oftentimes gather the, the youth ministry data that we do gather from is that, as much as there's diversity among the situations within white churches, that also applies to Latin American churches and churches of Color and Black churches, is that they're not all the same. And that community geographics, the makeup of one church makes all the difference.

Conclusion

Megan: Next week on *Disrupting Ministry*, I'll introduce you to our friends at Abiding Presence Lutheran Church in Burke, Virginia, and you'll learn about how the pandemic created a space for mentorship and moneymaking for young people.

Today's episode was written and recorded by me, Megan DeWald, and then, Nii Addo Abrahams once again made audio magic for the masses through editing and production. My thanks also to Maiia Avelino and Christine Toto for their help with promotion and for showing up on Webex every Thursday morning for our meetings. To find out more about the Institute for Youth Ministry, visit our website at iym.ptsem.edu—and from there, click on the words that say Princeton Theological Seminary or visit directly at ptsem.edu. Until next week!