



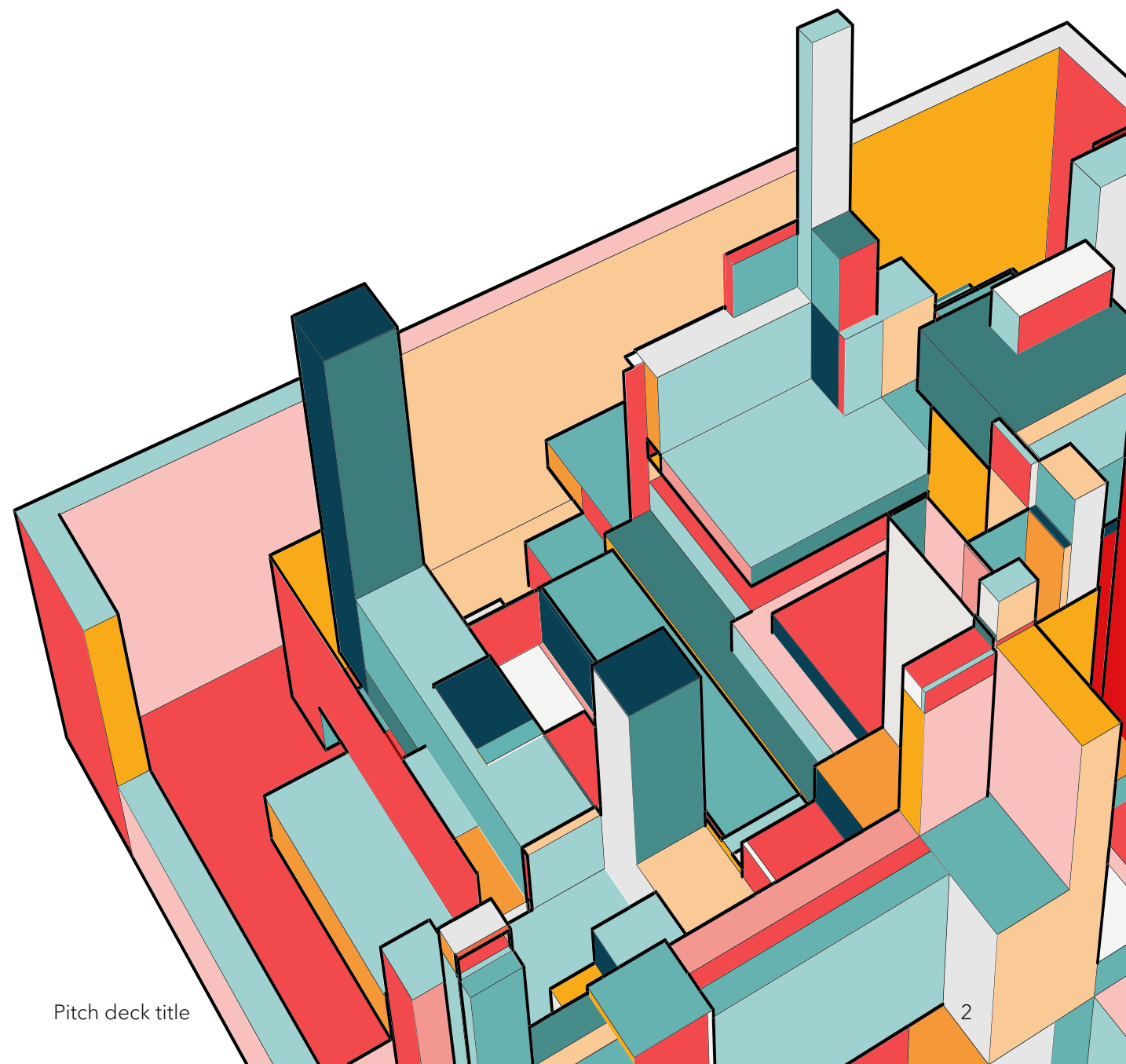
CONSTRUCTING THEOLOGIES OF CHILD WELL-BEING

Dr. Starsky D. Wilson,
President & CEO, Children's Defense Fund

February 18, 2023
CDF Practicing Resurrection Retreat

ABOUT US

Children's Defense Fund's Faith Community Organizing Team aims to build upon and ultimately evolve our current portfolio and partnerships from faith-related outreach to faith community organizing that builds power for children and families.



PRACTICING RESURRECTION

Objectives:

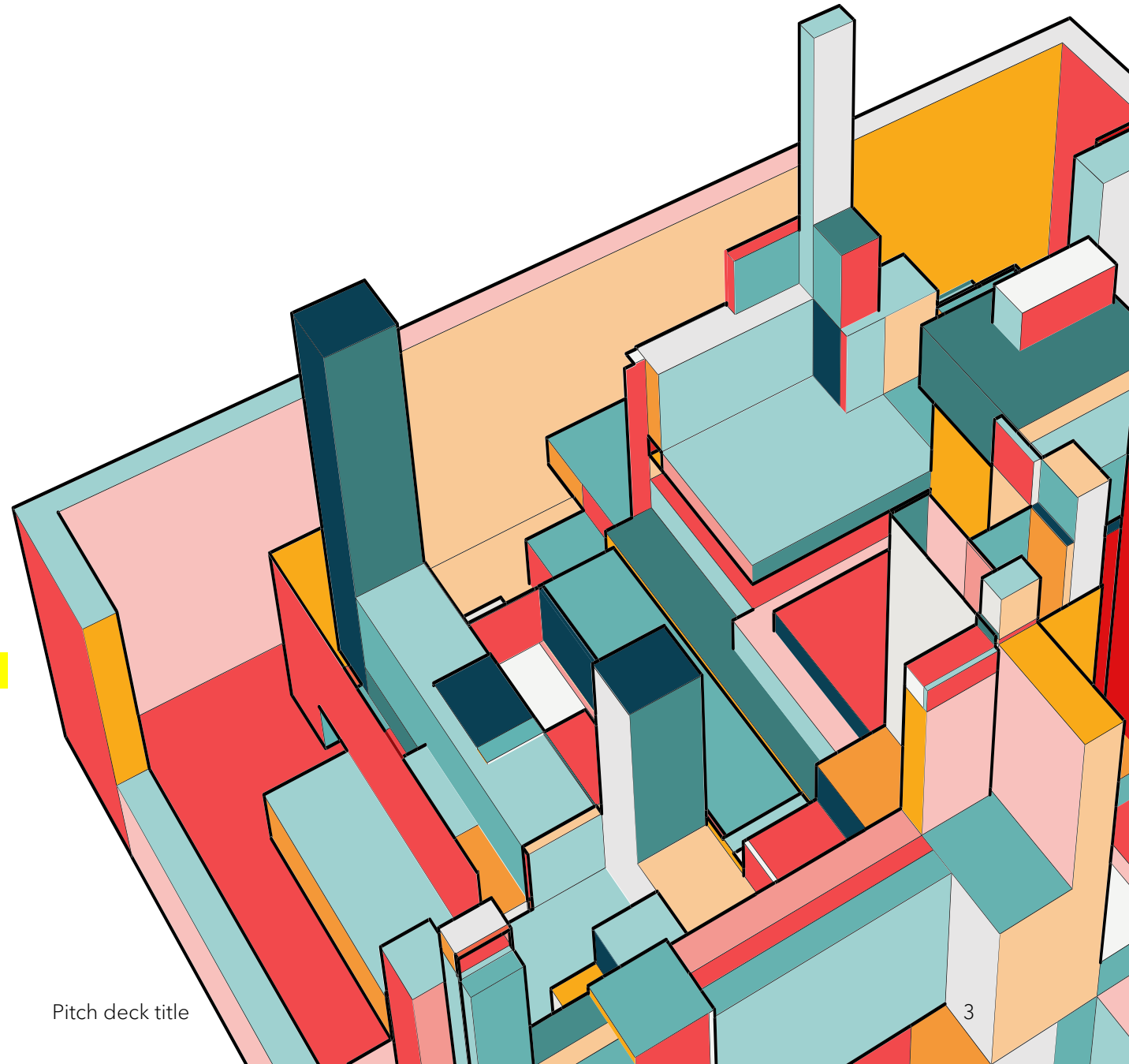
Access the insights of global and national leaders in justice-related ministry

Gain knowledge on social issues that impact children and youth

Develop a contextual theology of child well-being that is relevant and just

Invigorate congregations with new approaches to community-focused ministry

Secure technical, leadership and financial assistance to launch a new ministry plan or project



PROBLEM

PURPOSE GAP

Congregations are vital places for faith formation, socialization and inspiration, but governing polities and theologies are inward-facing and adult-centric, leaving young people's needs behind.

CUSTOMERS

74 million children and youth (under 18) & 30 million young adults (under 25) are the largest generation in the American population, also more likely to be poor and food-insecure.

FINANCIALS

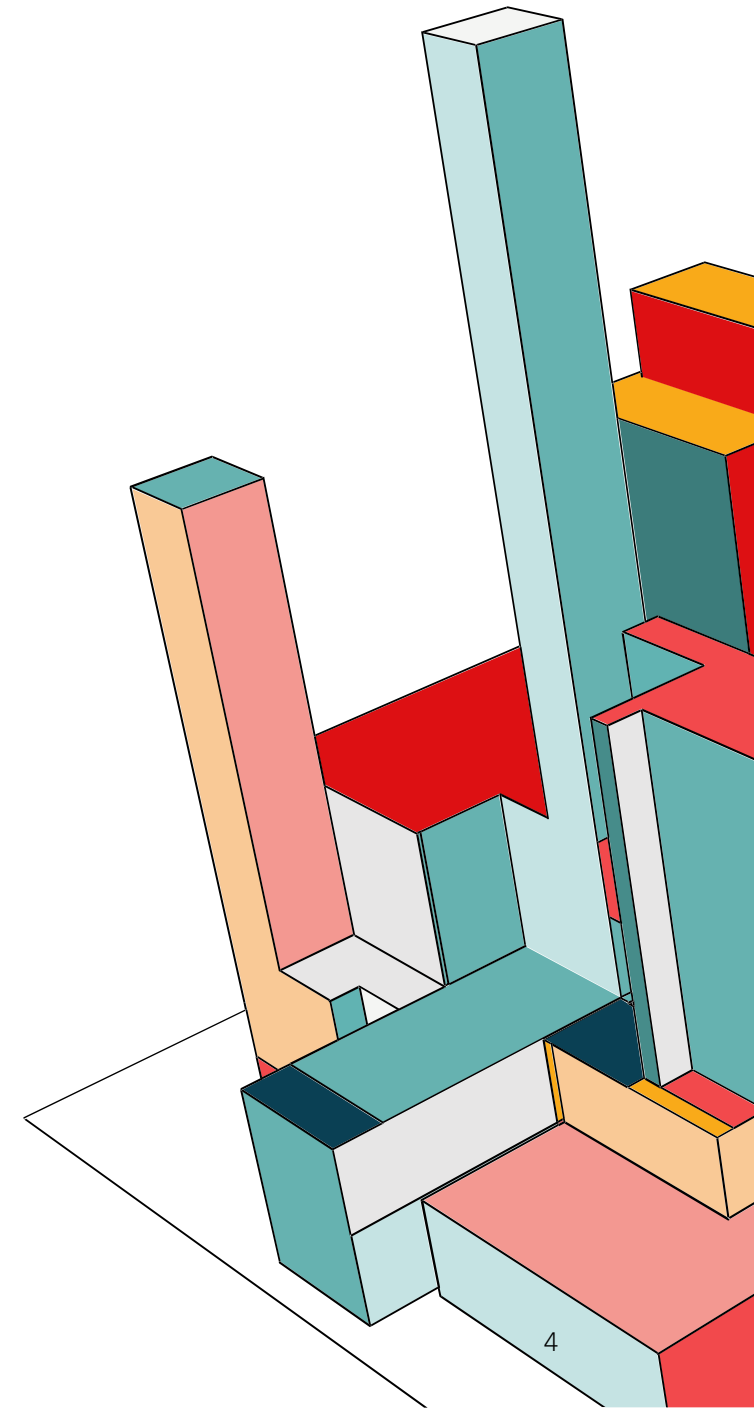
Child poverty fell to a record low of 5.2% (a 46% decline) in 2021, due largely to the expansion of the child tax credit, a public policy intervention.

COSTS

The largest *economic* cost of child poverty is reduced future earning potential of children born into poverty. For adults who experienced poverty during childhood, earnings were reduced by a total of \$294 billion in 2015.

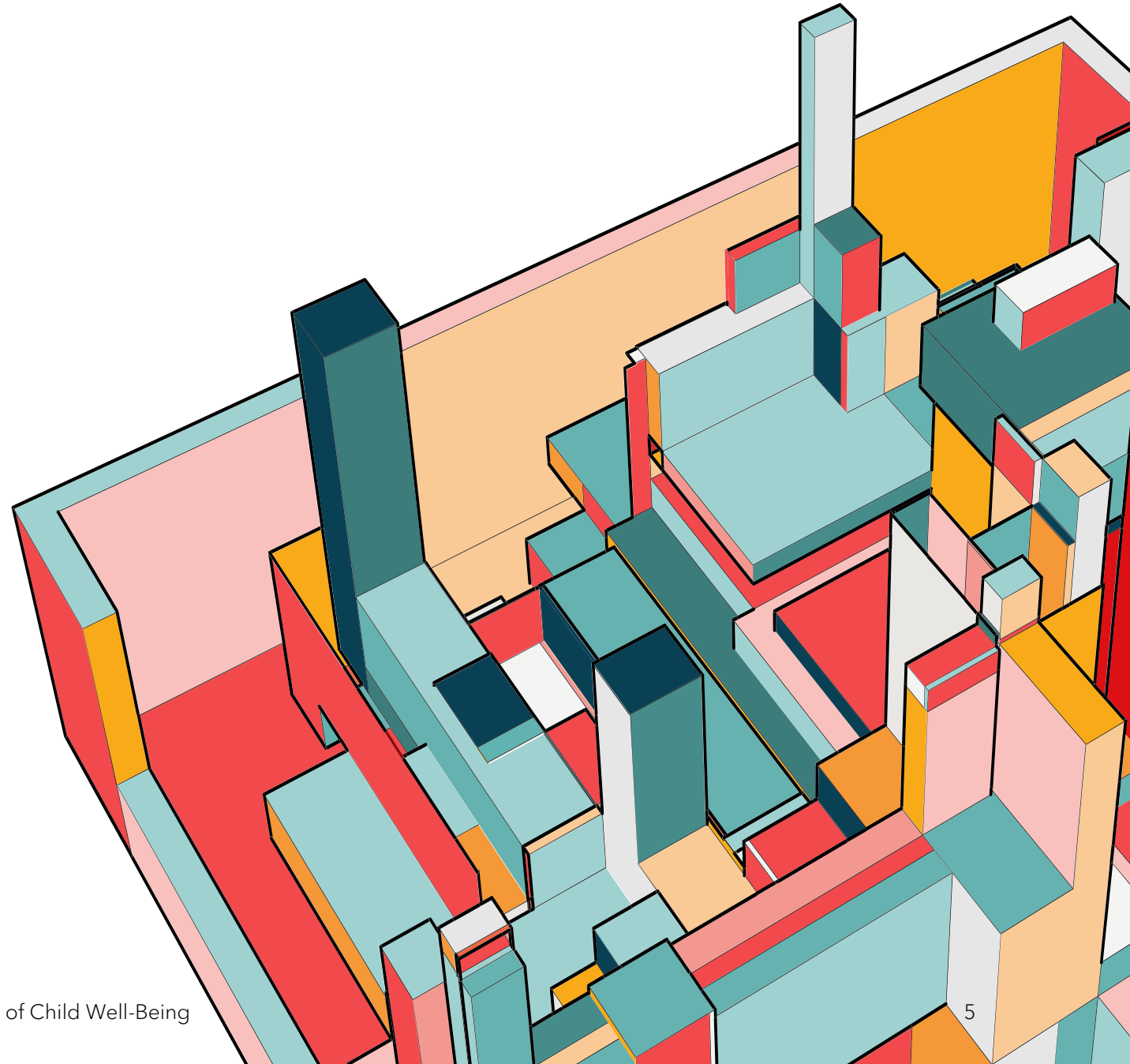
The next largest costs are related to crime and poor health.

In all, child poverty reduced the size of the economy by an estimated \$1 trillion dollars, or 5.4 percent of gross domestic product, in 2015.



“In the politics of Jesus, every policy and policy proposal must be judged by Jesus’ yardstick of love and justice.”

- Baba Obery



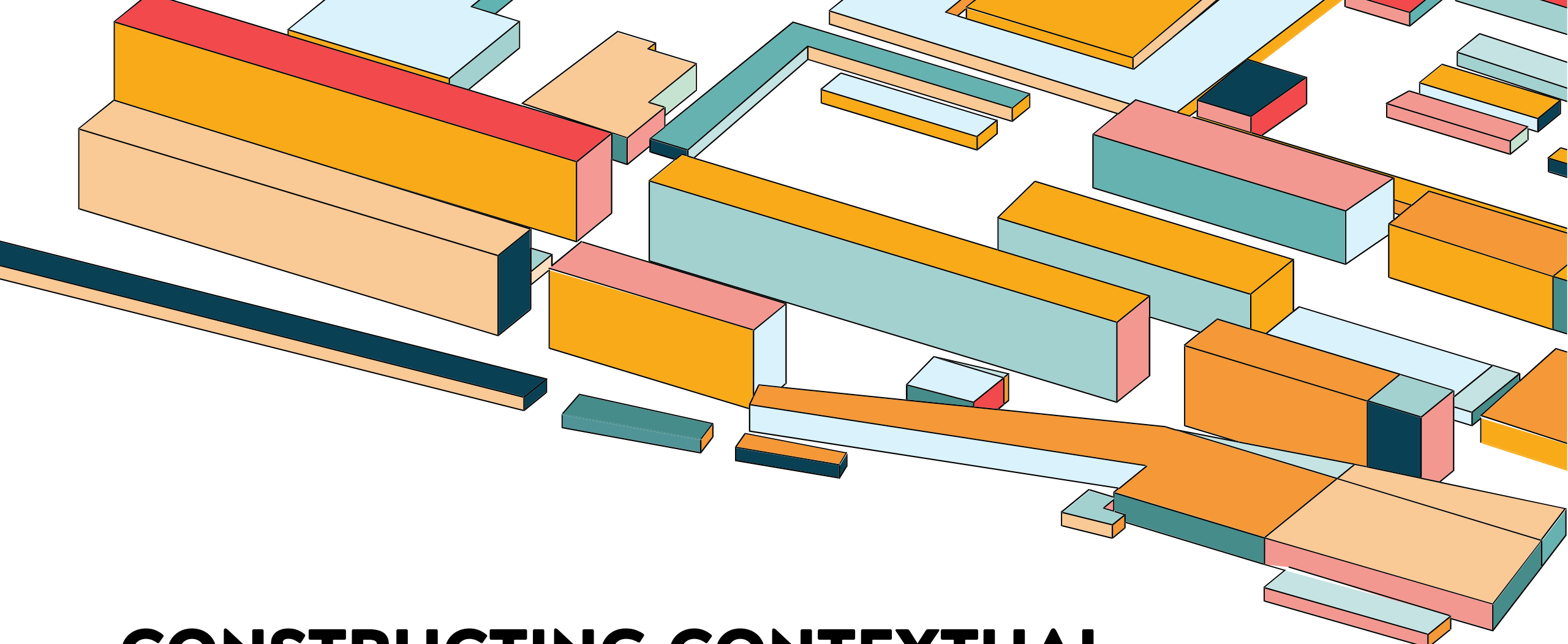


SOLUTION

CLOSE THE GAP

Contextualized theologies of child well-being seek to take seriously the call and strategies of “The Politics of Jesus” to:

1. Treat the people’s needs as Holy
2. Give voice to the voiceless
3. Expose the workings of Oppression
4. Call the ‘Demon’ by Name
5. Save [] Anger for the Mistreatment of Others
6. Take blows without Returning Them
7. Showing the Alternative, not just Explaining It



CONSTRUCTING CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGIES

POTENTIAL COMPONENTS

THEOLOGY

Who is God? For many, this will include Christology (Who is Jesus?) and Pneumatology (Who is the Holy Spirit?)

THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

What does it mean to be human (before God)?

SOTERIOLOGY

What does it mean to be 'saved?' Including consideration of 'saved from what?'

ECCLESIOLOGY

What does it mean to be Church?

ESCHATOLOGY

What are the ultimate things (or happens or hopes)?

PLAYING WITH PRECEPTS

Our job is to provide, protect, prepare

Children are humans – not just future adults

The future belongs to the children

Childhood should be able to be enjoyed for itself.

Jesus is a youth pastor

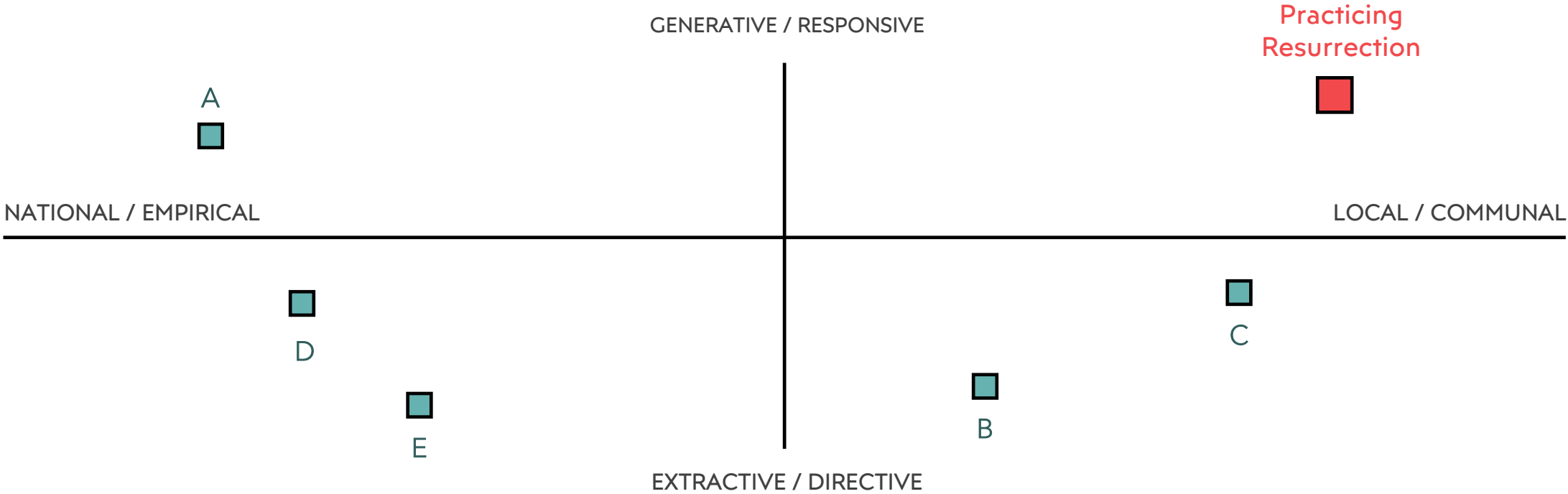
We should listen to children

Spaces of gathering for faith traditions should be sanctuaries that offer children space to be seen and safe and secure

Children are agents – not objects

Children having human dignity and agency and authority over their own lives

OUR COMPETITION: CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM



THANK YOU

Starsky Wilson

Swilson@ChildrensDefense.org

www.ChildrensDefense.org