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Worship, theology, and praxis at Antioch Community Church, Waltham, Massachusetts: an exploration of the foundations of worship from a Baptist-Charismatic perspective

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
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Project Thesis

**WORSHIP, THEOLOGY, AND PRAXIS AT ANTIOCH COMMUNITY
CHURCH OF WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS: AN EXPLORATION OF THE
FOUNDATIONS OF WORSHIP FROM A BAPTIST-CHARISMATIC
PERSPECTIVE**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

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Dedication Page

For my wife, Sarah, who has shown patience worthy of a saint as I have pursued theological education for almost the past ten years. Your love, support and encouragement have carried me through the wee hours of the morning.

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Ten years ago, I would have had no idea that I would end up being an ordained minister and be pursuing a doctoral degree! There are so many to thank. To my wife, Sarah for your love, patience and support. To Sean Richmond for your unfailing support, encouragement and belief in me. To Jeff Bianchi for taking me under your wing and mentoring me in the ways of the Lord. To Charlie Halley for your wisdom, experience and expertise. To all the staff and pastors at ACCW and ACCGB—you are all brothers and sisters in Christ. To Rev. Jennie Gould and Sam Lowe at Boston Medical Center who have taught me so much about compassionate chaplaincy. To my family: my father, the Right Rev. John Snape, for all your loving support and encouragement (and for making the trips from England for my graduations and ordination!), and to my brother, Julian and my sister Emma. To my other parents, Ira and Alma Mandas: thank you for your wisdom in the ways of the Lord and your generosity of time and family. To all my professors at Gordon-Conwell and Boston University School of Theology, and especially to my advisor, Rev. Dr. Karen Westerfield Tucker, who has been a rock of wisdom and knowledge, and a steady guide through this whole project. To Eileen Daily for guiding me through this new program with patience and humor. To my fellow cohort students from whom I have learnt so much and especially, to Chad Puclowski for always being willing to help and selflessly give of his time. Thanks also to Dr. Ben Deaton for his help with Word software editing.

Finally, all thanks, praise and honor to the Lord Jesus Christ for calling and guiding me to the ministry.

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(Order No.)

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ABSTRACT

This project thesis explores and identifies the foundational suppositions that undergird corporate worship at Antioch Community Church of Waltham (as part of Antioch Community Church of Greater Boston), and to that end examines the relationship between an articulated theology of worship and the worship praxis that simultaneously embodies and generates that theology. Research for this project included review of selected works on worship and liturgical theology, interpretation of significant biblical texts, an exploration of contemporary praise and worship music, the development and interpretation of a church survey, and a series of interviews and ethnographic investigations.

This study shows that the church articulates its theology of worship within a scriptural framework and places a high value on encountering the presence of the triune God through experiential worship that engages the whole person.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------|----|
| List of Figures | x |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Significance of the Study | 3 |
| The Structure of the Study | 7 |
| Limitations | 13 |
| Final Thoughts | 14 |
| Chapter 1 | 15 |
| Foundations and Explorations..... | 15 |
| The Inspiration of Scripture..... | 15 |
| The Authority of Scripture..... | 20 |
| The Challenges of Postmodernism | 24 |
| The Bible as Living and Eternally Reliable | 27 |
| Theological Explorations of Worship..... | 30 |
| The Old Nature versus the New Nature | 30 |
| Worship as an Eschatological Act | 34 |
| The Christological Center of Worship..... | 36 |
| Contemporary Praise and Worship Music | 39 |
| The Imagined Community | 41 |
| Emotive Worship | 44 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Hillsong United | 46 |
| Bethel Music | 50 |
| Chapter 2 | 57 |
| Contextual Analysis | 57 |
| A Brief History of Antioch Community Church | 57 |
| Missional Considerations | 63 |
| Core Values of Ministry | 68 |
| The Changing Face of the Church | 77 |
| Lex Orandi and Lex Credendi | 85 |
| Chapter 3 | 89 |
| Interviews, Observations and Survey Research | 89 |
| The Survey | 89 |
| Interviews | 93 |
| Ethnographic Research | 101 |
| Grace Chapel | 102 |
| Hillsong United Concert | 105 |
| Worship Conference, Antioch Community Church, Waco, Texas | 108 |
| Chapter 4 | 116 |
| Discussion, Implications and Recommendations | 116 |
| Appendix A | 132 |
| Appendix B | 134 |
| Appendix C | 170 |

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Appendix D | 171 |
| Bibliography | 173 |
| Vita..... | 182 |

List of Figures

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Figure 1 - ACCGB Organizational Structure..... | 78 |
| Figure 2 - ACCGB International and Regional Overview..... | 78 |
| Figure 3 – Old Testament Words for Praise | 114 |
| Figure 4 - How did you hear about The River Church? | 134 |
| Figure 5 - How long have you been attending The River Church? | 136 |
| Figure 6 - Are you currently involved in a Faithgroup (small group)? | 136 |
| Figure 7 - How often do you attend a Sunday morning worship service?..... | 137 |
| Figure 8 - Is the amount of music in the Sunday service:..... | 137 |
| Figure 9 - Is the volume of the music during the service..... | 138 |
| Figure 10 - There are a number of musical styles for congregational singing. Based on your understanding of these types, check the categories that indicate your preferences. | 139 |
| Figure 11 - How often do you enjoy new worship songs being introduced to the congregation? | 140 |
| Figure 12 - Do you find yourself becoming distracted during the worship service?..... | 141 |
| Figure 13 - Which service length do you feel is most appropriate? | 144 |
| Figure 14 - What do you value most about the Sunday morning worship service? (Please check all that apply). | 156 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Figure 15 - Listed below are a number of general characteristics, which can be applied to the “style” in which the worship service is conducted. Based on your understanding of these terms, check the categories that indicate your preferences. | 158 |
| Figure 16 - If the church were to switch to two services on Sundays, which times would you prefer? | 159 |
| Figure 17 - Based on your answer to question 14, which service time would you most likely attend? | 160 |
| Figure 18 - How important are visual aesthetics/ambiance in aiding you in Sunday morning worship? | 161 |
| Figure 19 - If you answered very/somewhat important to question 16, what are some of the following aesthetics you find valuable? (Check all that apply)..... | 162 |
| Figure 20 - What is your age demographic? | 163 |
| Figure 21 - Are you male/female? | 164 |
| Figure 22 - How would you describe your ethnicity? | 165 |
| Figure 23 - Which of the following best describes you? | 166 |
| Figure 24 - What is your religious background/upbringing?..... | 167 |

Introduction

In 2010, Community of Faith, Christian Fellowship, a Brighton, Massachusetts, church founded by the Antioch Community Church movement, planted The River church with thirty-five of their members. The vision was of starting a church in the heart of Waltham that would be more family and community orientated. I have been a part of the church plant from its inception in the role of worship pastor and remain so to the present. The culture of worship at The River church is informed by Evangelical, Baptist and Charismatic theology with a strong focus on biblical authority/teaching and discipleship.¹ The short-hand term used for this in the context of The River church is “biblical worship.” Worship through music is also a very important component of the Sunday service and overall culture of worship at the church. Much of the music draws from the Contemporary Praise and Worship Music (CPWM) world. The church is heavily influenced by the Hillsong and Bethel music movements arguably to an overbearing degree. Often this music seeks to emulate a “pop” and/or “rock” style evocative of its secular counterparts. As a result, an intriguing juxtaposition has emerged between the Christian and popular music cultures. Within the CPWM world, “biblical worship” can sometimes be attenuated to accommodate modern culture in an attempt to stay “relevant.” While CPWM music has its benefits and disadvantages, it is a by-product of a larger issue, which is the church’s attempt and effort to bridge the gap between the church and the unchurched.

¹ The church also has Pentecostal influences.

On March 19, 2017, The River church officially fully integrated into the Antioch Church movement and changed its name to Antioch Community Church of Waltham (ACCW). The Waltham church is part of network of three Antioch Community congregations in the New England area. The other two churches are located in Brighton, Massachusetts, and Beverley, Massachusetts. Collectively these three congregations make up the larger church known as Antioch Community Church of Greater Boston (ACCGB).

As the worship pastor at ACCW, my role has been described as being one of the primary theologians of the church. Theology grounds worship and worship shapes theology, and, as such, the source of our worship (through scripture, preaching, corporate prayer and music) is a matter of significant importance.

This project has been an exploration of a theology of worship, grounded in scripture, in an effort to flesh out and understand how ACCGB and more specifically, ACCW worships as a church. This in turn will help to shape a culture unique to Antioch Community Churches within the New England area and help foster further church plants. As this guiding theology is developed, it has been important and constructive to explore the interconnecting theological loci of *lex orandi* (prayer/worship), *lex credendi* (belief/doctrine), *lex agendi* (practice/action) and *lex vivendi* (way of life). How does this exploration of the theology of worship at ACCW shape what the church believes and inform how it should live as a community of faith? What has ensued from this project is: An articulation of a reanimated worship for this community that is grounded in its theology. This in turn will also have broader implications for ACCGB.

Significance of the Study

Israel Galindo, a professor at Baptist Theological Seminary in New Orleans, states, “I believe that one the most critical dynamics...of congregations is the formation of a corporate identity.”² Galindo elaborates that a congregational identity is formed by three major components: “its *spirituality*, its *stance* and its *style*.”³ These three components as they relate to ACCW and ACCGB are explored in more detail later but, for now, the following summaries will prove helpful. A church’s *spirituality* will inform how it worships God, the purpose of the corporate gathering and how it understands its ministry and mission.⁴ The *stance* of a church relates to how its ministry and mission are carried out within the geographical and socio-economic locale that it is rooted in.⁵ For example, a church located in an urban inner-city and one located in a rural area will likely have differing stances on social, political and economic issues. Finally, Galindo defines *style* as having to do with “the outward corporate expression of the emotional tone a congregation embraces.”⁶ All churches have certain corporate characteristics that form their collective identity, so the question becomes for ACCW and ACCGB: How do these three areas of *spirituality*, *stance* and *style* relate to its own identity? Certainly, the church has a spirituality, stance and style of its own, but how can these be recognized, analyzed

² Israel Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations* (Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 115.

³ Ibid., 116.

⁴ Ibid., 117.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 123.

and articulated more clearly? With clarity will come a greater sense of the church's purpose and identity as it relates to worship.

ACCGB and more specifically ACCW are a fledgling church that is part of a relatively young movement that is trying to establish a more solidified and centralized identity. The church seeks to transition from a startup church plant to an established church that has notable presence and impact on the community it serves. Presently, ACCW would be characterized as a small church that is on the cusp of breaking the “200 barrier” and transitioning into a mid-sized church. While there are many different models of congregational size and definitions of church growth, theologian and senior pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, Tim Keller, loosely defines a small church as ranging from 40 to 200 attendees and a mid-sized church as having 200-450 attendees.⁷ Churches in different stages of growth require different leadership skills and strategies. As ACCW grows, it is anticipated that new strategies for growth will have to be explored and the area of worship is no exception. How the church grows and diversifies (or homogenizes) will influence the culture of worship. An emerging question becomes: To what extent does worship at ACCW impact church growth and culture?

A key tenet of the church's philosophy on church planting is that a cemented and clear identity as a church movement is crucial to reproducing and planting new churches. To state it in business terms, the church is looking to develop a brand that can then be marketed. The church has recently embraced the multi-site church model. This

⁷ Tim Keller, “Leadership and Church Size Dynamics: How Strategy Changes with Growth,” Senior Pastor Central, accessed December 15, 2016, <http://seniorpastorcentral.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/04/Tim-Keller-Size-Dynamics.pdf>.

model allows one regional church (ACCW) to function as the base of operations to launch and oversee other church plants within the area. In essence, ACCW has become the base of operations for Antioch Community Church of Greater Boston (ACCGB). Articulating how ACCW and ACCGB as a whole worships and the theology that grounds this worship will be key to helping form and guide the identity of future ACCGB congregations in the area.

A definition of worship can never be all encompassing or unequivocal. As human beings created by God, we are image bearers of the living God that reflect the creator's infinitely inventive and innovative artistry. Diversity is the lingua franca of the 21st century. In today's Western society, the term "diverse" has taken on almost neological proportions in how it is applied to the human condition. This twenty-first century approach and attention to diversity has both positive and negative connotations. The ramifications for society as a whole in many cases remain to be seen. But here's the point: If we accept that we are designed by a creative God who delights in diversity and variety, then why should the worship of this God be any less multifarious? Furthermore, if we are said to be image bearers of the living God (Gen. 1:26), then surely we too should reflect this creativity and diversity in how we worship.

To define worship too narrowly runs the risk of confining or worse hindering communion and relationship with the triune God. Therefore, how worship is defined in this study must be recognized as addressing only one mode of worship that speaks to the needs of this particular church (ACCW) within the larger context of ACCGB and further

still the Antioch Community Church movement as a whole.⁸ Not only does worshipful diversity speak to the needs of the church movement, within each congregation there is sub-culture and diversity of its own. For example, within the three New England congregations, the Brighton congregation largely consists of college students and young professionals. The Beverley congregation mainly constitutes young Caucasian families and young professionals. The Waltham congregation due to its location reflects more racial and socio-economic diversity than the other two churches.

The church has a generalized way of doing worship and a somewhat inchoate theology that underlies its modes of worship. Yet to describe the church's theology as vague or hazy would be an unfair and inaccurate assessment. Instead, it would be more accurate to say that the bones of the church's beliefs and core values are clear and articulate, but that the next stage of worship development is going to require more than a theological skeleton; what is needed is a fleshing out of what the church believes and holds as core values. For example, on the church's website under the "What we Believe" tab, the church states, "We believe the Bible is the inspired, authoritative, living, eternally reliable word of God and is a daily necessity in the lives of all believers." From this statement, though, it is still not clear how the church defines the terms, "inspired," "authoritative," "living" and "eternally reliable." Part of this project will involve giving clarity and definition to such terms as part of defining and clarifying the church's theology especially as it relates to worship.

⁸ The term "Antioch Community Church movement" will be used in this study to refer to the whole church movement of Antioch Community Churches including all church plants both domestically and internationally including ACCW and ACCGB. See Chapter Two for a more in-depth study and historical survey of the Antioch Community Church movement.

However, the relationship of theology and worship is not unidirectional. Indeed, existing ethical and missional commitments of the community also influence the church's theology and worship. By examining the interconnection between the *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, *lex agendi* and *lex vivendi*, underlying principles of worship and theology may be clarified and articulated. Questions that have been asked include: How does the stated theology of the church find expression in worship? How do current practices of worship inform and shape what the community believes? How do the ways the congregation aspires to engage in mission and evangelism shape both worship and theology? How do all these things work together to enable a real live engagement and encounter with the living God? At the heart of these inquiries is the question: How does the way we worship affect how we live? In other words, it is argued that worship is the working out and a manifestation of theology in action. The goal of this project has not been to focus on church growth and multiplication (although this is one of the desired outcomes) but to define a theology of worship for ACCGB and particularly ACCW that will help create clarity and unity of vision and create a malleable paradigm/template that can be duplicated and adapted for each new church.

The Structure of the Study

Chapter One examines the foundations of ACCW/ACCGB's⁹ understanding of scripture, worship and how contemporary praise and worship music plays an integral role

⁹ While this work is primarily concerned more specifically with Antioch Community Church of Waltham (ACCW), the relevance to the larger Antioch Community Church of Greater Boston (ACCGB) is almost equally as important. As a result, ACCW/ACCGB will be used throughout this work to refer predominantly

in the culture of worship at ACCW/ACCGB. Using these three areas as a basis for discussion, the chapter functions as an interactive literature review that examines and engages specific authors and works that address the areas of scripture, worship and contemporary praise and worship music.

ACCW/ACCGB holds to a high view of scripture with the church website of ACCW describing the Bible as “the inspired authoritative, living, eternally reliable word of God.”¹⁰ As a result, in the first part of Chapter One, a more in-depth study examines the meaning of words such as “authoritative,” “inspired,” etc., to expound upon how ACCW/ACCGB understands and articulates these terms. A selection of authors are brought into the dialogue including Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann, New Testament scholar N.T. Wright and Evangelical theologians Millard J. Erickson and Norman Geisler. Each writer brings a nuanced and varied approach to their understanding of scripture. Brueggemann, for example, wrestles with the meaning of “inspired”¹¹ while Wright tackles what it means for scripture to function as an authoritative text. Within this context, the challenges postmodernism present to the Bible are also explored.¹²

The second part of the first chapter explores the theological underpinnings of worship. A number of classic texts on worship are explored including *Worship in the*

to ACCW but also to ACCGB as a whole. When ACCW is used alone, this will be to denote material specifically regarding the Waltham church.

¹⁰ “Our Beliefs,” The River Church, accessed January 20, 2017, <http://theriverwaltham.org/beliefs/>.

¹¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Struggling with Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

¹² The choice of a mix of Evangelical scholars and scholars from other denominational backgrounds (such as Anglican and the United Church of Christ) was a deliberate choice in an effort to bring a wider theological perspective to this work.

Name of Jesus by Lutheran, Peter Brunner,¹³ and *Worship Old and New* by evangelical, Anglican Robert E. Webber.¹⁴ Both Brunner's and Webber's Christological approach is helpful for ACCW/ACCGB's perspective which sees a strong Christology at play in its theology of worship. Spiritual regeneration and the term "born again" are probed in conjunction with Paul's description of the old and new nature. How does sin and the repercussions of the fall affect and distort worship?¹⁵ The eschatological dimensions of worship are also discussed through the work of Allen P. Ross and texts from the *Book of Revelation*.¹⁶

The final part of chapter one delves into the world of contemporary praise and worship music (CPWM) which plays a prominent role in the culture of worship at ACCW/ACCGB. The web driven and tech savvy world of contemporary worship music is engaged by interacting with works by Monique Ingalls and Gesa Hartje-Doll who envision an "imagined community" of global proportions connected by the internet and technology.¹⁷ Emotive and demonstrative worship is a common phenomenon at

¹³ Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 1968).

¹⁴ Robert Webber, *Worship, Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1982).

¹⁵ Again, the decision to not just consult Evangelical theologians was a deliberate choice to bring a balance and variety of theological perspectives to this work in the hope of a more informed and complete work.

¹⁶ Allen P. Ross. *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006). Ross is Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School, an interdenominational, evangelical theological school. Ross presents a scholarly approach from an evangelical perspective.

¹⁷ Monique Marie Ingalls, Carolyn Landau, and Thomas Wagner, *Christian Congregational Music: Performance, Identity and Experience* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013).

ACCW/ACCGB, so the work of Peter Althouse and Michael Wilkinson is used to explore how bodily experiences relate to the social sciences.¹⁸

Lastly, two worship movements in particular have had and continue to hold considerable influence over how ACCW/ACCGB worships stylistically and musically. Hillsong United based out of Melbourne, Australia, and Bethel Music, Redding, California both play a large role in both the world of CPWM and at ACCW/ACCGB. The histories and theologies of these movements are examined in light of their relation to ACCW/ACCGB's own theology of worship.

Chapter Two begins with a historical survey of the origins of Antioch Ministries International (AMI) and the Antioch Community Church (ACC) movement. The church's theological stance has been described as Baptist-Charismatic¹⁹ and the historical tour helps the reader understand how the conflation of several theological influences have given rise to ACC's own theology. Key biblical texts for the church movement (Isa. 43:18-19; Isa. 58:11-12 and Acts 2:42-47) are also examined in light of the church's philosophy of ministry.

Documenting the origins of ACCW (formerly The River church) as a church plant in Waltham, Massachusetts, leads to questions of the church's mission and how this mission relates to the worship of the church. Tied to this mission are the church's core values of ministry. The work of Charlie Halley, a church consultant and specialist in

¹⁸ Peter Althouse and Michael Wilkinson, "Musical Bodies in the Charismatic Renewal: The Case of Catch the Fire and Soaking Prayer," in *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, ed. Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015).

¹⁹ See interviewee A's comments in chapter 3.

church growth and culture, is analyzed as it pertains to what are described as ACCW's and ACCGB's *relational* and *operational values*. Again, visiting scriptures that are seen as foundational by ACCW/ACCGB (Eph. 4:13 and Eph. 4:11-16) helps to underscore the biblical underpinnings of ACCW/ACCGB's approach to ministry.

The changing face of the church and its context within the city of Waltham is also addressed as the church changed its name from The River church to Antioch Community Church of Waltham. As the church transforms into the spearhead of Antioch Community Church of Greater Boston, questions for ACCW within its immediate setting and further afield in New England are addressed. The Waltham church is more diverse than a typical ACC church and this leads to questions regarding *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*. How the songs the church worships to and the prayers that are prayed inform the church's beliefs and Christian praxis are all explored in an effort to further understand the church's theology.

Having explored the foundations of biblical authority, worship and CPWM as it relates to ACCW/ACCGB in Chapter One, and presented a contextual analysis in Chapter Two, Chapter Three documents and evaluates research and data collected from three sources: a church survey, interviews with key leaders within Antioch Community Church of Greater Boston (ACCGB) and ethnographic research based on a church visit, a Hillsong United concert and a worship conference at the founding church of ACC in Waco, Texas. The survey was composed to gather information about congregational demographics, preferences of musical and liturgical styles, aesthetics and opinions on

priorities of the church. The survey was the first of its kind for ACCW and an assessment of the data is detailed in Chapter Three and appendix B.

Five leaders within the ACCGB movement were interviewed including key leaders at the Waltham and Brighton congregations. The questions focused on defining worship, the role of music as it relates to worship, and the influence of CPWM on the ACC movement as a whole. The interviewees are put in dialogue with each other as opinions and views are parsed out in yet a further attempt to flesh out ACCW/ACCGB's theology of worship. A recurring theme of emotive worship through experiencing the presence of God emerges that helps define what the term "the presence of God" means to this movement.

The ethnographic research takes note of a site visit to Grace Chapel, Lexington, Massachusetts, and their practices of worship. Grace Chapel follows a similar mode of worship albeit in a much larger setting. Despite the obvious similarities, there were also many subtle differences that are observed and analyzed which in turn help inform ACCW/ACCGB's own sense of identity. The Hillsong United concert which took place at the Agganis Arena, Boston, Massachusetts, provided an opportunity to observe first-hand the culture and practices of a worship movement that has and continues to exert considerable influence over the both the CPWM world and ACCW/ACCGB. Finally, observations taken from a worship conference held at ACC's mother church in Waco, Texas, give insights into the ethos and praxis of worship at the mega church and how their practices trickle down to other ACC churches, especially ACCW/ACCGB.

Chapter Four ties together the previous three chapters by raising questions and recommending a number of practical suggestions and implementations to foster growth and transformation in the culture of worship at ACCW. Among these proposals is the intentional incorporation of more ethnically diverse worship music, the establishment of a worship collective among the worship teams, the incorporation of music software into live worship and transforming the church basement into a music studio. The training and equipping of new leaders is discussed using the work of Dave and Jon Ferguson as a point of dialogue.²⁰

The implications of the transition to an ACC church and a multi-site model are also raised as well as how the church and volunteers will respond to implementing two Sunday services. Other practical issues that are addressed are the aesthetics of the church, outreach and evangelism as well as sermonic style as it relates to the church's view of scripture.

Limitations

Several limitations have been important to the completion of this study. Firstly, while ACCW/ACCGB is part of a church planting organization, the goal of this project has not been to focus so much on church planting and church growth, but on exploring an articulated and reanimated worship for this community that is grounded in its theology. The topic of church planting has emerged within the study but it has not been the primary focus. Secondly, it must be acknowledged that when such terms as *biblical worship* are

²⁰ Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson, *Exponential: How You and Your Friend Can Start a Missional Church Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 71-83.

used, a one size fits all definition is not possible. Instead, this term and others in the study are defined from an Evangelical and Baptist-Charismatic perspective that fall in line with the church's underlying denominational beliefs. Finally, the world of CPWM is a vast one, but two movements, Hillsong and Bethel Music, have a significant influence on praise and worship at ACCW/ACCGB and other ACC churches and so the primary focus in this study has been these two music ministries.

Final Thoughts

As the church continues to grow and expand, a number of implications and potential developments remain unknown. Waltham's young professional population is growing as the city attracts more business and tech companies. Waltham functions to many as a more affordable satellite town to Boston. A number of residential building apartments within very close proximity to the church are presently under construction and will be finished within the year. This will offer a huge opportunity for evangelism and growth in the church. Negative fallout from this potential growth could be to alienate the multicultural population of the church and essentially prioritize numerical growth over multicultural growth.

Chapter 1

Foundations and Explorations

The Inspiration of Scripture

The doctrinal confessions of Antioch Community Church of Waltham (ACCW) declare, “We believe the Bible is the inspired, authoritative, living, eternally reliable word of God and is a daily necessity in the lives of all believers.”²¹ Within this declaration are four notoriously difficult words to define. What does it mean to say the Bible is inspired, authoritative, living and eternally reliable? Many Christian denominations use similar terminology in their statements of faith but can often arrive at disparate interpretations based on predisposed theological suppositions. How do the stated theology and lived practices of ACCW define these terms?

In general, ACCW adheres to a fairly standard evangelical interpretation of the terms listed above. Regarding the term “inspired,” the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (1978), Article VI states, “We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.” Articles VII and VIII further clarify, “We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers gave us his Word. The origin of Scripture is divine...We affirm that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive

²¹ “Our Beliefs,” The River Church, accessed January 17, 2017, <http://theriverwaltham.org/beliefs>.

personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.”²² Finally, Article X makes the point that “inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.”²³

Essentially, then, to declare scripture to be inspired is to postulate that human hearts and minds have been inspired by the Spirit of God to write and record specific historical events, occurrences, visions, writings and teachings under divine guidance that are tantamount to the very word of God.²⁴ Throughout the history of the wider church, there have been numerous challenges to these assumptions with many coming from post-enlightenment philosophers and theologians. The scope of this work does not allow for an addressing of these concerns, but it should be noted that even within the many Christian denominations that hold to the Bible as a sacred text, there are widely differing opinions on the how the inspiration of scripture is interpreted. What is to be explored in this study is how ACCW and ACCGB in general understands inspiration.

²² “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics,” Dallas Theological Seminary Archives, accessed January 18, 2017, http://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_2.pdf. The Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy was a product of an international conference on biblical inerrancy and was formulated and signed by nearly 300 prominent Evangelical scholars. It has become a standard definition for many evangelicals on the issue of biblical inerrancy. ACCW does not actively use this definition but agrees with all its tenets.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Many Evangelical traditions capitalize “word” to denote their acknowledgement of the Bible as a divinely inspired document. ACCW/ACCGB does not necessarily have an official stance on the issue of capitalizing the “W” and either is deemed acceptable. For the purposes of this study, a lower-case letter “w” will be used when referring to the Bible to distinguish it from Jesus the Word and Logos.

While affirming that “the force of God’s purpose, will...and new life is everywhere” in scripture, biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann suggests that the very Spirit that rushes through the text and inspires the writers also blows past our own assumptions and presuppositions in how we read and interpret.²⁵ Thus, the text may be inspired, but that does not necessarily mean our reading of the text is.²⁶ However, Brueggemann does submit that on occasion, though, our reading can be inspired and with it comes something new and inspired of its own. The Holy Spirit will not be restrained or “regimented” as Brueggemann suggests,²⁷ but instead breathes new life into an ancient script that continues to be living and active (Heb. 4:12). An important point is raised with Brueggemann’s observations: how we interpret the scriptures will have a direct bearing on how we determine the meaning of the term “inspired.”

With all this talk of interpretation, one must wonder whether Brueggemann has been swept up with the tide of postmodernism that abhors absolutism. Relativism will always pose a problem to the questions of inspiration, inerrancy, authority and truth. A gradual whittling away of definitive truth has emerged with the rise of Postmodernism that presents challenges to the exclusive claims of the Christian faith. Exclusivity in today’s culture is seen as the unpopular sibling of intolerance and yet Christianity’s

²⁵Walter Brueggemann, Walter C. Placher, and Brian K. Blount, *Struggling with Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 24.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

authenticity and veracity is contingent on a number of truth claims that depend on recognizing that objective truth exists.²⁸

ACCW/ACCGB understands God's truth as revealed not only through God's son Jesus Christ, the Word, but also through modes of general revelation and special revelation.²⁹ If general revelation can be loosely defined as ways God has revealed himself to humanity through natural phenomena, the natural sciences and nature in general, then special revelation can be said to be ways in which God reveals himself through more specific means such as supernatural phenomena, miracles and his written word. To some, taking the Bible literally means to take every word and sentence at face value and thus arrive at one supposedly definitive interpretation. For example, a literalist reading of the creation accounts found in Genesis 1 and 2 would demand that the world and all life therein really were created in seven, twenty-four hour days.³⁰ Such a strict interpretation of the term "literal" opposes Brueggemann's assertions that the Spirit's inspiration flows through both the text and the reader. In fact, such a dogmatic and narrow view of reading the scriptures disqualifies defining the Bible as a living book. To be alive suggests breath, and it is significant that the meaning of the Hebrew *ruach* and the Greek *pneuma* are trifold: spirit, breath and life. To be alive is to breathe in and

²⁸ Such as, Jesus really lived, was crucified and rose from the dead, that salvation is found through Christ, etc. Of course, many other religions have their own truth claims.

²⁹ While recognizing that God transcends gender, the male pronoun is the preferred choice for ACCGB/ACCW who recognize the triune God as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The generic term "God" usually refers to both the triune God and God the Father.

³⁰ This would seem to ignore quietly the issue of the sun and moon not created until the fourth day in the creation account.

breathe out. Thus, readers of the Bible inhale the inspired text and exhale inspiration fueled by the Holy Spirit.

Scripture affirms its own inspiration through texts such as 2 Tim. 3:16-17, “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NASB). Verses 20-21 of 2 Peter state, “First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet. 1:20-21, NRSV). Many would argue that using scripture to affirm scripture is a circular argument; but, in a similar fashion, if scripture is truly God-inspired, then there can be no greater evidence to assert its inspiration.

Nonetheless, for the skeptical, resorting to circular reasoning may not be enough to convince the enquiring or curious mind. Theologian Millard J. Erikson casts some light on the justification of circular reasoning concerning the Bible’s inspiration: “Any theology...faces a dilemma when dealing with its basic authority. Either it bases its starting point upon itself, in which case it is guilty of circularity, or it bases itself upon some foundation other than that upon which it bases all its other articles in which case it is guilty of inconsistency.”³¹ One could argue that a subtext Erikson is suggesting here is the question of tradition versus scripture in regards to the authority of the church. Are the scriptures or the church’s articles, teachings and dogmatics the ultimate source of

³¹ Millard J. Erikson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 226.

authority? For some ecclesiastical communions, most notably Roman Catholicism, the answer is both.

The Authority of Scripture

Authority is an unpopular word in today's culture. Authority, to many, suggests the repression of freedom, a crushing of personal expression, an Orwellian society. Authority also suggests having to be answerable to a higher source, to something or someone who exerts power over us. In a culture that holds equality as one of its supreme virtues, sources of authority (such as the police or the government) can become sources of contention creating societal unrest, disillusionment and distrust. To follow authority blindly for authority's sake can lead to terrible atrocities such as seen in World War II under the Nazi regime. The twenty-first century has been no different. Indeed, even terrorist organizations such as ISIS would seek to justify their ideology by appealing to the authority of the Koran and the teachings of Muhammad. So as troubling as the concept of authority may be (and especially considering its possible abuses), the Christian faith requires that there be a source of authority—of ultimate authority. The source of this authority is recognized and acknowledged in and as the triune God. If the triune God is the ultimate source of authority, what is the Bible's role and place in this authority?

Many churches such as ACCW/ACCGB view the Bible as essential and central to their Christian faith. Indeed, most Christian denominations would make the same claim. However, what is in dispute is how the Bible is viewed as a source for worship ministry, and the degree of authority given to the Bible by various denominations. For example,

ACCW/ACCGB doctrinal beliefs states that the Bible is “a daily necessity in the lives of all believers.”³² Conversely, using the United Church of Christ (of which Walter Brueggeman is a member) as one example, a cursory glance through the “What we believe” and “Statement of Faith” tabs on their website mentions nothing of the Bible, its authority or the church’s view on scripture.³³ This is not to single out unfairly the United Church of Christ, but merely to make the point that biblical relevance, prominence and authority is multifarious within the Christian landscape. ACCW/ACCGB’s basic understanding of the Triune God and of the church is dependent on the biblical record.

According to the stated theology of ACCW/ACCGB, the Bible can only be authoritative if it is recognized and accepted as a special revelation from the living God inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the question asked earlier regarding inspiration is crucial in understanding how scripture can be authoritative in the Christian life. If the Bible is not recognized as inspired and is regarded merely the work of human hands alone, then the foundations of biblical authority have already collapsed. A determination of the *source* of inspiration is the key to understanding what or rather *who* carries authority.

N.T. Wright approaches the question of authority from another, grander perspective. According to Wright, the term “authority of scripture,” in a Christian sense,

³² “Our Beliefs,” The River Church, accessed January 17, 2017, <http://theriverwaltham.org/beliefs>.

³³ “What We Believe,” The United Church of Christ, accessed January 17, 2017, <http://www.ucc.org/about-us/what-we-believe>, “Statement of Faith”, The United Church of Christ, accessed January 17, 2017, http://www.ucc.org/beliefs_statement-of-faith.

is shorthand for “the authority of the triune God, exercised somehow through scripture.”³⁴ Through the Bible, the authority of God is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.³⁵ Wright views scripture not as sixty-six disparate books but as one metanarrative³⁶ that has at its heart God’s plan to rescue his people and complete creation.³⁷ Authority understood in this fashion can be placed in the context of the church and of salvation history’s movement toward the ultimate reign of God.

If the biblical narrative reveals God’s plan of redemption, then the thread that unites all of scripture is the over-arching story of God establishing his kingdom and dominion through a covenantal people. Through this people, the Messiah comes forth and a new covenantal people inaugurated through the church. Thus, God’s covenantal people—attentive to God’s kingdom present and to its fullness yet to come—carry out God’s authority. Authority understood in this light means “God at work powerfully through scripture to bring about the Kingdom by calling and shaping a new covenant people and equipping its leaders to be teachers and preachers.” Essentially, what Wright is laying out is the mission and purpose of the church and an eschatological view of authority and scripture.

³⁴ N.T. Wright, *Scripture and The Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (New York: HarperOne, 2013), 21.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁶ Postmodernism has a distrust and suspicion of metanarratives. See below in pages 24-27. Check page numbers

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

Understanding scripture as the road that directs the church to the authority of God rather than as the resting place of this authority helps to interpret and understand scripture more clearly. Wright identifies two worldviews that he regards as clouding or opposing the authority of scripture: rationalism (birthed from the Enlightenment) and Postmodernism.

The Enlightenment, Wright argues, offers a competing narrative to the biblical story. At the heart of the Enlightenment fueled by reason is the notion of progress,³⁸ often articulated in twenty-first century culture by the descriptor “progressive.” Towards what are they progressing?³⁹ Wright observes that, since the eighteenth century, humanity “has been reordering itself by an inexorable movement of moral, social, and cultural rationalization in which old rules and beliefs have been either left behind or, if retained, tamed and brought into line with reason itself.”⁴⁰ If the world can carry its own torch to a glorious redemption, who needs God? Who needs the cross? Who needs the church? Indeed, according to Wright, when the authority of scripture (understood by Wright as God’s authority exercised through scripture) is abandoned, all that remains is a form of self-glorification, idolatry, and a basking in humanity’s own ingenuity that offers a

³⁸ Ibid., 87.

³⁹ The term “progressive” would seem to suggest a worldview steeped in the Enlightenment ethos: humanity progressing towards a more humane and civilized future based on its own achievements and advancements. This worldview can often lead to a secular humanistic perspective, which can present challenges to the Christian faith as antithetical towards the Gospel and the need for a divine Savior in Jesus Christ.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 88.

counterfeit eschatology.⁴¹ Conversely, a view of eschatology grounded in the biblical witness recognizes God in the person of Jesus Christ as the redeemer of creation—a redemption not possible by human hands.

The Challenges of Postmodernism

If Wright sees Modernism, especially in the form of human secularism, as antithetical to a scriptural and Christological eschatology, he (as does ACCW/ACCGB) also sees Postmodernism offering more critique of biblical authority but with fewer answers. Postmodernism's stance, fueled by an all-encompassing suspicion of anything claiming to be definitive, is to deconstruct narratives in a bid to expose the power plays at work within these narratives. This approach is not always nugatory but can challenge readers to examine and understand scripture in new ways that lead to fresh insights and revelations.⁴² However, with its propensity to see a devil behind every bush and a tendency towards eisegesis, the Postmodern agenda can put the emphasis on the wrong proverbial syllable. By way of example, Wright notes that “to suggest, as is sometimes done, that the apparent ‘patriarchy’ of the household codes of Ephesians and Colossians renders those books unusable today means, once more, that their vision of the church as the renewed and united people of God, who by their very existence offer a powerful and unanswerable challenge to pagan religion and empire, goes unheard.”⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 98.

⁴³ Ibid., 100.

By highlighting the selective interpretations⁴⁴ Postmodernism tends to espouse, Wright underscores a challenge facing the modern-day Western church: “all we can do with the Bible, if Postmodernism is left in charge, is to play with such texts that give us pleasure, and issue warnings against those that give pain to ourselves or to others who attract our (usually selective) sympathy.”⁴⁵ There is something about Wright’s observation that strikes a nerve, notably that Postmodernism is very much rooted in the *zeitgeist*, in a “what feels right” in the cultural moment.⁴⁶ That the advocates of Postmodernism seem oblivious to subjecting themselves to the same criteria they apply to all other philosophies is an argument that leads one to ask (as does Wright): What role does our experience play in how we interpret the authority of scripture?

Much of how we process information and formulate our worldviews is done through the lens of our experience. Therefore, relying upon our experience alone as an interpretive grid will produce a subjective reading of scripture and of its authority. Indeed, if experience is cited as a source of authority, Wright argues this dismantles the function of authority in the first place: “If ‘experience’ is a *source* of authority, we can no longer be *addressed* by a word that comes from beyond ourselves. At this point, theology and Christian living cease to be rooted in God himself, and are rooted in our own selves; in other words, they become a form of idolatry in which we exchange the truth about God

⁴⁴ By the term “selective interpretation,” I specifically mean interpretations of scripture that pay little attention to the historical context and the original setting of the text. In a sense, all interpretation is selective due to the nature of human bias.

⁴⁵ Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 98.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

for a human made lie.”⁴⁷ The point to take away from Wright’s analysis is that if the authority of scripture is not rooted in a higher source—the ultimate source of all authority, God (as opposed to ourselves and our subjective experiences and interpretations)—then the Bible and the foundations of the Christian faith will be seen as purely the work of human hands.

This road of secularizing the Bible to fit a more agreeable narrative can lead to an erosion of the fundamentals of the Christian faith.⁴⁸ Furthermore, a form of theological attrition emerges that soon comes to question the divinity/humanity of Christ and questions the validity and authenticity of the gospel. One can see examples of the trail this trajectory leaves with the work of Thomas Jefferson’s naturalistic redactions of the Gospels or Rudolph Bultmann and his process of demythologization. Both were brilliant men beholden to the Enlightenment and indentured to reason, leading them to a limited, incomplete and inadequate approach to the work of Christ that sought to rob him of any supernatural power or authority.

The works of Jefferson, Bultmann and others demonstrate, firstly, the need for an honest acknowledgment and assessment of intellectual, philosophical and ideological blinders. Secondly, that throughout the history of Christianity, there are recurring cycles of heresy that are as old as the church. Heresies can often be associated in some form or another with three over-arching ontological issues: the divinity and humanity of Jesus,

⁴⁷ Ibid., 103.

⁴⁸ In this context, I use the word “secularizing” to denote selective cutting and pasting of scriptural passages to support a preconceived agenda. Arguably this is something done at some times by most theologians and pastors.

the nature of the Trinity and the nature of salvation. Ironically, the nature of heresy never changes, only its form and packaging. Thus, modern day forms of heresy still abound, packaged and marketed as appealing forms of pseudo-spirituality.⁴⁹ Popular fictional works such as Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* have only helped fuel the rising tide of skepticism towards the authenticity of the Christian narrative. Postmodern philosophy refuses to be bound to definitive truth and an exclusive source of authority. As a result, there has never been a greater need for the church to have a clear definition of what it means for the Bible to be authoritative in the lives of believers.

The Bible as Living and Eternally Reliable

Engaging and clarifying the terms “inspired” and “authoritative” helps to inform how ACCW/ACCGB defines the words “living” and “eternally reliable.” For example, an understanding of the Bible as a living book is not possible if not recognized as inspired.⁵⁰ Likewise, if the source of the authority of scripture does not come from the eternal uncreated God, then a comprehension of the Bible as eternally reliable will be difficult to accept.

The term “living” in the context of AACW/ACCBG's doctrinal confessions professes the belief that the Bible is the written word of God, written through men and women inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the source of the written word comes from the

⁴⁹ There have been many works written tracing the history of heresy up until the modern day. See Alister McGrath, *Heresy: A History of Defending the Truth* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), as an example.

⁵⁰ ACCGB/ACCW understands the Bible to be “living” in the sense that it believes the Holy Spirit continues through to the present day to illuminate the text to its readers. This is why ACCW/ACCGB considers daily reading and meditating on scripture as essential spiritual disciplines in the Christian life. Engagement with scripture is key to hearing God's voice and discerning his will.

living God. There are various theories on the nature of inspiration but the one that probably best represents ACCW/ACCGB's position is the "Dynamic Theory."⁵¹ The Dynamic Theory asserts that God guides each writer's thoughts, ideas and concepts and expressed through while retaining the unique personality of each author.⁵² Thus, while the authors may no longer be living, the source behind their inspiration very much is. Scripture itself affirms the living nature of the Bible declaring, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12, NASB).

Karl Barth declared the Bible as both "strange and new." With that comes the suggestion through the reading and rereading of scriptures, the reader gains something new.⁵³ That the Bible is a living book is to suggest that it speaks to its readers in different ways and at different times. Countless testimonies and anecdotal evidence demonstrate that a familiar biblical text can unexpectedly take on new meaning, comprehension and life via illumination from the Holy Spirit. Brueggemann writes, "The Bible is not a fixed, frozen, readily exhausted read; it is rather a 'script' always reread, through which the Spirit makes new...Nobody makes the final read; nobody's read is final or inerrant, precisely because the Key Character in the book who creates, redeems and consummates

⁵¹ Erikson, *Christian Theology*, 232.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and The Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1978), 20-28. Taken from Brueggemann's observations in *Struggling with Scripture*, 12.

is always beyond us in holy hiddenness.”⁵⁴ What this observation serves to highlight is that while the written biblical text is set, how the text speaks and inspires the hearts of its readers is not, and in this sense, these words written hundreds and thousands of years ago are still very much alive and fluid for the contemporary engager of the word.

Finally, a consideration of the phrase “eternally reliable” in the context of ACCW/ACCGB’s theological grid. If God is accepted as an eternally reliable being and the Bible viewed as God’s revealed word to humanity, then describing the Bible as “eternally reliable” can rightly be understood as an expression of God’s character. The eternity of God is a mystery to most people. The concept of an uncreated eternal being existing both in and outside of the space-time continuum defies human logic and understanding. Trying to conceive of something or someone having always existed and never having an origin or point of creation is abstruse for most. Realizing that as humans we are epistemologically limited in our understanding of the divine is the first step to acknowledging that there is a God.⁵⁵ To admit that God exists is not a psychological crutch as many an atheist might have one believe, but instead is a frank admission of not knowing all, and that perhaps there is something greater than ourselves worthy of our worship and devotion.

The eternal qualities of God are tied to his immortality and to him being the source of all life. Understanding God as the ultimate source of life leads to an understanding and definition of life itself. As theologian Norman Geisler states, “God is

⁵⁴ Brueggemann, *Struggling with Scripture*, 12-13.

⁵⁵ In the sense that what we can truly know about ourselves or God is limited.

life, everything else has life.” Geisler continues, “There cannot be an infinite regress where everything is receiving life but nothing is giving it; therefore, ultimately there must be something that is life in and of itself and has not received it from anyone else. This life is God.”⁵⁶

Theological Explorations of Worship

The chapter up to now has examined theological understandings of the role of scriptural authority in the Antioch Community Church movement, and especially as it relates to ACCW/ACCGB. This then leads to ask the question: What constitutes biblically grounded worship at an Antioch Community Church congregation and how does this question pertain specifically to the worship life of ACCW/ACCGB? As mentioned earlier, most churches would argue that their worship is in some sense biblical, so it needs to be asked what is uniquely biblical about worship at ACCW/ACCGB. Is there a unique approach to the use of scripture or is the question really more about stylistic and formal/informal preferences? A definition of worship will not only guide theological thinking but also the praxis of worship.

The Old Nature versus the New Nature

The human being is hard-wired to worship. At the very essence of the human condition is the need and desire to worship. Orthodox theologian and ecumenist Alexander Schmemmann describes human beings as “Homo adorans” (the human being as worshipper), alluding to the central place worship occupies in the human heart, mind and

⁵⁶ Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology in One Volume* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002), 533.

soul.⁵⁷ Speaking about the anthropological nature of worship, the Lutheran theologian Paul Brunner writes, “From his very origin his being is appointed for this worship.”⁵⁸ “Appointed” is an interesting choice of verb as it implies that humanity’s assigned role within the created order is to worship God. Yet, Brunner argues, human beings are also from birth “factually incapable” of the worship they are assigned to do.⁵⁹ The earthly inheritance of the children of Adam is the Fall and thus a nature prone to sin tends to pursue misdirected forms of worship. Brunner describes the Fall as essentially consisting “in the fact that man destroyed the worship given him with his creation and perverted it into the appalling opposite.”⁶⁰ Here the link to Genesis 1:26 and human formation in the image of God is clear. Part of godly reflection, according to Brunner, is to worship the God who endowed humankind with his image. Often, though, worship is misguided, misdirected and misused to glorify counterfeit gods that are empty and lifeless.

Brunner uses Romans 1:18-23 as a proof text to support the argument that the natural human condition without repentant faith in Christ is antithetical to the true nature of worship. Romans 1 relays that the invisible God has revealed himself clearly through his creation and that his divine nature and power are self-evident, and yet the sinful nature of humanity rejects this truth. Furthermore, humankind not only rejects this truth but, moreover, creates counterfeit sources of worship that seek vainly to usurp the one

⁵⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973), 15.

⁵⁸ Paul Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 85.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 41-42.

true fountainhead of worship. This denial of reality (the reality that worship is due to the creator) creates a spiritual hardening and blindness leading to the establishment of a false reality that serves as a false justification for humanity's idolatry. Brunner's summary is worth quoting in full:

The inevitable consequence of man's rejection of God's revealed reality will be that henceforth utter unreality will replace reality and be regarded as real and that absolute falsehood will replace truth and be regarded as valid. When the reality of God is denied by man's unnatural negation, man must fall prey to the empty irreality of the idol, which now, as a pseudo-reality, replaces the reality of God and exercises, weirdly logically, an uncanny, godlike, demonic power over man.⁶¹

With this assessment, Brunner is striking at the very core of what it means to be human. If to be human is to worship, then what is worshipped defines our humanity. Worship defines our very being—our existence. This center of a human being's spiritual essence is distorted and twisted when the worship of God is willfully rejected, and this subsequently affects a person's whole being. Again, Brunner's words prove revelatory: "The antinature of that self-willed rejection over against the revealed God forces the entire practical conduct of man into an antinature, which results in the deadly dissolution of his being."⁶² When understood in Pauline terms, what Brunner is suggesting is that a rightly ordered sense of worship is contingent on the nature that governs a person. If a person is ruled by the old nature (or self), then that person will be corrupted by deceitful lusts. But if the new self is at work within the heart of the worshipper, then he or she will reflect the likeness of God in holiness and truth (Eph. 4:22-24). From these observations, lingering

⁶¹ Ibid., 48.

⁶² Ibid., 49.

questions remain nonetheless: Is true worship possible without a renewed nature? Must one be truly spiritually born from above (born again) to worship in spirit and truth (Jn. 3:3; Jn. 4:23-24)?

Many denominations view the term “born again” often associated with Evangelical, Charismatic and Pentecostal traditions with suspicion. More specifically, the term “born again Christian” tends to elicit a certain wariness from many mainline denominations and traditions.⁶³ Perhaps it is worth pausing and posing the question of whether some of this suspicion is justified. Many traditions include “born again” or “new birth” language in their baptismal rites, and sometimes with internal theological controversy. Thus, is the terminology “born again Christian” as it is used in many Evangelical churches suggesting a certain spiritual elitism or class of Christian? Regardless of which side of the theological fence views of baptism fall on,⁶⁴ when properly understood, the term has nothing to do with denominational divisions but refers instead to the condition of the regenerate heart that should be present in all believers. The Greek words *gennethe anomen* found in John 3:3 can be translated as either “born again” or “born from above.” Either interpretation captures a sense of regeneration and new birth. Jesus expounds in verse 5, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Water serves figuratively in the

⁶³ Being raised in the Roman Catholic tradition, I fell prey to these prejudices associating “those wacky born agains” with fundamentalists (another misused word) bent on a hellfire and brimstone biblical legalism.

⁶⁴ ACCW/ACCGB does not subscribe to infant baptism but understands baptism to be a decision made by the individual who acknowledges and accepts the salvific work of Jesus Christ.

Old Testament to refer to renewal or cleansing,⁶⁵ and the link between water and spirit is never more apparent than in Ezekiel 36:25-27 where the cleansing of God's people comes through water and transformation occurs through the Spirit.⁶⁶ The allusion to baptism—often described as new birth into the kingdom of God—is difficult to miss.

Being born again or from above also implies the death of an old life, which echoes back to Paul's theology of the old sin nature and the new Spirit nature. Embracing the new nature inaugurates an eschatological act pointing towards the new heavens and new earth to come. Similarly, worship points to a transcendent ideal hinted at in the Book of Revelation,⁶⁷ which serves as a reminder that worship by nature is an eschatological act.

Worship as an Eschatological Act

Christian eschatology points towards a time when Christ will be “all and in all” (Col. 3:11, NASB) and the salvation event of Calvary will be consummated. When a community of faith gathers to worship, they are declaring an “already, not yet” eschatological witness that affirms God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. Understood another way, Brunner surmises our earthly worship already points towards the eternal worship in the heavenly throne room of God.⁶⁸ Scenes from the Book of

⁶⁵ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 195.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ See Rev. 5:1-14; 19:1-8.

⁶⁸ Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, 32.

Revelation give a window into what worship looks like in the heavenly realm and points towards the eschatological goal of worship. Just as Christ's death on the cross tore the veil that separated humanity from the presence of God and forced an entrance into the holy of holies,⁶⁹ so when the new heavens and earth emerge (Rev. 21) will there no longer be a separation of heavenly and earthly worship.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews suggests that earthly worship is only a foreshadowing of heavenly worship (Heb. 9). Many Christian theologians and biblical scholars subscribe to this view as well. Allen P. Ross notes some points of divergence between worship as experienced presently on earth and its expression once Christ has consummated all creation. The "already, not yet" aspect of worship will no longer exist. While people often claim to experience the immanence of God when they worship, there is still a transcendent aspect of God's presence that is unknown and inaccessible to the worshipper. However, Ross declares that in heaven the worshipper will be in the actual presence of God, caught up in the fullness of God's glory and engaging in this worship with pure angelic hosts and the redeemed and glorified communion of saints.⁷⁰ A part of God's nature will always remain transcendent to humankind because of God's eternal and inexhaustible qualities, but now a tangible physical presence of the living God will be clear and discernable. Ross also suggests that certain aspects of earthly worship will become obsolete; "confession of sin, prayers of the people, and exhortations to combat

⁶⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁷⁰ Allen P. Ross. *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 474.

evil, avoid idolatry and hypocrisy, pursue righteous living, develop evangelistic endeavors and address pain and suffering on the world” will all be defunct as the main purpose of the worshipper becomes praise and adoration.⁷¹ Not only will worship, in a sense, be reduced to these two imperatives of worship (praise and adoration), but John’s apocalyptic vision also highlights the communal nature of worship. “In Revelation the work of the Spirit is related to the community as a whole; nowhere in the book is it connected to the experience of an individual apart from the community.”⁷²

The Christological Center of Worship

As the community worships, be it here on earth or in heaven, what is clear is that worship is to have a Christological epicenter.⁷³ Christian worship necessarily is Christocentric in nature. Ross observes that in chapters four and five of Revelation there are five hymns sung by the heavenly hosts. The hymns are evenly apportioned with two directed towards God, two towards the Lamb and the last to both Father and Son.⁷⁴ Ross uses Revelation 5:9-10 and 5:12 to illustrate the realized soteriology achieved through the Lamb and affirm his divinity.

Worthy are you to take the book and break its seals; for you were slain and purchased for God with your blood men from every tribe and tongue and

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 475.

⁷³ It must be noted that a biblical perspective on eschatological worship suggests that the division between earthly and heavenly worship will no longer exist. There will be a new heavens and a new earth where God makes his dwelling place and tabernacle among those on earth (Rev. 21).

⁷⁴ Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 481-482.

people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth (Rev. 5:9-10, NASB).

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing (Rev. 5:12, NASB).

The heavenly scene from verses 8-13 is structured in such a way that God and the Lamb are worshipped together. John does not portray Jesus as an alternative beneficiary of worship, but as a co-recipient of the praise and adoration due to God.⁷⁵ Ross brings these verses into focus by positing, “Here is the center of Christian worship explained—Christ is to be worshipped because he is the Creator, Redeemer and Sovereign Lord of all the world. In short, he is to be worshipped because, like the Father, he is divine.”⁷⁶

Robert E. Webber also affirms a Christocentric focus too. In his work, *Worship Old and New*,⁷⁷ Webber identifies Christian worship as being contingent on the cosmic work of Christ: the Christ event of the cross and resurrection that leads to a renewing and rebirth of creation formerly corrupted by the effects of the Fall.⁷⁸ Jesus’ death on the cross becomes the “death of death”⁷⁹ and releases creation from the bondage of decay (Rom. 8:21). The resultant effects for the church is that the Father is worshipped in and through the work of the Son, and that worship is seen through the theological loci of

⁷⁵ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 58-65.

⁷⁶ Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 484.

⁷⁷ Robert Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 87.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 89.

creation, fall, incarnation, death, resurrection and consummation.⁸⁰ Within this framework, Webber sees the church's role in worship as one of reliving and celebrating the cosmic work of Christ. Three ramifications emerge from this understanding: "(1) worship recapitulates the Christ-event, (2) worship actualizes the church, and (3) worship anticipates the kingdom."⁸¹

The tri-part theological construct that Webber presents provides a concise framework for worship. By recapitulating the Christ event, the church reenacts and celebrates what Jesus has done to redeem creation. The scenes depicted in Revelation as discussed above eulogize this very thing. The worthiness of the Lamb is declared due to the blood that was shed for the redemption of creation. So, the church rehearses and relives the "one unrepeatable event in history" every time it gathers to worship.⁸²

In reference to the actualization of the church, Webber suggests that the gathering of the people to declare the Christ-event defines what the church is.⁸³ The physical reality of the church is made up of its constituent gifts. According to 1 Cor. 12 and other New Testament epistles,⁸⁴ all within the body of Christ have been gifted in some capacity as a means to serve the church. For example, some have gifts to be teachers, prophets,

⁸⁰ Ibid., 87.

⁸¹ Ibid., 91.

⁸² Ibid., 92.

⁸³ Ibid., 93.

⁸⁴ See Rom.12:6-8; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-13.

and administrators. Through these gifts, the sacraments⁸⁵ and the word, “the church is made visible, concrete, tangible, and present.”⁸⁶ Through these physical acts, the church realizes and celebrates the spiritual reality of Christ’s salvific supervention.

Finally, yet again, the “already, not yet” aspect of the church is always in play when the community of faith gathers. Whenever the church gathers to worship, “the tension between the resurrection and the consummation is expressed.”⁸⁷ Once again, referring back to Revelation, the church receives a vision of the new creation to come and of the renewed worship to emerge (Rev. 21 and 22). In a sense, the church remains in the trenches fighting the remnants of a battle already won, awaiting the effectuation of the victory through Christ’s return. Thus, one of the greatest characteristics of worship is hope. While love is the greatest of all, Paul’s supreme triadic virtues⁸⁸ can be said to lie at the heart of the church’s worship. These are (1), faith in the atoning work of Christ’s death and resurrection, (2), hope in the return of Christ and the consummation of all things, and (3) love orientated towards the triune God and towards each other.

Contemporary Praise and Worship Music

A highly significant component of the culture of worship at ACCW/ACCGB centers around music and in particular Contemporary Christian Music (CCM). Other

⁸⁵ ACCW/ACCGB does not have a strict policy on using the term “sacrament” or “ordinance.” Both are used interchangeably.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 94.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Faith, hope and love (1 Cor. 13:13).

terms for this musical style/form include Praise and Worship Music (PWM), Contemporary Congregational Songs (CCS) and Contemporary Praise and Worship Music (CPWM).⁸⁹ For uniformity, the generic term Contemporary Praise and Worship Music (CPWM) here denotes a category of Christian praise and worship music that incorporates popular music genres such as rock and pop to appeal to a broad Christian demographic.

The origins of CPWM rests in the Jesus People Movement of the 1960s and 1970s which then led to the establishment of movements such as Maranatha! and Vineyard.⁹⁰ These Christian musical entities, among others, would become the progenitors of the larger contemporary praise and worship movements that have emerged over the last forty to fifty years. Contemporary Praise and Worship Music has coincided with the precipitate growth of Pentecostalism over the latter half of the twentieth century. Pentecostalism is still the fastest growing population of the Christian church with over 500 million adherents worldwide.⁹¹ A dominant feature of Pentecostal worship services is the assignment of a significant portion of the gathering to praise and worship through the singing of contemporary songs by the congregation. Many churches including

⁸⁹ There appears to be no apparent differences in these terms other than personal preference although interestingly within ACCW/ACCGB some shun the term CCM as they associate it with “cheesy” Christian music from the 1980s and 1990s.

⁹⁰ Gesa Hartje-Döll, “(Hillsong) United Through Music: Praise and Worship Music and the Evangelical “Imagined Community,” in *Christian Congregational Music: Performance, Identity and Experience*, ed. Monique Ingalls, Carolyn Landau and Tom Wagner (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge), 137.

⁹¹ Monique M. Ingalls, “Interconnection, Interface, and Identification in Pentecostal-Charismatic Music and Worship,” in *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, ed. Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 1.

ACCW/ACCGB have adopted this mode of worship and in a sense made it their own liturgical format.

In less than half a century, CPWM has become a global phenomenon among churches labeled “postdenominational” or “new-paradigm” churches.”⁹² These churches “adhere to teaching ‘rooted in first-century biblical narratives about Jesus and the early Christian church’ while using ‘the technology and cultural idiom of postmodern culture.’”⁹³ An interesting juxtaposition emerges for the twenty-first century church between the desire for a certain rootedness in its history and origins and a need to address technological advances and a changing cultural landscape. While these postdenominational or new-paradigm churches are diverse and diffused around the world, a common thread that appears to unite many of them is the use of a musical network of praise and worship that seems to transcend geographical and theological barriers.⁹⁴

The Imagined Community

Gesa Hartje-Doll suggests that present-day media formats and technology allow for the emergence of an “imagined community.”⁹⁵ Within this imagined community are people and churches across the globe united by a common core of charismatic

⁹² Gesa Hartje-Döll, “(Hillsong) United Through Music, 140-141. Harte-Döll attributes the terms “post denominational” and “New Paradigm churches” to Donald E. Miller. Donald E. Miller. *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Ltd., 1997).

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Gesa Hartje-Doll, *Christian Congregational Music*, 139.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

objectives.⁹⁶ These objectives and the establishment of a core identity are accomplished through creating databases/hubs of sermons, testimonies, and prayer networks⁹⁷ and are correspondingly solidified through a common musical language. Thus, an imagined community becomes an embodied community through a common set of beliefs that transcend location and church. Music as a modality of worship becomes the cementing factor in the community or “fraternity.”⁹⁸ “When two individuals not only share the same core values but also know and like the same music, their connection finds a concrete form of expression...shared musical repertoire is a means of amplifying the ‘fraternity.’”⁹⁹

The easy accessibility to the constantly revolving world of CPWM via the internet and other media formats means that churches are constantly abounding in new worship music that leads to a rapid turnaround of songs sung by the congregation.¹⁰⁰ This raises the question of how a church can develop a worshipful identity if the songs sung are so ephemeral. Might this mercurial, musical output produce a shallow and fickle stream of worship? Hartje-Doll makes two points to address this concern. First, despite the vast output, there is a canon of music, a “contemporary Christian songbook,” emerging within CPWM that transcends the time barrier of what is described as “contemporary.” As an

⁹⁶ Simon Coleman, *The Globalization of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 67. Via Gesa Hartje-Doll, *Christian Congregational Music*, 142.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Hartje-Doll borrows this term from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London: Verso, 1983/2006).

⁹⁹ Gesa Hartje-Doll, *Christian Congregational Music*, 143.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 147.

example, the song “10,000 Reasons (Bless The Lord)” co-written by Matt Redman and Jonas Myrin, is considered dated (2012!), but has consistently remained in the CCLI (Christian Copyright Licensing, Inc.)¹⁰¹ top ten since its release and is now considered a “classic” of CPWM.¹⁰² Another example is Darlene Zschech’s “Shout to The Lord” (1993), which is still listed in the top fifteen CCLI worship songs sung around the world.¹⁰³ Second, just as a “timeless” canon of contemporary congregational songs is being formed in an active repertoire, a passive repertoire is continuously growing and creating within worshippers a residual memory linked to certain events and emotions.¹⁰⁴ Thus the imagined and now embodied community is united through this active and passive repertoire that defines their corporate worship.¹⁰⁵

The musical repertoire and style of CPWM not only helps create a global village that begets its own culture of worship, but certain shared experiences and encounters through the power of music also help in molding the shape of the worshipping community. A global village has positive and negative implications. Positively, it helps to transcend cultural and geographical barriers and thus, in a way, foreshadow the image

¹⁰¹ CCLI is an organization that among other services provides churches with copyright licenses that allows for the use, copying and displaying (for example projector screens) of CPWM songs in corporate worship settings.

¹⁰² “CCLI Top 100,” SongSelect, accessed December 21, 2016, <https://songselect.ccli.com/search/results?List=top100>.

¹⁰³ Gesa Hartje-Doll, *Christian Congregational Music*, 147.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 148.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

of worship depicted in Revelation.¹⁰⁶ Negatively, a global village runs the risk of creating a homogenous style of worship that neither honors the diversity or unique contributions to worship of other cultures.

Emotive Worship

Charismatic and Pentecostal worship are often characterized by demonstrative displays of emotion manifested in numerous physical ways. For ACCW/ACCGb and others with a similar approach to worship, these can include the raising of hands, jumping up and down, shouting with joy and excitement, weeping, lying prostrate on the ground, running around the room, rocking and swaying, kneeling, clapping, glossolalia and many other forms of vocal and non-vocal responses. There is no doubt that music contains a unique and powerful ability to stir emotions and responses in the participant that few other mediums can.

Peter Althouse and Michael Wilkinson explore how music and bodily experiences relate to one another through the social sciences.¹⁰⁷ Citing Randall Collins' work, the authors expound on the theory that social interactions define human life. These interaction rituals (IR) in turn lead to emotional energy (EE).¹⁰⁸ Hence, "IR is a social mechanism in which mutually focused emotion produces a shared reality."¹⁰⁹ It does not

¹⁰⁶ See Rev. 7:9-17 and chapters 21 and 22.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Althouse and Michael Wilkinson, "Musical Bodies in the Charismatic Renewal: The Case of Catch the Fire and Soaking Prayer," in *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, ed. Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong, 31.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

take much imagination to see how easily translatable this concept is to the setting of corporate worship in a Charismatic/Pentecostal setting. During worship, the participant often experiences emotional and spiritual feelings that are stimulated through the IR and EE released in the room. According to Althouse and Wilkinson, what is significant about the EE produced through corporate worship is that they are not just evanescent experiences that fade as the participant leaves the church. Instead, EE has long-term effects on the individual “so that it continues to motivate them to act accordingly in relation to the group and its objectives.”¹¹⁰ What this suggests is that worship music can arouse strong religious and spiritual experiences. It also plays a fundamental role in shaping the culture of the community of faith. Further, the long-term effects of the EE emergent from the church service create “the capacity to initiate and act with resolve, in order to direct social situations. EE is therefore associated with a high level of attunement and long-term consequence.”¹¹¹ One conclusion, then, of Althouse’s and Wilkinson’s findings is that, when correctly utilized, worship enabled by music can help facilitate and direct the praxis of the Christian life and the community of faith.

Many churches, as they expand and grow, develop music movements that soon identify with the church itself. These include Elevation Worship,¹¹² Planetshakers,¹¹³ and

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 32.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Elevation Church, Charlotte, NC.

¹¹³ Planetshakers church based out of Melbourne, Australia.

Passion Conferences.¹¹⁴ Mark Evans notes that these churches and many others like them highlight the “intrinsic relationship between notions of identity, church growth and influence on congregational singing.”¹¹⁵ Two of the most prominent and influential worship movements as pertains to the culture of worship at ACCW/ACCGB are Hillsong United and Bethel Music. Because of their impact upon and prevalence in the Antioch Community Church movement and more specifically ACCW/ACCGB, both are deserving of closer examination.

Hillsong United

Perhaps the flagship movement among CPWM is the Australian church movement, and music and marketing powerhouse, Hillsong United. Hillsong United emerged from Hillsong Church, founded by Brian Houston, as an international worship band.¹¹⁶ Hillsong Church began in 1983 as a congregation of seventy in Sydney, Australia, under the umbrella of the Pentecostal church movement the Assemblies of God (now Australian Christian Churches).¹¹⁷ According to Mark Evans, “Pentecostalism is not in itself a denomination but a brand of Christianity.”¹¹⁸ Contemporary praise and worship music is largely a product of Pentecostalism with a proclivity for more demonstrative

¹¹⁴ Founded by Louie Giglio and featuring worship leaders such as Chris Tomlin and Matt Redman.

¹¹⁵ Mark Evans, *Open Up the Doors: Music in the Modern Church* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2006), 97.

¹¹⁶ Brian Houston, *Live Love Lead: Your Best is yet to Come* (New York: FaithWords, Hachette Book Group, 2015), 9.

¹¹⁷ Evans, *Open Up the Doors*, 94.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

displays of worship. From its small beginnings, the Hillsong movement has become a giant musical institution allegedly reaching an international audience of over 25,000,000 people every year¹¹⁹ with distribution in over eighty-seven countries and in numerous languages.¹²⁰

Senior Pastor Brian Houston lays out his vision and purpose for the church:

The Church that I see is a Church of influence.
A Church so large in size that the city and nation cannot ignore it.

A Church growing so quickly that buildings struggle to contain the increase.

I see a Church whose heartfelt praise and worship touches Heaven and changes earth; worship which influences the praises of people throughout the earth, exalting Christ with powerful songs of faith and hope.

I see a Church whose altars are constantly filled with repentant sinners responding to Christ's call to salvation.

Yes, the Church that I see is so dependent on the Holy Spirit that nothing will stop it nor stand against it; a Church whose people are unified, praying and full of God's Spirit.

The Church that I see has a message so clear that lives are changed forever and potential is fulfilled through the power of His Word; a message beamed to the peoples of the earth through their television screens.

I see a Church so compassionate that people are drawn from impossible situations into a loving and friendly circle of hope, where answers are found and acceptance is given.

I see a people so Kingdom-minded that they will count whatever the cost and pay whatever the price to see revival sweep this land.

¹¹⁹ "Annual Report," Hillsong United, accessed November 18, 2016, <http://etro.hillsong.com/assets/Annual-Report.pdf>.

¹²⁰ Evans, *Open up the Doors*, 99.

The Church that I see is a Church so committed to raising, training and empowering a leadership generation to reap the end-time harvest that all its ministries are consumed with this goal.

I see a Church whose head is Jesus, whose help is the Holy Spirit and whose focus is the Great Commission. YES, THE CHURCH THAT I SEE COULD WELL BE OUR CHURCH - HILLSONG CHURCH.¹²¹

Houston's goal for the church is an eschatological one whose focus is the Great Commission and reaping "the end-time harvest." A significant part of that goal, according to Evans, is congregational song.¹²² Hillsong envisions its own self-declared identity and missions as pioneering new forms of congregational song and views this as the anointing of the church.¹²³

Whether the songs and their form are new is a matter of debate. Musically the genre imitates soft rock and pop in an attempt to be culturally appealing and contemporary. There are inherent dangers, though, in trying to globalize a church sound and genre, a danger that "is creating a sameness within congregational song that is fast becoming malignant."¹²⁴ Does the body of Christ around the world want to worship to one stylized sound? The answer should hopefully be "no" as such an approach would alienate and dismiss other cultures and eventually become "stale and irrelevant."¹²⁵

¹²¹ Ibid. Also see, Evans, *Open up the Doors*, 96.

¹²² Evans, *Open up the Doors*, 98.

¹²³ Ibid., 100.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 98.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Musical style and genre do have an effect on the congregation and the culture of the church. “An identification or dis-identification with the musical style of a church can change a worshipper’s relationship to the church community in a theologically significant manner.”¹²⁶ Furthermore, not only in a theological way but also in a communal and ethical way. How does church happen as a community? Do the music and words sung reflect the identity of the church? According to Monique Ingalls, “Whether on the level of the individual, the congregation, or the large-scale movement, music making is a key activity for identity creation. Identity is not a given but rather is produced out of constant negotiation among competing options and embedded in bodily practices.”¹²⁷ What Ingalls acknowledges is that music through the act of worship is a bodily practice of the faith community that plays a significant role in forming its identity and mission.¹²⁸

The “manifest” presence of God during worship receives significant attention, and particularly in the Hillsong movement with its claim to anointing regarding congregational song.¹²⁹ Stephen R. Phifer suggests there are three facets of God’s presence, the omnipresence of God, the inner presence of God and the manifest presence

¹²⁶ Mark Porter, *Christian Congregational Music*, 205, reflecting on Timothy Rommen’s observations. Timothy Rommen, *‘Mek Some Noise’: Gospel Music and the Ethics of Style in Trinidad* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press Ltd. 2007).

¹²⁷ Monique M. Ingalls, “Interconnection, Interface, and Identification in Pentecostal-Charismatic Music and Worship, *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, ed. Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong, 13.

¹²⁸ It is worth noting that just as music can play a positive role in molding the culture of a faith community, the inverse is also possible; music has the capacity to malform as well.

¹²⁹ See more in Chapter Three for more on ACCW/ACCGB’s theological perspective towards the “presence of God.”

of God.¹³⁰ In Evans' words, "this manifest presence lies at the heart of much contemporary thinking about God's presence within the gathering of believers."¹³¹ The "manifest" presence of God is a specially anointed manifestation of God's presence during worship (facilitated through worship music) as opposed to the "abiding" presence of God in everyday life.¹³² The pitfalls to this approach to worship must be noted, not least, the "focus on subjective models of experience."¹³³ Worship that is purely based on experiential encounter alone should never be used as a gauge for the presence of God. Nonetheless, many churches, including ACCW/ACCGB, place a high emphasis on "experiencing" the presence of God during worship.¹³⁴

Bethel Music

Another church that places a high value on experiential encounters during worship is Bethel Church, located in Redding, California. Not unlike Hillsong, Bethel Church emerged from another Pentecostal Assemblies of God denomination before becoming an independent entity in 2006. Senior pastor Bill Johnson's overriding theology is one of revival. Upon taking the role as senior pastor, Johnson wrote, "We moved back to Bethel in Redding in 1996 after the leadership there unanimously

¹³⁰ Stephen R. Phifer, *Worship that Pleases God: The Passion and Reason of True Worship* (Bloomington, IN: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 34-37. Phifer defines *omnipresence* as God being everywhere, *inner presence* as God being in his people and *manifest presence* as God being in the praise of his people, 36.

¹³¹ Evans, *Open up the Doors*, 102.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 104.

¹³⁴ For further insights into ACCW/ACCGB's theology of the presence of God, see Chapter Three.

supported my one condition: I was born for revival and would pursue revival—this was not negotiable.”¹³⁵ What revival looks like to Johnson is the kingdom of God realized on earth. Subsequently, according to Johnson, a life of supernatural ministry through healings and encounters with the Holy Spirit should be the norm for the Christian existence.¹³⁶ While there are abundant stories of supernatural phenomena claiming to occur at Bethel Church, others are more hesitant to embrace what has been termed an “over-realized eschatology.”¹³⁷

Mark Galli, editor for *Christianity Today*, opines that the “not yet” component of the eschatological axiom “already, not yet” has been seemingly abrogated to inform the theology that drives Bethel Church.¹³⁸ On the one hand, proponents of this theology would argue that this approach leads to deeper walks of faith and to witnessing God’s supernatural power at work. Johnson writes, “Faith is the mirror of the heart that reflects the realities of an unseen world—the actual substance of His kingdom. Through the prayer of faith, we are able to pull the reality of His world into this one. That is the function of faith.”¹³⁹ On the other hand, a counterargument would be that such a definitive expectation of God always to act, always to heal, and always to answer prayer is creating false conjecture and is not supported biblically.

¹³⁵ “Redding 1996,” Bill Johnson Ministries, accessed November 21, 2016, <http://bjm.org/bill/>.

¹³⁶ Bill Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth: A Practical Guide to a Life of Miracles* (Shippensburg, PA: Treasure House, 2003), 157.

¹³⁷ Mark Galli, “The Theology that Drives Bethel,” *Christianity Today* 60, no.4 (May 2016), 35. Also, see more in Chapter Three as to how ACCW/ACCGB views this realized eschatology.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 43.

Regardless of the theological implications for a realized or over-realized eschatology, one of the predominant ministries Bethel Church exports is Bethel Music. Husband and wife team Brian (Bill Johnson's son) and Jenn Johnson head up a collective of worship leaders/musicians that include many "stars" of the CPWM world including Jerry Riddle, Amanda Cook, Cory Asbury and Leeland. Stylistically, the music of Bethel Music is not unlike Hillsong United or numerous other CPWM collectives. The underlying theology of supernatural works, revival and God's kingdom at work as a daily reality is what gives Bethel Music its unique voice and breathes life into its culture. These values underpin some of ACCW/ACCGB missional and theological convictions.¹⁴⁰ As a result, much of the music produced by Bethel Music resonates with the collective identity of ACCW/ACCGB and the Antioch Community Church movement as a whole. This resonance finds a place in the musical repertoire sung at ACCW/ACCGB, which to a degree leans on Bethel Music's output.

A brief examination of one of Bethel Music's recent songs, "Spirit Move," demonstrates how their theology of revival, realized-eschatology and experiential worship are manifest and embodied in their song writing.

Verse 1:

I feel it in my bones, You're about to move
I feel it in the wind, You're about to ride in
You said that You would pour Your spirit out
You said that You would fall on sons and daughters.

¹⁴⁰ ACCW/ACCGB by no means prescribes to all of Bethel Church's theological assumptions but there is considerable overlap.

Already themes of revival are present (pour out your Spirit, echoing Joel 2:28-29 and Acts 2:17-18) and of sensory emotions (I feel). Verse two, affirms the realized kingdom of God on earth, revival, and sensory emotions (I can see/ hear):

Verse 2:
I can see it now, Your kingdom come
I can hear it now, the sounds of heaven
You said that if we ask, we'll receive
We are asking for the greater measure.

Finally, the chorus:

We are fixed on this one thing
To know Your goodness and see Your glory
We're transformed by this one thing
To know Your presence and see Your beauty.¹⁴¹

The chorus like the verses again appeals to the senses and emotions to experience the presence of God.

Both Hillsong United and Bethel Music represent powerful voices in the CPWM world. They both also typify the commercial industry that has been built around contemporary Christian music. Dave Perkins warns of the “commoditization of worship music”¹⁴² and the “culture shaping forces that run though all culture industries and media.”¹⁴³ Perkins sees the Christian music industry as shaping a culture of worship that,

¹⁴¹ Kalley Heiligenthal, “Spirit Move,” by Kalley Heiligenthal, Amanda Cook, and Brian Johnson, recorded 2015, Bethel Music Publishing CCLI# 7054191, streaming audio, accessed April 27th, 2017, <https://bethelmusic.com/chords-and-lyrics/have-it-all-spirit-move/>.

¹⁴² Dave Perkins, “Music, Culture Industry, and the Shaping of Charismatic Worship: An Autobiographical/Conversational Engagement,” in *The Spirit of Praise*, ed. Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong, 230.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 232.

through its propensity to standardize its products runs the risk of creating a homogenous sound and style. What this homogenization produces, is, in Perkins words, an “expanding sameness and loss of expressive diversity” that curtails the original intent of praise and worship music.¹⁴⁴

Lynn Nichols, a longtime executive at EMI Christian Records, laments the loss of spontaneity and Spirit-led worship that first attracted him to the charismatic worship of the Jesus Movement of the 60s and 70s.¹⁴⁵ Instead, many worship songs have been reduced to radio edits for mass consumption by an industry that thrives on convincing people of what is good and worthwhile for them. Nichols bemoans the spell of cultural indoctrination the CPWM industry has cast: “After a while [people say], ‘Yeah this is good.’ Repetition—which is going to motivate the purchase—has an effect. Those people begin to think, ‘This is what worship music is. This is what it sounds like.’...so they [the industry], are creating their own Christian pop culture.”¹⁴⁶

In conclusion, there is a Christian pop culture that has emerged through an amalgamation of stylized worship music, industry commercialization strategy and marketing that has created a global phenomenon. There are many benefits to the formation of a global worship community united by a common musical language but there are also downfalls that need attention. The contemporary Christian music industry that promotes CPWM is largely a product of white, Western culture exported around the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 243.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 234.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 235-36.

globe thanks to the promulgation of technology.¹⁴⁷ There is a risk that such a musical hegemony as it pertains to worship music will stifle and choke the creativity of individual churches and their respective cultures and ethnicities. A healthy balance and perspective must be maintained when assessing the spiritual and worship needs of respective communities of faith.

This chapter has examined three core areas of ACCW/ACCGB's theological schema in relation to worship: the role of biblical inspiration, authority and inspiration; an examination of the role and purpose of worship; an evaluation of Contemporary Praise and Worship Music (CPWM) and its role in the worship of the church.

ACCW/ACCGB understands the Bible to be a living and breathing book that speaks into the lives of the readers inspired by the triune God. Scriptural authority is apparent by its divine inspiration. This source of authority rests in the divine author who uses the scriptures as a means to communicate to the church the purposes of the kingdom of God. Rationalism and Postmodernism have been examined as contemporary philosophies that pose a challenge to the biblical narrative. Worship has been explored through the context of being understood as a God-ordained, natural attribute of being image bearers of the living God. Human worship is seen as having been distorted through the effects of the Fall and the sin nature. Genuine, redemptive worship is characterized as Christocentric and as being an eschatological act pointing towards a redeemed and renewed worship that is to come through the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21).

¹⁴⁷ I refer here primarily to the CPWM industry that promotes Christian pop and rock. Black, contemporary praise and worship music are whole other genres.

Finally, the merits and drawbacks of CPWM within the context of both ACCW/ACCGB and the broader world of contemporary worship have been evaluated. The music of Hillsong United and Bethel Music have been highlighted as movements of particular relevance and influence upon ACCW/ACCGB. A juxtaposition of a desire to be rooted in the first century worship practices of the early church and a need to remain technologically savvy have been noted, leading to the observation that “imagined communities” have emerged through technology such as the internet. Within the culture of CPWM it has been identified that much of the music and songwriting emerging has a significant role and influence on the theology of the ACCW/ACCGB. This will be explored more in Chapters Three and Four. Now attention is turned to the origins of the Antioch Community Church movement and its emerging theology of worship.

Chapter 2

Contextual Analysis

This chapter lays out a brief history of the Antioch Community Church movement and its missions branch, Antioch Ministries International (AMI).¹⁴⁸ This in turn will help to establish the historical roots of Antioch Community Church of Waltham (formerly The River church). The historical survey will also shed light on the theological heritage of the church by highlighting key scriptural texts that have been foundational to the church's missional values.

A Brief History of Antioch Community Church

Antioch Community Church (ACC) and Antioch Ministries International (AMI) began as the dreams and visions of a group of young college graduates whose goal was to train and equip local churches to send forth people to the nations to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Spearheading this young and enthusiastic group was Jimmy Seibert. A Texas native, Seibert, after graduating from Baylor University, found himself as a member of Highland Baptist Church in Waco, Texas. It was at this church that Seibert along with the college pastor Mark Buchner sowed the first seeds to begin a training and discipleship program to equip and send missionaries out across the world.

¹⁴⁸ For the sake of clarity, the Antioch Community Church movement refers to the church organization as a whole including all church plants and mission teams both within the United States and internationally. Antioch Ministries International (AMI) refers specifically to the church-planting branch/organization within ACC that launches and supports church plants domestically and internationally.

Inspired and influenced by Phoenix First Assembly of God's discipleship training school entitled "Master's Commission and elements of Youth with A Mission (YWAM), Highland Baptist launched in the Fall of 1987.¹⁴⁹ The program required a year-long commitment and culminated with serving for three months overseas. The school's curriculum centered upon the practices of prayer, fasting, Bible study, discipleship, evangelism and serving the community.¹⁵⁰ Even at this inchoate stage, the foundations for ACC's theological framework were beginning to take form. Already a convergence of Baptist (Highland Baptist Church), Pentecostal (Phoenix First Assembly of God) and Charismatic (YWAM) theologies were beginning to emerge as the predominant modes of religious expression within the future church movement.

Key to Seibert's theology and philosophy of ministry were, and still are, a faithful response and obedience to God's direction, which Seibert acknowledges often only comes one step at a time. "Over the years, that has become our mode of leadership: we ask the Lord for the next step, and even if we can't see the big picture, we can choose to say yes today."¹⁵¹ During this period, Seibert cites two scriptural passages as being key to his ministerial vision. The first was Isaiah 58:11-12:

And the Lord will continually guide you,
And satisfy your desire in scorched places,
And give strength to your bones;
And you will be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.
Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins;

¹⁴⁹ Jimmy Seibert, *Passion and Purpose: Believing the Church Can Still Change the World* (Brentwood, TN: Clear Day Publishing), 49.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 51.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 49.

You will raise up the age-old foundations;
And you will be called the repairer of the breach,
The restorer of the streets in which to dwell (Isaiah 58:11-12, NASB).

The second was Isaiah 43:18-19:

Do not call to mind the former things,
Or ponder things of the past.
Behold, I will do something new,
Now it will spring forth;
Will you not be aware of it?
I will even make a road in the wilderness,
Rivers in the desert (Isaiah 43:18-19, NASB).

Both of these biblical texts voice a prophetic mission to bring restoration and new life to places of spiritual decay and dryness. Water restoring, refreshing and replenishing arid lands is a prevalent theme in both these texts and underpin the early missional purpose of what would become the Antioch Community Church movement. The training and discipleship schools/programs are still a vital and integral part of all Antioch Community Churches and serve to help instill and teach the church's visions, values and theology.

In 1990, Seibert, as well as still leading the discipleship training program, also transitioned to the role of college pastor at Highland Baptist Church. In this role, Seibert laid the foundations for what would become a typical trait of Antioch Community Churches: a focus on college students and the 20-30s age demographic. As the college ministry blossomed for Seibert, new vision was emerging.

Just as the two scriptures Isaiah 58:11-12 and 43:18-19 had been pivotal passages for the establishment of the training and discipleship programs, new vision and purpose

for ministry now would be inspired by yet another text from Isaiah. Seibert relates¹⁵² that within the period of less than a week, three unrelated and unconnected people gave him the same Scripture to meditate on:

Enlarge the place of your tent;
Stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not;
Lengthen your cords and strengthen your pegs.
For you will spread abroad to the right and the left.
And your descendants will possess nations
And will resettle the desolate cities (Isa. 54: 2-3, NASB).

Again, inspired by what Seibert saw as a prophetic mission, small teams of volunteers were trained, equipped and sent out to areas of the world considered gospel deprived. Within several years, there were church planting teams established in Russia, Mongolia, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, to name a few.¹⁵³

The formation of Antioch Community Church and Antioch Ministries International have always shared a synergetic relationship. Technically, AMI emerged first due to Seibert's vision for church planting in gospel deprived areas of the world. The emergence of Antioch Community Church, Waco, Texas happened organically as a need for AMI to have a home base of operations. In 1999, with the blessing of Highland Baptist Church, Seibert planted Antioch Community Church in Waco. Initially, the church plant met at various locations including the movie theater and convention centers. The church eventually raised enough funds to purchase a 36,000-square foot, run down, dilapidated old grocery store in the inner-city area of Waco

¹⁵² Ibid., 89.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 108.

Feeling called to plant a church domestically in the United States, Sean Richmond and his wife Laura, in association with ACC/AMI, moved to Boston in January, 1998, to scout out a suitable location for a church. The following year in January, 1999, Community of Faith Christian Fellowship (CFCF) was established in Brighton, Massachusetts. Much like all the previous and subsequent church plants of the ACC movement, the church began as a small group meeting in people's homes. This strategy is not accidental but an intentional adoption of the early church practices gleaned from the Acts of the Apostles. In many ways, Acts 2:42-47 forms the foundational text for the communal values of the ACC movement as a whole:¹⁵⁴

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved (Acts. 2:42-47, NASB).

Within this passage is a blueprint for what the ACC movement believes the church should look like today. A church that is devoted to the apostles' teaching will focus on the teachings of Jesus as they were taught to the disciples and will seek faithfully to follow Christ's call to holiness and the spread of the Gospel. A church that is devoted to fellowship is a church that places high importance on relationship and care for each other. New Testament scholar Darrell L. Boch observes, "Luke points to

¹⁵⁴ The "Antioch movement as a whole" refers to and includes all of ACC and AMI.

fellowship to underscore the personal interactive character of relationships in the early church at all levels. There is a real sense of connection to, between and for each other.”¹⁵⁵

A church that breaks bread together is one that enjoys the pleasure and bond of eating and sharing a meal together.¹⁵⁶ Few human interactions are more integral to building friendship, trust and community than is eating together. Finally, a church that is devoted to prayer is a church that is devoted to hearing the voice and will of God in all that they do. A praying church is a church that desires to live and move in the current of the Holy Spirit.

Also, worthy of note in Acts 2:42-47 is the counter-cultural tone of the passage. Not only was this way of community counter to the first century times the apostles lived in, it is also antithetical to the individualist nature of modern day Western culture. Much of today’s society is self-absorbed, individualistic and anthropocentric. Unfortunately, the church is often caught up in the *zeitgeist* and tries to cater to this individualism in the hopes of remaining “relevant” and of attracting new members. Ironically, this focus on the needs of the individual is antithetical to the communal nature of the church especially as detailed in the book of Acts. Instead of the church being the light and salt of the world, it becomes merely another institution feeding an already edacious society. By contrast, if the church is theocentric, outward and community focused, the needs of the

¹⁵⁵ Darrell L. Boch, *Acts: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 150.

¹⁵⁶ ACCW celebrates Holy Communion on the first Sunday of the month and strongly encourages its faith community to share meals and fellowship together on a regular basis.

individual are met inadvertently through the joy that comes from serving and loving others.

By the conceptual DNA of the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer being present at the birth of their new church plants, The ACC movement hopes to create a culture of holy, relational and sacrificial living that seeks to emulate what it understands to be the life and practices of the first century church. This brief exposition of Acts 2:42-47 in relation to Antioch Community Church of Waltham (ACCW) and other Antioch Community Churches leads us next to an examination of the core values and mission of the church.

Missional Considerations

Three pithy statements known as the “three Rs” sum up ACCW’s overarching vision and mission: Revived in God. Refreshed in community. Released in purpose. With similarities to the three Rs, Antioch Community Church of Waco’s mission summary reads: “Loving God. Loving each other. Loving the Lost.”¹⁵⁷ The statements are designed to be easily memorable so that the church as a whole understands the basic mission of the church. At the heart of the three Rs are:

1. A commitment to an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ and his word through prayer, worship and Bible study;
2. A commitment to friendship and relationship through a sacrificial lifestyle and small group interaction;
3. A commitment to sharing the Gospel with the lost.

¹⁵⁷ Antioch Community Church of Waco is considered the parent church and headquarters of the Antioch Community Church movement as a whole.

In order to expose further ACCW's sense of mission, it is necessary to examine the meaning of mission itself.

A common mistake is to assume that the church is the impetus and catalyst for its own sense of mission. On the contrary, mission begins with God. According to David Bosch, "mission is not primarily an activity of the church but an attribute of God."¹⁵⁸ Through this statement we can understand that just as God is constantly at work throughout the world to achieve his purposes, mission becomes the animus of the church.¹⁵⁹ Mission is an attribute of God and connects the church with the triune God who is a community of Father, Son and Spirit. In Genesis 1:26, God says, "Let us make mankind in our image." In the creation narrative of Genesis 1, of all the "Let there be" statements connected with creation, the plural pronoun "us" is only used regarding the creation of humankind. In a Christian reading of the text the use of "us" brings into synergy the implicit interrelational aspect of the Trinity and the ontological roots of the *imago Dei*.

The *imago Dei* and *missio Dei* are intimately connected. As God is about mission, so human beings too as God's creation and image reflectors are to be about the work of God. It is through such missional work that humanity finds its greatest purpose, calling and satisfaction. An essential part of creation in the image of God is to reflect and

¹⁵⁸ David J. Bosch, "Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-Currents Today," in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*, ed. Paul W. Chilcote and Lacey C. Warner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 390.

¹⁵⁹ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 10.

emulate that image. The act of worship is a key component in the mission of the church and in a corporate and personal identity as image bearers of the living God.

To be involved in the mission of God, one has to have an understanding of God and his purposes, knowledge attainable through prayer, worship and the hearing, reading and reflection upon scripture. Through these spiritual disciplines, Christians can gain greater discernment about what roles both individually and corporately look like in being part of God's mission. Church, heralding God's kingdom and evangelism to a large degree cannot be done alone. Community and relationship are essential to an identity as image bearers of the triune God. When life about others rather than self becomes the focus, the faithful are transformed from instruments of self to instruments of God. Through this transformation comes refreshment in community.

The church is the people of God intent on God's purposes. Proclaiming God's kingdom through worship, evangelism and church planting is the primary focus of this church. All these activities, though, begin with motives of the heart and this can only come from seeking God and community. Worship is the earnest seeking of and acknowledgment of praise and thanksgiving to the living God; it is the assignment of "worth-ship" to the Lamb.¹⁶⁰ Evangelism involves sharing the gospel through relationship and discipleship. Church planting happens by inspiring others to promulgate the

¹⁶⁰ George Hedley, *Christian Worship: Some Meanings and Means* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), 1. Hedley reminds us that the English word, "worship" derives from a Middle English, Anglo Saxon meaning of "worth-ship."

kingdom of God by modelling and sharing a lifestyle and way of community representative of God's kingdom to those untouched by the gospel.¹⁶¹

So, how does mission relate to worship? A common mistake can be to assume that worship and mission are unrelated.¹⁶² In fact, mission and worship intimately connect in the forming of a horizontal and vertical intersection. Worship reminds us of the divine source of mission and it is true worship that “combines both the vertical and the horizontal, i.e. both communion with the transcendent God and mission in the world.”¹⁶³ An important aspect of worship is developing a relationship and intimacy with God—getting to know his character. Through worship we are able to learn more about who God is and his desires and wishes. Indeed, when a community realizes that *God* is the source of mission and not humankind, mission can transform and be transformative.

According to missiologist Dana Robert, “Worship publicly reveals the hidden foundations of cultures and subcultures. It expresses something vital about a group's understanding of reality.”¹⁶⁴ Thus, worship is a key mode to the formation of a church's identity and its sense of mission. What form the liturgy of the church takes will speak to its cultural, communal and missional goals. The Greek word *leitourgia* from which is

¹⁶¹ Defining the kingdom of God is notoriously difficult but in terms of ACC's understanding of the term, the Kingdom of God can be seen as being related to the Lord's prayer (Mt. 6:10). “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” implies seeking out the will of the Father and implementing this in our daily lives and the ministry of the church.

¹⁶² J.G. Davis, *Worship and Mission* (New York: Association Press, 1967), 9.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁶⁴ Dr. Dana Roberts, “Mission and Outreach” (Lecture, Boston University School of Theology Boston, February, 2015).

derived the word “liturgy,” can be defined as “service of a formal or public type.”¹⁶⁵ In other words, a “public works project.”¹⁶⁶ Certain communal acts such as taking communion together or celebrating baptism, help affirm meaning and purpose in life. In defining worship, the focus should not necessarily be on the inward aspect as often has been the case, but rather on the outward.¹⁶⁷ J.G. Davies identifies baptism and the eucharist as essential elements of worship that involve the embrace of suffering. Baptism signifies the drowning of the old self and the eucharist as the brokenness of the body of Christ.¹⁶⁸ Baptism is a “spiritual circumcision”¹⁶⁹ that initiates an ordination into the priesthood of missionaries.¹⁷⁰ The eucharist is a regular affirmation of this priestly call.

Celebrating outward signs of God’s grace through the sacraments is one way ACCW can affirm its identity and foster the three Rs of being revived in God, refreshed in community and released in purpose. When understood properly, Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship. These three vision statements highlight the importance of relationship—the heart of the Christian faith. Christians are called to relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to relationship with each other in the community of faith, and finally to relationship with the lost.

¹⁶⁵ Frederick W. Danker et. al, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 591.

¹⁶⁶ Dr. Dana Roberts, “Mission and Outreach” (Lecture, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, February, 2015).

¹⁶⁷ J.G. Davis, *Worship and Mission* (New York: Association Press, 1967), 70-71.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 78-79.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

Core Values of Ministry

While the three Rs articulate ACCW's meta-vision, there is a sub-division of the church's mission and values described as *Core Values*. Charles Halley, an experienced pastor, leadership development and business coach, has largely been the architect of articulating these core values. Halley, with over twenty years of working in large church settings (3000 plus congregations) and a specialist in church culture and growth, was contracted by the church in 2013 to help articulate more clearly the church's vision, values, philosophy and administration. It would be an understatement to say that Halley's work with the ACC movement has been transformational. Within four short years, Halley helped to transform significantly the culture and way all Antioch Community Churches operate. Due to the impact that Halley's methodology and theological framework have had on the church movement, his philosophy of ministry as it relates to the ACC movement is worthy of deeper examination. Through this study and analysis, a deeper understanding of the ACC movement's underlying culture and philosophy of ministry and particularly how it relates to ACCW should emerge.

Before Halley's arrival, the ACC movement appeared to place a high value on relational values such as discipleship, small group gatherings, prayer, devotional life, community. Operational values had a low priority such as casting a clear vision, empowering the laity, managing the everyday affairs of the church, training and equipping new leaders, and developing new ministries. In other words, the church was relationally and pastorally strong but administratively and operationally weak. Halley's role was to assess the deficiencies and strengths of the church culture and restore balance

to the ministerial scales in a way that would allow it to expand and grow. As much as Halley employs many methods of the business world to the church's ministry model, the Bible nevertheless serves as the primary source and inspiration for church ministry. As a result, the reasons and justifications for why the church operates in certain ways must have its grounding in scripture.

Halley understands the life and teaching of the apostle Paul to be the primary source of the church's ecclesiology. Three texts from Paul's epistles are key to this assumption: Philippians 4:9; Ephesians 3:8-9 and Ephesians 4:11-16. Firstly, Philippians 4:9: "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." (Phil. 4:9, NASB). Context is important with this Pauline exhortation. Prior to verse 9, Paul urges the Philippians to rejoice in all circumstances (v. 4), through prayer and thanksgiving to be anxious for nothing (v. 6) and finally to dwell on noble attributes (v. 8). Therefore, in the immediate context of verse 9, Paul is teaching the church how rightly to relate to each other as a community of believers. This could be argued as pertaining to the *relational values* of the church.

Secondly, Ephesians. 3:8-9: "To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things" (Eph. 3:8-9, NASB). Paul reveals in verse 6 that the mystery hidden for ages is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs to the gospel and salvation through Jesus Christ. Key to this revelation is the gift of grace. A common misunderstanding is that one appropriates the gift of grace passively. A grace that requires nothing of the receiver is indeed cheap

grace. While Christianity is not a religion of works, it is most certainly a religion of action,¹⁷¹ and this is how Paul interprets God's gift of grace. Indeed, this gift of grace motivates and underpins Paul's ministry. Klyne Snodgrass, in his commentary on Ephesians, writes, "Grace engages us, calls us, pushes us, develops us and *gives us a ministry*. Ministry is the gift of God's power at work in us for managing grace. The application of the text is obvious; Get to work."¹⁷² So, according to Snodgrass, ministers are recipients and managers of grace who in turn act as conduits of grace to others. Thus, Paul's ministry (enabled by grace) and that of the church is to *preach the unfathomable riches of Christ* and *the administration of the mystery*. Halley observes that the Greek term for administration, "*oikonomia*," translates as the oversight or management of a house. According to Halley, Paul's ministry and that of the church are twofold: preaching and teaching. The preaching ministry relates to the message and content of the gospel along with the discipleship of the heart and is therefore associated with the *relational values* of the church. Complementing the *relational values*¹⁷³ is the ministry of teaching, which encompasses the method and process of how ministry is done (how the house is managed and administered), how others are equipped and discipled in ministry, and thus how the church functions through its *operational values*.¹⁷⁴ The administration and use of these values and areas of ministry in the church depend on the body of Christ

¹⁷¹ Kyle Snodgrass, *Ephesians, The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids: MI, Zondervan, 1996), 171.

¹⁷² Ibid. Emphasis mine.

¹⁷³ See Ephesians 4:1-3.

¹⁷⁴ See Ephesians 4:11-16.

and the gifts and talents given therein. Together the twofold ministries of preaching and teaching (*relational and operational values*) constitute the *oikonamia*.

The third text is Ephesians 4:11-16:

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love (Eph. 4:11-16, NASB).

This passage is one of five such lists found in the New Testament (Rom. 12:6-8; 1. Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30; Eph. 4:11-12 cf. 1Pet. 4:10-11).¹⁷⁵ Immediately clear from this passage is the reality that not all are gifted in the same way. What is apparent is that these gifts are for “the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” There is some debate as to whether the four (pastors and teachers are governed by one Greek article, hence, teaching-pastor)¹⁷⁶ types of ministers are themselves the ones doing the works of service and building up of the body or if they are the ones called to equip the church for such works. If one understands “for the equipping of the saints” as being related to the primary verb “He gave,” this logically explains Christ’s reasons for

¹⁷⁵ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 298.

¹⁷⁶ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 203.

providing the various types of ministers to do the equipping and training of the church.¹⁷⁷

Peter O'Brien sums this notion up well by quoting E. Best: "The ministry of the officials does not find its fulfillment in their own existence but only in the activity of preparing others to minister."¹⁷⁸

Halley's understanding and reading of the text falls in line with the above interpretation but he further elicits valuable insights for the ministry of the church. Halley sees all people within the body of Christ as called to serve per Paul's description in Ephesians 4:12. In other words, everyone in the church is called to serve in some capacity to edify the church. The ministries and gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11 (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) emerge with the Holy Spirit's distribution, and as servants in the church develop in character and are affirmed by others in their gifting and growth. Halley uses a sports analogy by calling verse 11 ministers "coaches" and verse 12 ministers "players." Coaches are ministers who essentially are intentionally trying to work themselves out of a job. They achieve this by training others well and being carefully selective about whom they do equip. Their joy is found in seeing people grow and succeeding in their ministry. A player, on the other hand, is more likely to take on ministry alone, be focused on meeting certain needs and, instead of working themselves out of a job, may try to make themselves indispensable, thus potentially leaving a hole should they leave the ministry.

¹⁷⁷ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 301.

¹⁷⁸ Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 173.

The analogy between the church and the body is a common Pauline theme¹⁷⁹ and as Paul concludes this passage, one observes that a recurring motif is the unity of the church and the necessity of all members to be ministers in some capacity. Snodgrass argues, “The body of Christ does not have two classes of members—clergy and laity—or two sets of expectations. Everyone has the same task of building up the body, even though responsibilities vary.”¹⁸⁰ This line of thinking ties in well with the philosophy of ministry espoused by the ACC movement. Within the church culture of the ACC movement there is not a high regard for clerical titles and officiality. This position can positively break down the artificial wall of separation between the clergy and the laity, but can also negatively create confusion as to leadership and spiritual authority.

Having briefly established and explored a scriptural basis for Halley’s adoption of a Pauline ecclesiology as the *modus operandi* of the church, attention now turns to discussion of the core values in more detail. The core values divide into two categories: *operational values* and *relational values*.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ See 1 Cor. 12:12 and Rom.12:4.

¹⁸⁰ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 224.

¹⁸¹ The following concepts are taken from the work and teachings of Charles Halley who was contacted by the Antioch Community Church movement in 2011 to bring a more organizational and structured model of ministry to the movement. Halley served as executive pastor of The River (Now ACCW) from 2013-2015 and continues to work as a consultant for the movement as a whole. In this time, while he was in the Boston area, Charlie and I met numerous times to discuss relational and operational values.

Relational Values

Passion for Jesus
Authentic Relationships
Sacrificial Leadership
Honoring Collaboration
Courageous Generosity

Operational Values

Compelling Clarity
Anointed Fit
Patient Apprenticing
Life-Giving Coaching
Honoring Transitions

According to Halley's ministry paradigm, Paul's *administration of the mystery* combines *relational values* and *operational values* to form a *ministry values*.

Both *relational values* and *operational values* are concerned with personal and especially interpersonal development. For example, worshipful living would include developing a healthy prayer life, study of the Bible and attending corporate worship. Authentic relationships would focus on building friendships and meaningful relationships with others inside and outside the church through small groups and other communal activities. Empowering service might mean the giving of one's time and skills to edify the church. Finally, courageous generosity would entail any means that might involve living a sacrificial lifestyle. This might involve the giving of one's time, finances or professional skills again for the benefit of the body of Christ. Traditionally, the ACC movement has excelled at *relational values*. *Operational values*, however, in the past were another matter.

Both *relational values* and *operational values* function as different facets of the church's corporate ministry. Highlighted are five key components that encompass the

operational values. Most of the components are relatively self-explanatory,¹⁸² but by way of example, the element of *compelling clarity* will be explicated. For any ministry to succeed there must be a vision. With that vision comes a vision caster who must articulate with clarity what he or she hopes to execute. Proverbs 29:18 warns, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (KJV) and this is never more applicable than in the church. Knowing the end goal and desired outcomes produces clarity of vision and definitive purpose. In Halley’s vocabulary, then, for *compelling clarity* to emerge, the church must start with the “win” in mind.

Once in conversation with Charlie, he asked what I initially considered an odd question. “I wonder sometimes if the first part of the Bible to be written and inspired by God wasn’t Genesis 1 but Revelation 21 and 22?” The question obviously was not directed at the historical chronology of the scriptures, but instead was designed to probe a deeper question. Assuming God is omniscient and exists independently of the space-time continuum, did God’s vision of creation begin with the new heavens and earth we read of in Revelation 21 and, if so, has all of creation from day one been on a steady trajectory via history and through the glorification of his son, Jesus Christ, to meet this end? Framing the question in simpler terms: did God already have the “win” in mind? At the risk of opening a theological Pandora’s box, Christian conjecture might say “yes.” Scripture details God’s vision for creation in the Garden of Eden, and yet Revelation 21 and 22 lay out something even more spectacular, something that could only have been achieved by the failure of the old creation. From death comes new life and resurrection.

¹⁸² “Anointed fit” as another example means ensuring that people are equipped and placed in areas of ministry that suit their God-given natural abilities and talents.

From Eden comes a new heaven and a new earth where the tabernacle of God is among men (Rev.21:3). At the heart of it all? Worship.

While Halley's philosophy of ministry infused with the ACC movement's own inherent values and strengths have been largely positive, a few points of critique are pertinent. One must question if using Paul's life and teachings, as the primary source of the church's ecclesiology is all together wise. Perhaps with this approach there is too much emphasis placed on church growth, numbers and an introspective mindset that prioritizes insular church ministries that only benefit the church members. Conversely, making Jesus the center of the church's ecclesiology reminds the church of its essential mission to care for the poor, embrace the outcast, feed the homeless and heal the sick. A counter argument could suggest that the church did not exist when Jesus walked the earth. Nor was Jesus' ministry about building the church per se but of proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom and the salvation offered through Christ. It was Paul and the other apostles who birthed the church: yes, inspired by Jesus' vision, but might not Paul and the other apostles be a better source for the *administration of the mystery*? To counter the counter though, one could also contend that if the church is not primarily emulating Christ and his ministry then questions arise regarding the purpose of the church. With this critique, however, it is important that Halley not be misrepresented, for he never diminishes the importance of Jesus in the church's ministry and, in fact, sees Jesus as the "cornerstone" of all the church's activity and ministry. In a recent conversation, Halley added that it is important to see the Father as the real source of the

relational and *operational values* and that Jesus models what he sees the Father doing (cf. John 14).

Another criticism: Has the pendulum swung too far the other way in terms of the church's *relational* and *operational values*? As noted above, Charles Halley came on board to balance out the church's disproportionate weight towards *relational values*. There has been fallout from the tipping of the scales. The church lost a number of key families who were instrumental in the original River church plant. These issues will be discussed later, but for now it is safe to observe that ACCW (formerly The River) lost certain members because they became disillusioned with the changing direction and mission of the church.

The Changing Face of the Church

In the past, there has been ambiguity regarding the question: Is the River an Antioch Community Church or a separate, independent church entity associated with ACC? The answer has always been a phlegmatic, "Well, both." All ambiguity has been resolved as The River church officially transitioned to being Antioch Community Church of Waltham on March 19th, 2017. With the name change came a full integration into the Antioch Community Church movement. The Brighton church has followed suit becoming Antioch Community Church of Brighton and the Beverley church is also expected to transition in the near future. This change is designed to bring more unity and clarity to ACCW's and its sister churches identities. Now instead of the each of the New England churches being viewed as separate entities, they are to be understood as on

church (Antioch Community Church of Greater Boston) with multiple congregations.¹⁸³

(See Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).

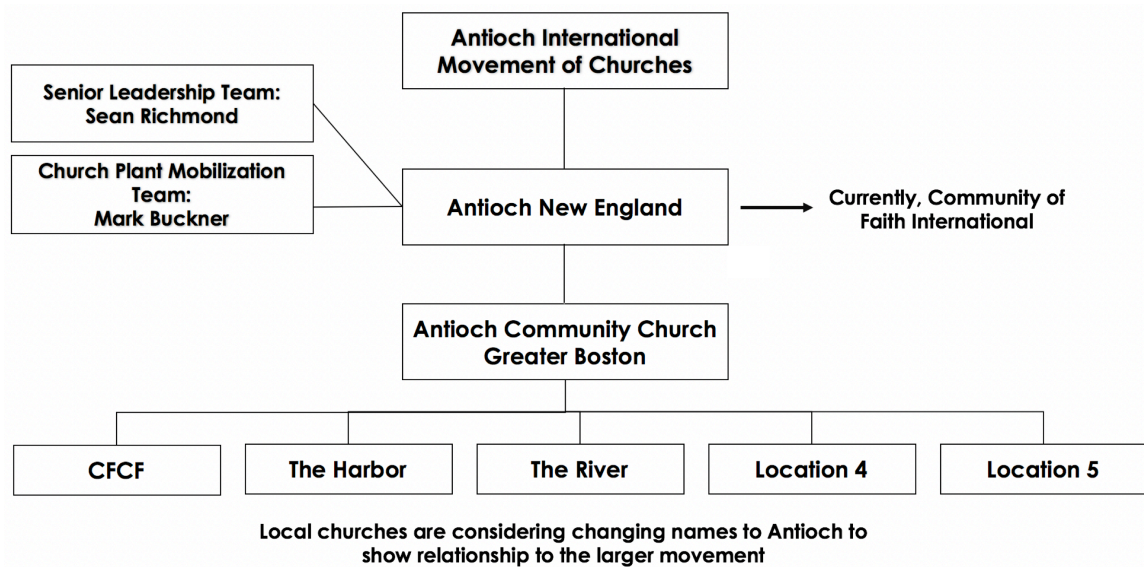


Figure 1 - ACCGB Organizational Structure

Antioch Ministries International is a non-profit, church-planting organization that launches and supports church-planting movements all over the world.

Antioch New England (CFI) is the regional arm of AML.

Antioch Community Church of Greater Boston is a church in the Greater Boston area with multiple congregations.

CFCF is the local congregation in Brighton of ACCGB.

Figure 2 – ACCGB International and Regional Overview

ACCW is expected to be the headquarters for both Antioch Community Church of Greater Boston and its missions branch Antioch New England. As the headquarters of the

¹⁸³ The congregations presently being: Antioch-Waltham, Antioch-Brighton and Antioch-Beverley.

New England operations attention is now turned towards examining the immediate context of Waltham, Massachusetts, where ACCW is located and how the church can impact the immediate community it serves.

ACCW is situated in the heart of the city of Waltham, located directly off Moody Street. Moody along with Main Street form the main arteries of the city center and bustle with independent retailers, restaurants and bars. A cursory walk down Moody Street will immediately reveal the diversity of ethnicities and cultures that populate Waltham. An Indian market sits on the corner of Spruce Street (home to ACCW) and Moody Street. Less than a block away is a Vietnamese restaurant, a Thai takeout, and across the street lies an independent bookstore/café next door to a sports bar. A little further down overlooking the Charles River is the Mexican restaurant Margaritas. The variety of cuisine alone gives newcomers to Waltham a prefatory taste of the city's diversity and multicultural vibrancy.

Waltham has an approximate population of 62,227 and the following ethnic percentages:

- Asian: 9.7%
- Black / African American: 6.0%
- Hispanic or Latino: 13.7%
- White: 68.7%¹⁸⁴

The average median household income is \$74,198 and 10.1% of the population live in poverty.¹⁸⁵ The ethnic makeup of ACCW approximately stands as:

¹⁸⁴ "Quick Facts, Waltham City, Massachusetts," The US census, accessed November 23, 2016, <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045214/2572600.00>.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

- African: 7.7%
- Black / African American: 5.2%
- Asian: 12.8%
- Caucasian: 63.2%
- Hispanic/Latino: 8.5%
- Indian: 2.6%¹⁸⁶

The figures indicate a healthy reflection of Waltham’s ethnic diversity. In particular, two ethnic groups are significantly impacting the face and potential growth of the church. These are the African and Asian components of the church. Of course, within the broad terms “African” and “Asian” come smaller and more precise ethnic categories. For example, the Asian population of the church presently includes Chinese, Korean and Indian heritages that all have very distinct cultures of their own. Likewise, within the African church community there are Nigerians, Ghanaians, Kenyans and South Africans as well as African-Americans.

Reflecting on the beautiful diversity that travels through the church, and the intersections at which all these different worlds and cultures collide,¹⁸⁷ there emerges a navigational challenge for the church that is at once both exciting and dangerous. Walter Earl Fluker explains that this intersection is “fiercely private...personal and intimate,”¹⁸⁸ but also “public in the sense that it is the space where citizens meet and engage in meaningful discussion and action about values, and where they hold one another

¹⁸⁶ These statistics are based on a survey conducted in January, 2017. See the next chapter for more details.

¹⁸⁷ Fluker provides this analogy. *Ethical Leadership; The Quest for Character, Civility and Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 6.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

accountable for what they know and value.”¹⁸⁹ There are stories and history that have shaped ACCW into its current community. There are active and emerging stories that continue to mold the malleable and fluid church community. These stories emerge within what Fluker terms “Lifeworlds” or the everyday interactions and community people forge with each other that form opinions and worldviews.¹⁹⁰ Lifeworlds exist in a vaster, more impersonal and bureaucratic web that Fluker labels “Systemworlds.”¹⁹¹ The Bible calls these *rulers* and *authorities* (Col.1:16). An important part of ACCW’s identity is its commitment to living by what it holds to be biblical truths and the power of the Holy Spirit. Part of the struggle for the church in how it forges and ministers to her community is and will be crossing an increasingly secular intersection that is growing in hostility towards what it holds precious. Worship, in part, can act as vehicle that transports people and community across the intersection.

Stories of the community are also highly significant in the formation of a church’s culture. In 2014, the church experienced a crisis that mobilized and consolidated a sense of community.¹⁹² The crisis centered around a perfectly healthy, fifty-year-old woman in the congregation who unexpectedly became critically ill and was not expected to live. I had been spiritually mentoring the woman’s twenty-seven-year-old son for the past year. Against all odds, the woman survived but lost both her hands and feet. Amidst this story

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² See Appendix A.

of tragedy and hope, the church rallied like never before. Powerful stories emerged of how others were moved and brought to new places of faith and hope through this experience. What also surfaced was a congregational theology of suffering.

A theology of suffering that sees hope at its pinnacle is not easy to come by, and yet through the unexpected pain and suffering of a mother and her son the church had come to learn that unexpected suffering can be redemptive.¹⁹³ Suddenly songs that spoke of joy in the morning and reflected on the redemption found in the brokenness of humanity began to pierce people's hearts. It became apparent that people were moved to new levels of worship and intimacy with the triune God. Suffering became part of the identity of the church and, unlike many churches, it has learned to embrace suffering rather than run from it. Ironically, the church's unexpected epiphany on suffering struck at the core of the Christian faith. Suffering *is* redemptive and it is through Jesus' suffering that redemption becomes manifest and available. By remembering and reliving the history of the church's suffering, it is possible to retell that history in a way that makes worship richer and deeper. This, in turn, can lead to a collective sense of empathy that deepens the spiritual life of the church. When the empathy of the individual morphs into the empathy of the community, radical transformation within the community begins to occur.

While suffering is a universal phenomenon that unites persons in common humanity, from a perspective of worship, it cannot be the only vehicle used to cross the cultural intersections emerging at ACCW. An appreciation for the dignity of the other

¹⁹³ Martin Luther King Jr., "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," in *Strength to Love*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 154. Taken in turn from Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 27.

must be cultivated in a community of faith and especially in a culturally diverse environment. An appreciation for this autonomous dignity can only emerge through a recognition of one's own self-worth. When one values oneself, it becomes possible to see others in the same light. Loving others begins with knowing we are loved and by learning to love ourselves. With the recognition of someone else's dignity comes respect. When leaders have respect for those they lead, it is possible to elicit a sense of loyalty that precedes reverence.¹⁹⁴ Fluker notes, "Reverence for life...is really about a sense of community."¹⁹⁵

Community, along with dignity for all, develops by a shared sense of purpose and inter-dependence. Stated more simply: we need each other. Many barriers can be broken down when people admit their need for each other. It takes courage to admit the need for help, a healthy sense of self, which Fluker defines as "integrity."¹⁹⁶ Through integrity will emerge a sense of justice and this is crucial in a multi-cultural environment. Howard Thurman in "College and Color" uses the term "sympathetic understanding" as a way to find common ground regarding justice.¹⁹⁷ Sympathetic understanding is "an attitude which says that a man of another race is essentially myself, and that I feel toward him fundamentally as if he were myself."¹⁹⁸ To create this attitude and understanding requires

¹⁹⁴ Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 114.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 129.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 136.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 138.

¹⁹⁸ Howard Thurman, "College and Color," in *The Papers of Howard Washington Thurman*. ed. Walter Fluker, (Greenville, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009).

reaching into the worlds of the African, Asian, Hispanic and Indian families at the church and learning from them. Ultimately, all forms of community must be underlined by a sense of compassion.¹⁹⁹

Compassion, community and sympathetic understanding can find a common voice through music. Often described as a universal language, music has the power to transcend cultural norms, racial barriers and it is through this modality of music, as it relates to worship, that a multicultural church such as ACCW can move towards establishing and defining its own identity as a community of faith. The previous chapter discussed the predominance of music by such sources as Hillsong United and Bethel Music, but if the church is to embrace the ethnic diversity that has organically arisen, music from further afield must be embraced. The church has begun taking intentional steps toward creating a more diverse culture that embraces the multi-ethnicities that are emerging as the church grows. One way to implement this is by trying to incorporate differing musical styles and cultural exchanges. As a prelude to Thanksgiving 2016, the church held a celebration service incorporating a variety of musical traditions from contemporary African praise music (led by two African congregants) to traditional Wesleyan hymns. Congregants were encouraged to dress in their traditional native attire and the service was concluded with a potluck meal that included traditional dishes from the church's various cultural representatives.

¹⁹⁹ Fluker writes "Compassion is the supreme virtuosity of ethical leadership." Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 145.

How the church within the context of Waltham will embrace its own unique identity and mission now leads to an examination of the interconnecting theological loci of the *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*. Simply translated, the law of praying and the law of believing, the terms have traditionally implied that what and how we pray, mold our beliefs. In other words, we pray what we believe. Systematic theologian Geoffrey Wainwright, however, notes that the grammar is equivocal and that subject and predicate could correspondingly be reversed to assert, “the rule of faith is the norm for prayer: what must be believed governs what may and should be prayed.”²⁰⁰ The question then becomes akin to asking which came first, the chicken or the egg. In more theological terms, Wainwright probes, “according to what criteria is worship allowed to influence doctrine and *vice versa*?”²⁰¹

Lex Orandi and Lex Credendi

The concept of the *lex orandi* and *lex credendi* is more familiar in Catholicism and is often overlooked by or unfamiliar to many Protestant traditions.²⁰² Nonetheless, the theological validity of the question stands: Does prayer govern what we believe or vice versa—or both? Catholic tradition has often allowed liturgical praxis to govern doctrine but in most Protestant traditions the opposite can said to be true.²⁰³ Within the

²⁰⁰ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life* (London: Epworth Press, 2003), 218.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid., 219.

²⁰³ Ibid.

context of the Antioch Community Church movement, doctrine and more broadly, the church's theology derives from its understanding and interpretation of biblical authority, inspiration and inerrancy.²⁰⁴ As a result, what is prayed reflects this biblical understanding. For example, the church subscribes to an ongoing continuation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as opposed to cessationism. This doctrine of continualism is arrived at by the church's understanding of such texts at 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12; Ephesians 4 and John 14:12. Because of this biblical interpretation, a doctrinal position is formulated that allows for a theology of the miraculous (such as supernatural healing) to emerge contextually in both how the church prays and worships.

Spontaneous prayer and requests for prayers of healing are common within both the Sunday morning service and small group meetings.²⁰⁵ The sharing of testimonies is also an important part of the culture of worship within the church and inspires and exhorts others to greater hope, faith and belief. Theology and doctrine further reinforce the prayer life of the church through what is sung. Singing songs of praise, thanksgiving, intercession, lament, etc., are all modes of prayer that the congregation participates in corporately. When the church sings together: "The one who does impossible/ Is reaching out to make me whole, reaching out to make me whole/ The one who put death in its place/ His life is flowing through my veins, His life is flowing through my veins/ I believe in you, I believe in you/ You're the God of miracles, You're the God of

²⁰⁴ Refer to Chapter Two for a deeper examination of the Antioch Community Church movement's views on biblical authority, inspiration and inerrancy.

²⁰⁵ It shall be observed in the results from a church survey that there is a desire for more spontaneous prayer and worship within the corporate gathering. (See Chapter Three).

miracles,”²⁰⁶ the church is declaring in one voice their theological position on divine healing. Within this context, with both the *lex orandi* and *lex credendi* at play, an interesting epistemological juxtaposition occurs. The songwriter’s doctrinal and theological understanding of miracles, informed by a biblical interpretive lens, inspires and influences the writing of a lyric. This in turn leads to the writing of song lyrics that reinforce the position that God still works miracles in the present day. Finally, the congregation expresses solidarity in this theological position by corporately singing (praying) the song. The end result: consciously or not, the church forms doctrine from an outpouring of its theology and worship. The process can be summarized as follows:

Biblical Interpretive Lens →
 Theology →
 Prayers/Songs of Corporate Declaration →
 Church beliefs/doctrine.²⁰⁷

Based on the above assertions, within the context of the Antioch Community Church movement, we must address the question of how worship comes to have any authority in the affairs of doctrine.²⁰⁸ Wainwright rightly observes that the ultimate authority regarding doctrine resides with God and that fundamentally worship is not the initiative of humans but “God’s redeeming act in Christ through His Spirit.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Jesus Culture, “Miracles,” by Chris Quilala, Joshua Silverberg, Dustin Smith and Stuart Garrard, in *Let It Echo (Live)*, Sparrow Records, 2016, CD.

²⁰⁷ One must also observe that the possibility of the reverse is also possible. Do songs of corporate declaration form the church’s doctrine and theology leading to the lens through which the Bible is interpreted?

²⁰⁸ Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life*, 242.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

Wainwright continues, “Worship, then, is a source of doctrine in so far as it is the place in which God makes himself known to humanity in a saving encounter. The human words and acts used in worship are a doctrinal locus in so far as either God makes them the vehicle of his self-communication or they are fitting responses to God’s presence and action.”²¹⁰ Based on Wainwright’s assertions, worship is a God-initiated activity by which we respond to him and/or he chooses to communicate to us through our acts of worship and devotion; worship is a conduit to relationship with the living God.

Every church has differing modalities of worship that help facilitate a connection and response to God. Music is one very powerful modality of worship, but many churches also employ multiple sensory techniques to engage their congregations in worship. The matter of aesthetics cannot be ignored. How a church feels, smells and looks all have a role to play in transporting the worshipper on a transcendent journey. ACCW does not look, smell or feel like a traditional church. The building is an old Moose lodge under gradual renovation. Perhaps because of a lack of visual inspiration, music plays an ever more important role in cultivating the worship of the church. To aid in fostering an environment that is conducive to experiencing the presence of God in the Sunday service, a survey was compiled with the intent of generating feedback from the congregation towards this goal. The results and analysis of this survey along with interviews of key leaders and ethnographic research will be one focus of the next chapter.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 242-243.

Chapter 3

Interviews, Observations and Survey Research

In an effort to gather data that would be efficacious in providing useful information and observations for worship at Antioch Community Church of Waltham (ACCW), a survey was issued to the congregation both as a physical hard copy and online via the church website. This, along with select interviews with key church leaders and ethnographic research at several other sites, provided a tri-part source of data to better inform the theology of worship at ACCW and other ACCGB churches.

The Survey

A survey of twenty-three questions was compiled with the primary purposes of assessing the church's demographics, determining musical and aesthetical preferences, and obtaining feedback about multiple service times and amount of church involvement.²¹¹ The survey was designed to take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete in the hope of obtaining maximum participation from the congregation. A hard copy of the survey was distributed in a Sunday morning service and ten minutes was allocated during the service for congregants to pray and fill out the survey.²¹² An online

²¹¹ A number of questions were inspired and used or adapted from a worship survey by New Bethel Pontiac Church. "New Bethel Pontiac Worship Survey 2013," accessed January 20, 2017, <http://www.newbethelpontiac.org/New%20Bethel%20Worship%20Survey%202013%20FINAL.pdf>.

²¹² The choice of having congregants fill out the survey during an actual Sunday service was to receive maximum response and feedback.

option was also made available for congregants not present.²¹³ A survey of this nature had not been attempted before at ACCW (or any ACCGB church), and thus the data collected helped to provide invaluable insights into the church's congregational dynamics, predilections and antipathies. A comprehensive analysis of the survey results is beyond the scope of this study, but certain findings and data that are particularly germane to the theology of worship as it relates to ACCW are highlighted and discussed.²¹⁴

In regard to the general characteristics of the congregants, most attendees came to join the church via information on the internet, a personal invitation and word of mouth. It was expected that the internet (29%) would be a larger factor in the church's growth but, surprisingly, personal invitations (23%) were a close second in effectiveness. Nearly half the congregants (45%) had been attending the church for over three years. Considering ACCW has only been in operation since 2010, it is managing to retain a healthy core of congregants. A surprisingly strong number of people (78%) claimed to attend the Sunday morning service weekly. This result may be connected to a healthy sense of community, a factor that may also be related to the number of people attending a weekly small group meeting (61%).

Regarding the musical content of the service, a large majority of those surveyed agreed that the amount of music and volume were appropriate for the service (87%).

²¹³ The data compiled involved ninety paper surveys and thirty-seven online responses totaling 127 responses. The results of the ninety paper surveys were manually inputted into the online survey program.

²¹⁴ A full report of the survey results is available in Appendix B.

Stylistically, the majority of respondents displayed a general contentment with the music used for worship. Notable exceptions were a desire for more multi-cultural worship (45%), and an increase in spontaneous prayer and worship (49%). The worship team tends to introduce new praise and worship songs to the congregation on a regular basis and a concern has always been whether too much new material is introduced too quickly to the church.²¹⁵ However, the results from the survey reveal that a majority are comfortable with new songs once a month (39%) and a close second (35%) welcome new songs being introduced every two to three weeks. A majority of worshippers seem engaged and active in worship (65%), with 31% admitting to becoming distracted. The main reasons listed for being distracted were children and the subject's own thoughts. A majority were content with the service length, with 31% desiring a shorter service and the same percentage suggesting a longer service. Of most value to the congregation in the Sunday morning service are music and worship, and teaching and preaching of the word. Surprisingly, community and fellowship were not a high priority for a significant number, a number that may be attributed to people already finding community and fellowship in their small groups. It could also be accredited to the reality that currently the church has no designated communal area other than the sanctuary.

Valuable data was gathered assessing which service times would be most popular and likely to retain current members as the church considers moving to two services in the Fall of 2017. A majority preferred the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. options (49%) with the 9

²¹⁵ Part of ACCW's ethos of regularly introducing new songs is both an attempt to stay current and "cutting edge" on worship music trends but also to try and keep musical offerings fresh in an attempt to "Sing to the Lord a new song" (Isa. 42:10; Ps. 96.1).

a.m. service being the more popular of the two. These results will be used to help make a definitive decision on a two-service timeframe but, based on the survey, it is quite likely that 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. will end up being the official service times.

The church invested and continues to invest considerable energy in renovating the building, working on interior and exterior signage, and transforming the interior of the sanctuary. Considering the culture and age demographics of the church, it was anticipated that a higher percentage would consider aesthetics of high importance. Only 17% considered aesthetics of high importance with a majority considering them somewhat important (52%). What was revealing was that almost a third (30%) of respondents considered aesthetics not very important or not important at all. Perhaps this speaks into the psyche of a congregation that is not so concerned with décor and more with worship, preaching and teaching.

While the survey cannot give a complete and accurate representation of the church's demographics, the following data was useful in assessing general trends in age, ethnicity, gender and religious background. The majority of the congregation are in the twenty-five to forty-nine age group categories (47% for 25-34 and 31% for 35-49), with only 3% being sixty-six or older. A number of factors point towards the church principally populated by young and middle aged families rather than college students and youth: A majority of 65% identified as being married and only 7% in the 18-24 age bracket. These statistics are revealing in that they show the target demographic of most Antioch Community Churches (ACC), youth and college students, is not the primary make-up of ACCW.

The ethnic make-up of the church based on the survey results is:

- African: 7.7%
- African-American: 5.2%
- Asian: 12.8%
- Caucasian: 63.2%
- Hispanic: 8.5%
- Indian: 2.6%

Women (67%) considerably outnumbered men (33%). Religiously, half the congregants identified as coming from a Protestant background, with 22% and 18% identifying as being from a non-denominational and Roman Catholic backgrounds respectively.

What can be observed from this data is that although ACCW has some healthy pockets of diversity, it is still a predominantly white church that attracts a largely Protestant and non-denominational demographic who primarily identify as being in their twenties, thirties and forties. The style and format of the Sunday morning worship service currently reflects and is well received by this demographic. There is also a healthy sense of community that is achieved more through small group participation than through the Sunday morning service.

Interviews

Five interviews were conducted with pastors and worship leaders from Antioch Community Church of Waltham (ACCW) and Antioch Community Church of Brighton (ACCB). For reasons of confidentiality, the interviewees will be referred to as interviewee A, B, C, D and E. The questions focus primarily on three areas:

- An individual's theology and definition of worship and their relationship to practices of personal and corporate worship;
- The role of music as it relates to worship;

- The role of CPWM as it relates to ACCW and the ACCGB church movement.²¹⁶

Defining a personal theology of worship in a few sentences is a challenging task, but as this question was presented to the interviewees, certain commonalities emerged. All respondents agreed in some form that worship is a response to God and his character. Interviewee A²¹⁷ observed that worship should be a “constant expression of our lives in honoring and recognizing the person and character of God.” Likewise, B noted, that “Worship is a response to the glory of God, recognizing who God is and what our response should be in terms of honor, of love and of submission.” Interviewee C provided a more over-arching definition of worship as an “expression of appreciation and of giving honor to something.” While all respondents in some form or another acknowledged worship as a response to God, several also emphasized that worship should be a lifestyle; that everything done in the life of the believer should ideally, in some form or another, be an expression of worship. Hence, E categorized worship into two tiers: lifestyle worship and worship done specifically as a creative expression unto the Lord.

Continuing with a definition of worship, several of those interviewed determined worship to be a holistic synthesis of the will, emotions and intellect. Deuteronomy 6:5 supports this supposition, proclaiming, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all you soul and with all your might” (Deut. 6:5, NASB). Worship should never just be an obligatory act, an emotional experience or merely an intellectual

²¹⁶ For a list of sample questions used to guide the interviews, see Appendix C.

²¹⁷ Rather than use “interviewee” on most future occasions, only the letter name appears.

exercise, but ideally should be a healthy composite of the three. According to A, though, a balanced approach to worship “is not 50/50²¹⁸—we need one hundred percent emotional, one hundred percent intellectual, one hundred percent purposeful with our will.” Echoing Psalm 150:6, which declares, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord,” a number of the interviewees conveyed clear sense that every part of the human being is to engage in the worship of God. In the words of D, “God wired us to throw our whole being into worship.” To D’s mind, this also helped to explain and lend credence to being demonstrative in worship. “Being physical in worship,” D explained, “opened a door for me.”

A daily devotional life of worship was recognized as an essential discipline of the Christian life. Most interviewees detailed that their personal worship involved a combination of singing, playing an instrument or listening to some contemporary, praise and worship music followed by a time of reading scripture and prayer. Personal worship was seen to have a direct correlation to corporate worship. Individual devotional time could be understood in the context of a preparation for corporate worship. According to A, corporate and personal worship play off each other: “A strong corporate worship comes with people that have spent time alone with Jesus...they are bringing something with them.” If a daily habit of worship is not apparent, then corporate worship and relationship with God will suffer too. E surmised, “If our hearts are far from Him, I think we have stepped out of worship...worship is me bringing all of who I am and receiving all of who he is.” Respondent C, though, stressed that worship as a corporate experience

²¹⁸ Or technically, evenly tri-part.

“lifts one another up.” So, personal worship edifies the individual and prepares the heart, mind and will for corporate worship.²¹⁹

Interviewee A had some particularly fascinating thoughts on how the church worships. Theologically, A explained, ACCGB could be defined as “Baptist-Charismatics.” By this A was implying that the Spirit and word (scripture) are key to the church’s philosophy and theology of worship. “You need both the word and the Holy Spirit for true worship. If you only have the word, you’ll dry up. If you only have the Spirit, you’ll blow up. If you have both, you’ll grow up.” Describing the ACCGB as “Baptist-Charismatic” is a unique and perhaps accurate description of what best describes the church’s denominational and theological underpinnings.

On considering the role of music in worship, B ascribed the propensity to associate music with worship to the concept of the *imago Dei*: “God is a creative, active, musical being” and so as image bearers of an artistic God, it follows suit that humans would use artistic endeavors such as music to glorify God.” Some form of music is common to all cultures, and C affirms, “God made us musical creatures.” Both B and E suggest there is a precedent for music in scripture and point towards the many biblical examples that associate music with worship. All respondents acknowledged that worship was not contingent on music, but A noted, “Music is not essential to worship but it is critical.” This statement would suggest that, at least within the context of ACCGB, there is an aspect of music integral to the culture of worship within the church movement. Affirming this notion, D saw a direct relation between music and the worship culture of

²¹⁹ There is also a certain amount of reciprocity in so far as corporate worship also impacts personal devotion.

the church: “Music influences the culture of a church or responds to it.” This leads to a deeper question within the context of worship: Should the church shape the culture around it or should the culture shape the church?

As a generalization, while not essential, music is recognized as critical and integral to the worship culture of ACCGB. But what about the particular vein of music that proliferates the ACC movement? In particular, contemporary Christian rock and pop music typified by music collectives such as Hillsong United and Bethel Music, which exert a considerable influence over the way the church worships. Respondent E conceded that the abundant utilization of Contemporary Praise and Worship Music (CPWM) within the ACC movement connects to its mission of reaching young college students. “If we are trying to reach college students,” said E, “there is an assumption that they are up on what is cutting edge.”²²⁰ An important part of ACCGB’s theology emerges within this statement that sees placing a high priority on youth and the next generation as integral to growing the church and spreading the gospel. Respondent E acknowledged that it is not that the church does not value older congregants. Rather (paraphrasing), “We try to stay young by reaching youth and college students so that the church doesn’t ever peter out, grow old and die...college students are also most likely to give their lives to missions and church planting.”

The demographics of the church also play a role in how it worships. “We are still a predominantly young, white movement,” said D. “They gravitate to this sound, it appeals to their demographic.” Interviewee C concurred with this assessment observing

²²⁰ Within this context, E referred to the idea that keeping up with the latest worship albums and songs to be released is “cutting edge.”

that it is “what people are culturally comfortable with.” C extrapolated though that “Heaven will not look like a Bethel Music concert...it’s good to remember the whole world is not like us.” A different approach was taken by B who saw a direct correlation between the theological themes that emerges in the songs that are sung and how much suffering (or lack of) a culture is exposed to. For example, within the stereotypical predominantly white, middle-class church, many of the songs sung and their theology gravitate to the goodness of God, the father heart of God, God’s grace, mercy and forgiveness, etc., because these reflect the relative comfort and affluence of white, western culture. Furthermore, this is also, arguably, a theological decision that evinces the attributes of God’s character that are most appealing to western opulence.²²¹ However, in other parts of the world where such relative opulence is not so ostensible, where people have been torn apart by war, raped, tortured, forced into slavery or brainwashed into child soldiers, then, as B stated, “the wrath and justice of God becomes something precious to you.”

It is within this context of suffering that while unquestionable exponents of their music, ACCGB does break in concurrence with Bethel’s over-realized eschatology. Whereas Bethel’s theology would suggest that it is God’s will to heal every time and every place vis-à-vis “as it is on earth as it is in heaven,” ACCGB adheres to a more balanced approach which allows for the hope and belief that God will heal and move supernaturally while also acknowledging that God’s will does not always align with human expectations.

²²¹ For example, it is rare (though not unheard of) to find many contemporary worship songs that speak of God’s wrath, hell and judgment.

Nonetheless, Bethel Music, Hillsong United and other comparable worship movements continue to play a dominant role in how ACCGB worships. Respondent D noted that lyrically, contemporary worship music tends to be more relational: “contemporary worship music is more conversational...prayerful, whereas hymns for example tend more to describe who God is.”²²² People are “looking for worship that is mystical,” said A, and that is why A finds movements such as Bethel Music to be popular. Bethel Music is trying to tap into the mystical with their worship. “We don’t want to be that movement,” continued A, “but we agree with that value.” According to E, ACCGB, also along with Bethel Music, places a high value on the prophetic. “Prophecy has a lot to do with staying current on what’s on God’s heart in a specific season for people...the prophetic is just as much about speaking into the current state than it is about predicating the future.”

Finally, the question of experiential worship must be mentioned in relation to the interviewees. Four out of the five interviewed talked of having a significant experience with what they described as the presence of God. Respondent D detailed an encounter with the Holy Spirit: “I literally felt the presence of God descend on me...I felt tingling in my body...started speaking in tongues.” In B’s experience, there was “a tangible feeling of his [God’s] presence, a warm energy, peaceful, not jolting, very light and momentary...waves washing over me.” Describing another experience, A recounted feeling “electrified” and breaking into “uncontrollable prayer. I prayed for someone and that person got healed. People kept asking me, ‘what’s different about you?’”

²²² Paraphrased.

A common thread throughout all these accounts is a description of the presence of God. Encountering the presence of God in worship is of high priority to ACCGB and so how the church understands the presence of God is important to its theology of its worship. All interviewees acknowledged there were different degrees of God's presence. Respondent A talked of the *density* of God's presence: "God is everywhere but there are some places he's more and some places he's less...when we say something is dark, we're talking about a relative absence of the character of God...how much God is recognized and expressed equals the *density* of God." Continuing, A said, "Pagan cultures that deny Him are dark because people are not expressing and recognizing the true presence of God...[Christian] worship intensifies the *density* of God's presence." According to B, "God is drawn to specific things: humility and repentant hearts." Subject E pointed to the biblical concept of coming face to face with God. The Hebrew word for "presence," *panim*, can also be translated as "face," which suggests that experiencing the presence of God is an intimate, up close and personal encounter.²²³ The prologue of the Gospel of John also affirms the intimacy the Father and Son share.²²⁴ The use of the Greek proposition *pros* in John 1:1-2 is translated as "with," and as D. A. Carson suggests, "*pros* may mean 'with' only when a person is *with* a person, usually in some fairly

²²³ "Presence of God," Bible Study Tools, accessed January 16, 2017, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/presence-of-god.html>. Also, see Exodus 33:20.

²²⁴ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary, Vol.1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 369. As followers of Christ, believers understand this intimacy with the triune God now to be accessible through Christ.

intimate relationship.”²²⁵ According to the responses gleaned from the interviewees, it is clear that encountering and experiencing the presence of God in worship is a significant component of ACCGB’s theology of worship.

Ethnographic Research

Three sites served as the primary focus of the ethnographic research: Grace Chapel in Lexington, Massachusetts, a Hillsong United concert at the Agganis Arena, Boston, Massachusetts and Antioch Community Church, Waco, Texas. Grace Chapel was chosen due its close geographical proximity to ACCW and because of its similar theology and praxis of worship. A comparison between ACCW and Grace Chapel was deemed beneficial in determining if there were any distinguishing or unique characteristics about worship at ACCW. The music of and influence Hillsong United has had on ACCW and the world of CPWM is highly significant. Thus, the opportunity to observe and participate in a live concert provided valuable insight into the culture and ethos of Hillsong United and how this has impacted the worship practices of ACCW and the greater ACC movement. Finally, ACC of Waco is the mother church of the Antioch Community Church movement, so by observing and attending a worship conference hosted at the church, invaluable data was collected in helping to understand the theology, culture and praxis of worship within the Antioch Community Church movement.

²²⁵ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 117.

Grace Chapel

Grace Chapel, located in the affluent town of Lexington, Massachusetts, is a large non-denominational church with a congregation of approximately five thousand people, thereby constituting it as one of the few mega-churches in the area. Founded in 1948, Grace Chapel has grown to become a multi-site church with other Massachusetts satellite churches (known as campuses) based in Wilmington, Watertown and East Lexington. In many ways, Grace Chapel and ACCGB share many of the same values and beliefs. Both churches hold to a high view of scripture, subscribe to a basic Evangelical outlook and have similar patterns of worship in terms of service structure and musical stylistics. While being cut from similar theological cloths, the churches do have differences. Perhaps the most obvious disparity between the two churches (other than building facilities and financial resources) would be the more overtly Baptist, Charismatic and Pentecostal characteristics ACCW/ACCGB demonstrates in comparison to the more strictly Evangelical mainstream position that Grace Chapel embraces. Currently, ACCW has one Sunday morning service, whereas Grace Chapel has three Sunday services. The following observations were made on the 5 p.m. service at Grace Chapel.

I arrived unfashionably early at approximately 4:30 p.m., and thus found the sanctuary fairly empty and without ushers. The worship team was finishing a rehearsal so I took a seat towards the back of the room to give me good view of the service and congregation. People began to trickle in to talk and find their seats until, by the beginning of the service, there were approximately three hundred people in attendance. I was struck by the ambience and ascetic of the room. Low lighting, a semi-circular stage for the

worship band, and simple plants helped to create a space that felt conducive to meditative and reflective worship. This highlighted the importance of aesthetic triggers. The sights, sounds and smells of a place can have a powerful effect on the sense of the sacred.

The stage had a semi-circular design with hardwood flooring. The back wall had three panels. The central panel had a curtain with a wooden cross on it. The two side panels had grey slating. Green plants were along the panels followed by two rows of chairs presumably for choristers. The drums were at the center back of the stage, keyboard, bass and backing vocalist to stage left, electric guitar to stage right and the worship leader was center stage. There were multiple wedge monitors on the stage. A modest lighting rig with blue and yellow lighting hung above the worship stage. Two large projection screens were situated on either side of the stage. The rest of the sanctuary was also designed in a semi-circle with a balcony. The seating design was stalled and somewhat similar to a movie theater. The chairs were wooden with grey cushioned seats and backs. The flooring was an unobtrusive light brown and carpet. The lighting was kept at an atmospheric low glare.

Although some differences were obvious, certain differences were subtler and required a level of cultural intelligence. For example, while the congregation consisted of a number of Asian, Black and Hispanic attendees, the predominant ethnicity was Caucasian and there was not the same sense of diversity as at ACCW. The song choice and music tended only to reflect white contemporary Christian pop. The worship band consisted of an all-white team, as did the whole leadership team for the service (the lead

and associate pastor). Ironically, these differences also highlighted the similarities between Grace Chapel and ACCW. The flows of our services are remarkably similar:

- Fifteen to twenty-minute period of worship largely consisting of contemporary Christian songs and spontaneous prayer;
- Announcements;
- Offering;
- Sermon;
- Time of response and closing song.

This observation connects with a comment made in Max Bazerman's chapter "Industrywide Blindness" found in his book *The Power of Noticing*. Bazerman explains, "When someone tells you, 'This is just how it's done in our field,' it should be a call to ask why it is done that way and whether there is a better way to do it."²²⁶ Thus, questions emerge: Why is this flow of service so common? Why is Christian pop the "industry" standard for worship in many contemporary, non-denominational churches? How does worship influence diversity and vice versa? As these questions surface, hopefully new answers and creative suggestions emerge that lead to liturgical renewal.

I was struck by the similarity in the structure of the service to ACCW. The only major differences were a slightly longer period of worship and longer sermon at ACCW. Grace Chapel's service lasted one hour and twenty minutes; ACCW's is typically an hour and a half. What was apparent was a lack of diversity on the worship team and also a lack of active engagement and overt enthusiasm.²²⁷ Only the worship leader seemed actively engaged in leading the congregation. The rest of the band seemed disinterested and herein

²²⁶ Max H. Bazerman, *The Power of Noticing: What the Best Leaders See* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 66.

²²⁷ This was the ostensible appearance of the worship team but the dangers of associating demonstrative actions and outward ardor with a genuine expression of worship should be noted.

lies one of the potential dangers of this style of worship: there can be a tendency for the worship leader to be idolized and seen as the conduit and sole facilitator of congregational worship. To assume this is to diminish and the role of the triune God as the one who truly empowers the worshipper.

It is worth noting that I was able to enter, attend the service and leave the church without any substantial interaction. Nobody spoke to me, welcomed me or engaged in conversation with me. This is significant. It is important for people to feel welcomed when coming to a new church and it is something ACCW and ACCGB in general try to prioritize. Musically, nothing could significantly distinguish Grace Chapel and ACCW. The main differences between the two churches are in aesthetics and cultural diversity.

Hillsong United Concert

Secondly, an analysis of a Hillsong United concert that took place in Boston at Boston University's Agganis Arena on April 29, 2016. The concert was part of a nationwide tour to promote their new album *Empires*. A significant line of people curled around the side of the building as I waited with my pre-booked ticket to enter the Agganis Arena. I observed those in line, noting that they were predominantly Caucasians in ethnicity ranging largely from their twenties to forties. There were smatterings of diversity including people who likely would self-define as Black, Asian or Hispanic. Upon entering the building, I found merchandise and food stalls lined around the concert hall.

The concert began with an opening act by the contemporary Christian artist Lauren Daigle. Daigle a rising star in the CPWM world, performed a six song, thirty-

minute set to a half-full arena that continued to fill up as the set went on. When her set concluded, a promotional film hit the two giant projectors as the bands transitioned. The Master of Ceremonies, who had a distinct Australian accent, engaged the audience in pithy conversation while the stage was reset for Hillsong United to begin. After a twenty-five minute transition, a countdown clock accompanied by Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" heralded the opening to Hillsong United's performance. By this time the arena was full (the arena has an end stage capacity of 7500) and a roar from the audience created a surge of energy around the room.²²⁸ The band consisted of three guitarists, bass guitar, drums, keyboards and a male and female lead vocalist. The musicians interchanged on instruments and the sound was augmented by the use of pre-recorded tracks via computer software.

The band members, most of whom were in their twenties and thirties, were energetic and dressed in typical hipster fashion including the obligatory skinny jeans and (for the men) bushy beards. After the third song, the leader spoke to the audience accompanied by the band with soft, instrumental music. "Perhaps you came to see a show," the worship leader said, "Perhaps you came to be entertained, or to be critical or to be inspired, but what God is after is *you*!" The audience roared in approval and the leader continued to exhort the concert goers before launching into another song. The concert continued as Hillsong United made their way through the songs from their new album. Words displayed on the projector screens allowed people to sing along. The

²²⁸ "Capacity and Specifications," Agganis Arena at Boston University, accessed December 18, 2016, <http://www.agganisarena.com/business-opportunities/book-the-arena/capacity-specifications/>.

concert lasted approximately an hour and a half which included the interjection of moments of spontaneous prayer and scripture reading.

I had admittedly come to the concert with a skeptical disposition. I have immense respect for movements like Hillsong that have reached so many with their music and ministry, but I had no question that this event felt like a rock concert. I had a difficult time defining this event as genuine worship, especially given the level of commercialization. Having said that, the production was first class, the sound was excellent and the lighting production was astounding. I also could not deny that looking around the arena and seeing thousands of people with arms raised, singing to the glory of God, was uplifting and inspiring. There was no doubt that the incredible energy and atmosphere in the arena was inspiring. Was this the Holy Spirit or was this the product of emotional energy produced by the interaction rituals Peter Althouse and Michael Wilkinson talk about?²²⁹

In such cases, one must be honest about personal, pre-conceived ideas of worship. Might a professionally, well-produced rock concert be recognized as a legitimate mode of worship? Might all artistic avenues and genres be catalysts for worship? A common complaint often directed towards the Christian arts is that the quality of their work is inferior to their secular counterparts (take most Christian movies compared to Hollywood productions for example), but in the case of the Hillsong concert, this could not be the contention. All aspects of the concert from production to lighting, sound, execution and

²²⁹ See Chapter One. Peter Althouse and Michael Wilkinson, “Musical Bodies in the Charismatic Renewal: The Case of Catch the Fire and Soaking Prayer,” in *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, ed. Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong, 31.

performance were very professional and polished. Another unexpected component of the concert was the missional aspect of the event. Rather than just sing rock songs with Christian lyrics, there was a real effort by Hillsong United to share the gospel and its global importance. Several moments during the concert were dedicated to praying for peace in the war-torn areas of the world and for those lacking knowledge of Jesus Christ. A video was shown highlighting Hillsong's work with World Vision around the global south and acknowledging the plight of the Syrian refugees. An appeal and plug was made to sign up as monthly donors to aid the refugees.

This form of worship is certainly not for everyone. Many prefer a gentler, reflective and more intimate way of engaging with God. There can be little doubt that despite the many criticisms, Hillsong and other movements of the same ilk have managed to galvanize a demographic that perhaps may otherwise have lain dormant and untapped. They are stirring a younger generation to worship God, and for that they must be applauded.

Worship Conference, Antioch Community Church, Waco, Texas

I attended a worship conference at Antioch Community Church, Waco, Texas in October 2015. As noted earlier, ACC, Waco, is the headquarters of the Antioch Community Church movement and holds the church's largest congregation with over five thousand members. The conference was a three-day conference and involved approximately fifty to sixty worship leaders and musicians from ACC churches across the United States. The conference allowed for a more in-depth analysis and a behind the scenes look at the praxis of worship as ACC, Waco, understands it.

I arrived on a Sunday afternoon with sufficient time to observe the rehearsal for the worship team and to participate in the 5 p.m. service. The sanctuary (called “auditorium”), with a capacity of fifteen hundred, followed the typical design of a convention room with raked, comfortable seating, and a large stage in the front and center of the auditorium. The stage was largely black with a giant lighting panel on the back wall of the stage and various lighting rigs were above the stage and beneath it. The stage was bookended with two large projector screens. The design is typical of many mega-churches in an effort to be “seeker sensitive.” Observing the aesthetics of the room, I was struck by the lack of any religious or overtly Christian symbolism or artwork. If one were unaware of the building’s function as a house of worship, it would be difficult to assess the role and purpose of the auditorium based on aesthetics alone.

As the rehearsal proceeded, we were handed in-ear monitors that allowed us to hear what the worship team was hearing. The worship team’s sound was significantly enhanced by the use of the music software program “Ableton Live” which allows for additional tracks of music (such as guitar parts, strings and additional backing vocals) to be mixed into and played along simultaneously with the live music. This serves to create a fuller, richer sound and helps to mimic the studio recordings of the worship songs performed.²³⁰ The worship team consisted of the worship pastor on acoustic guitar,

²³⁰ The rationale behind this choice would seemingly be to recreate the sound of the studio recording in an attempt to avoid unfamiliar renditions of well-known CPWM songs. The obvious negative implication of this approach is it can quell any artistic and creative approaches to familiar music. Another practical application though, of incorporating additional backing tracks into a live worship team is it allows churches with limited musicians and resources to fill in missing musical parts. For example, a worship team without a drummer, guitarist or keyboardist, would struggle to execute much of the CPWM repertoire with any authenticity. This leads to another question: Is this need for a certain musical instrumentation an inherent weakness in the music?

another acoustic guitar, an electric guitar, a female vocalist, drums, electric bass guitar and a keyboard player who also doubled as the musical director by working with a laptop to trigger and control the functions of “Ableton Live.” Listening through the in-ear monitors, one could hear musical cues and directions spoken into a microphone by the musical director that only the team could hear. Digitized count offs from the “Ableton Live” program would lead the live team into the next song as they played along to a metronomic click track to ensure everyone stayed synchronized with the computer tracks. The overall effect of the integration of humans and machine was a surprisingly cohesive sound that still managed to sound somewhat natural and unaffected.

The worship service itself followed a very close format to ACCW’s Sunday service and most likely this format is similar in most ACC churches. The service order was as follows:

- Opening song;
- Brief welcome as music continues to play;
- Two more songs;
- Announcements;
- Offering;
- Sermon (30-35 minutes);
- Time of response as another song is played.

The service attended by approximately seven hundred people lasted seventy-five minutes, fifteen minutes shorter than the service time at ACCW.

Observations of the congregation in worship, which was largely Caucasian (approximately 85%), revealed that a considerable number of worshippers were uninhibited and demonstrative in their reactions, which included the raising of hands, jumping, clapping and swaying. Others chose to remain mostly static or seated with

heads bowed as the worship team exhorted the congregation. While the overt emotionalism of some worshippers may have led to a feeling of discomfort for some, there was also a sense of non-judgmental freedom that allowed for multiple responses to the worship music, ranging from reserved to extroverted displays.

The conference involved a series of talks and practical components of leading worship within small groups and corporate settings. Principal leaders of talks were the worship pastor and the associate worship pastor along several guest speakers who focused on music technology. Two sessions in particular stood out as instructional in helping to understand ACC's philosophy of corporate worship.

The first of these sessions examined the reasons for the general flow of worship that many contemporary, non-denominational churches adopt.²³¹ A commonplace pattern emerges when examining the musical flow of many contemporary worship services. Usually a worship service will involve between four and six congregational songs. Typically, the first song will be upbeat in tempo and lyrically focused on giving thanks and praise to God. Each song thereafter tends to decrease from mid-tempo to slow as the music and lyrics become more reflective and meditative. This service structure (surely a liturgy of its own), far from being arbitrary, is intentionally crafted not only to create a predicable range of emotions among the congregation, but also to have its structural basis in the design of the mosaic tabernacle.

The session drew heavily on the work of Zach Neese, who emphasizes the "Tabernacle Model" of worship. Neese's ideas laid out in his book *How to Worship A*

²³¹ In using this description, I am primarily referring to churches such as ACCW.

King, is not original in its concept but is a popular model for contemporary worship services among Charismatic/Pentecostal churches.²³²

The mosaic tabernacle as described in the Old Testament has discrete sections that form the sanctuary as a whole. These divisions of the tabernacle include the Outer Courts, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies, which housed the Ark of the Covenant.²³³ According to Neese,²³⁴ a pattern of modern worship can be observed that can be collated with the Old Testament mosaic structure. Psalm 100 states, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name” (Ps 100:4, NASB). Thus, it is suggested that worshippers enter the “Courtyard” through songs of praise and thanksgiving.²³⁵ In terms of CPWM, this often corresponds to beginning the service with an upbeat song to stimulate the congregation to a posture of praise and thanksgiving. Constance Cherry proposes that the “architectural design of the Old Testament tabernacle becomes a metaphor for the progression of worship...through the use of a very intentional progression of songs, worshippers ‘sing their way’ from the outer court to the Holy of Holies.”²³⁶ As noted, the congregation enters into the Outer

²³² Zach Neese, *How to Worship a King* (Southlake, TX: Gateway Create Publishing, 2014). Constance N. Cherry notes that various names for this model can be used such as Tabernacle, Temple and Temple Courts.

Constance N. Cherry, *The Music Architect* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 77.

See also, Stephen R. Phifer, *Worship that Pleases God* (Bloomington, IN: Trafford Publishing, 2014).

²³³ See Exodus chapter 40.

²³⁴ The two sessions taught at the ACC worship conference based their teachings on *How to Worship a King*. It is clear that this work has recently had a significant impact on the church’s philosophy of worship.

²³⁵ Neese, *How to Worship a King*, 135.

²³⁶ Cherry, *The Music Architect*, 78.

Courts through upbeat songs of praise and thanksgiving. They are then ushered into the Holy Place through songs that become more theocentric, singing *about* God and his divine attributes. Finally, usually softer and slower musical offerings transport the congregation to the Holy of Holies by singing songs *to* God expressing love, adoration and intimacy.²³⁷ This model stresses that worship is a progression and a journey embarked upon to encounter the living God.²³⁸

The second relevant session of the conference focused on biblical expressions of praise.²³⁹ These included: singing, playing instruments, shouting, clapping, hand raising and dancing. Biblical references supported all these categories.²⁴⁰ The session's leader elaborated further on the subject by identifying seven different Hebrew words found in the Old Testament to denote the meaning of praise. Figure three, summarizes the words and meanings.²⁴¹

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid., 79.

²³⁹ Adapted from Neese, *How to Worship a King*, 125-131.

²⁴⁰ Neese, *How to Worship a King*, 113-125.

²⁴¹ This summary is based off the worship conference session which in turn was adapted from Neese, *How to Worship a King*, 125-131.

| Hebrew Word: | <i>Halal</i> | <i>Yadah</i> | <i>Towdah</i> | <i>Zamar</i> | <i>Tehillah</i> | <i>Barak</i> | <i>Shabach</i> |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Meaning: | To boast and boisterously brag about God. | To give thanks through confession and the lifting of hands. | To give thanks through a sacrifice of praise. | To give praise through singing and playing of instruments. | Enthusiastic praise through adoration with an emphasis on God's glory. | To bless God through praise and postures of kneeling. | Spirited and triumphant praise that also soothes the worshipper. |

Figure 3 – Old Testament Words for Praise

Both of these sessions and the worship conference as a whole provided a valuable source of information and insights into the culture of worship that ACC, Waco seeks to cultivate. Youth, energy, enthusiasm and a desire to stay current in musical trends were all highly valued characteristics and components of ACC's worship identity. There was also clearly a desire to demonstrate that this style and form of worship could be justified biblically.²⁴² Through observations over the three-day conference, it was clear that ACCW has adopted many characteristics of ACC, Waco. Conversely ACCW has a unique voice of its own formed by its own diversity and socio-economic and geo-political location.²⁴³

The tri-part data from this chapter has helped further inform the reasons and grounds for ACCW and ACCGB's preferred practices of worship. The survey showed that the current style and format of worship at ACCW is conducive to allowing the majority of the congregation to experience genuine worship. While the music is currently

²⁴² See Appendix D for Antioch worship "Confessions."

²⁴³ I raised the issue of the considerable differences and challenges of trying to import a culture of worship from a Texas mega-church to a mid-sized congregation in New England in one of the question and answer sessions of the worship conference. A certain cultural disconnect became apparent.

reflective of what is typical of most Antioch Community Churches, and thus far displays nothing that could be described as unique,²⁴⁴ ACCW has an uncommonly diverse congregation (both ethnically and age wise) that opens up the possibility of developing its own unique culture of worship by diversifying from the typical diet of Hillsong United, Bethel Music and other CPWM. The ethnographic observations from the Hillsong United concert though, revealed that while not to everyone's taste, the commercial and high-tech approach to worship music can be an effective and genuine modality of worship that helps many encounter the living God. The movement also has a deeper missional context and uses its music as a missional tool to spread the gospel message around the world.

Common threads emerged regarding ACCW/ACCGB's theology of worship. Worship is seen as response to God involving a holistic approach of mind, will and emotions. Experiencing the presence of God through both word and Spirit is viewed as essential to participating in genuine worship and should be practiced both corporately and individually. While ACCW/ACCGB have imported much from ACC, Waco, including a desire for a biblical framework of worship through the "Tabernacle Model" and the inclusion and encouragement of demonstrative and spontaneous elements to the Sunday service, again, due to its diversity, ACCW in particular has the potential to reshape how ACCGB approaches worship. How ACCW within the context of ACCGB can be an innovator and pioneer within the broader Antioch Community Church movement will be explored in the next chapter.

²⁴⁴ As demonstrated in ACCW's similarities to Grace Chapel's practices of worship.

Chapter 4

Discussion, Implications and Recommendations

At the beginning of this study, an assertion claimed that theology grounds worship and worship shapes theology. Worship (*lex orandi*) and theology/doctrine (*lex credendi*) are not mutually exclusive, but rather are interdependent sides of the same coin. Vibrant and authentic worship should give rise to and shape sound theological expression and reflection.

One of the themes that has emerged from this study is that ACCW and ACCGB's theology and beliefs are to a significant degree impacted and influenced by the way they worship. The proliferation of CPWM within the movement has, for better or for worse, done much to shape the identity of the church. The key components of this identity are a high view of scripture as being a daily necessity in the life of the believer, scripture as a foundation of corporate worship, and a Christocentric focus on worship that incorporates a strong and explicit pneumatology. As a result, many of the songs sung and the prayers prayed focus on the supremacy of Jesus, the indwelling and presence of the Holy Spirit, and the belief and desire to see and experience the miraculous and supernatural in the life of the church. However, unlike Bethel Church in Redding, California, which has been described as having an over-realized eschatology, ACCW/ACCBG hold to the belief and hope for the miraculous and supernatural within the gathered community without the expectation that this will always be the case. Within this tension of "all ready, not yet," the faith of the believer rather than being weakened by this tension is actually

strengthened by a Christian lifestyle of faithful expectation that does not despair when expectations are not met.

The church is also learning through its own traumas that suffering can be redemptive and instrumental in fostering a communal strength forged through tragedy and triumph.²⁴⁵ Modern renditions of hymns such as "It is Well with My Soul" have taken on new meaning and depth in the church as it processes its own losses and walks in faith through them. As a result, not every song sung and prayer prayed necessitates being joyful, jubilant and energetic. There is room for lament and for expressions of grief.

Another fundamental part of ACCW/ACCGB's identity is a deliberate focus on the younger generations and the training and equipping of new church leaders. Much of the musical worship at ACCW and ACCGB as a whole has a youthful exuberance to it which can largely be attributed to the musical proclivity of CPWM. Musical style unquestionably has an important role in forming the identity of a community of faith. As research in this study has shown, the church still heavily relies on music and a style of worship that tends to appeal to a white, western, middle-class demographic. However, as the survey data from Chapter Three has shown, nearly forty percent of ACCW's congregation is accounted for by non-Caucasian members. This raises questions about the changing identity of the church and, thus, how the church continues to worship.

ACCW does not fit the typical description of many Antioch Community Churches across the United States due to its ethnic diversity. Recent discussions at church staff meetings have affirmed the need and desire to cultivate the diversity that is emerging and

²⁴⁵ See Appendix A.

growing particularly at ACCW. This in turn ties into the church's missional identity. ACCW desires to be a diverse church that embraces many ethnicities and cultures. A homogenous congregation at ACCW is not the goal. Therefore, it follows that neither should how the church worships be homogenous. Already, as the worship pastor, I have taken small steps to diversify the worship music by incorporating African songs such as "Tambira Jehovah" and singing familiar songs in multiple languages. These are incipient steps and it is important that these efforts do not become "token" offerings to the emerging ethnicities (becoming patronizing rather than prophetic), but instead start to become integral to the way the church worships.

As has been discussed in this study, considerable progress has been made on consolidating the church's identity in terms of name, branding and structure. It is anticipated that consolidation of the church structure and identity will provide some of the following advantages:

- Greater connection and access to resources from other Antioch Community Churches nationally and internationally;
- A clearer sense of unity, identity and synergy;
- Planting new churches will be easier and more reproducible;
- Greater collaboration among the Greater Boston churches on sermon series, strategic planning and leadership development;
- Greater collaboration between the worship teams of the three congregations leading to an interchange of musicians, musical ideas and worship repertoire.

Weekly church attendance figures at ACCW are showing that Sunday morning service attendance is now regularly surpassing 200.²⁴⁶ A preliminary decision has already

²⁴⁶ ACCW keeps weekly count and tally of its Sunday morning attendance.

been made to switch to two Sunday services beginning in the Fall of 2017 contingent on projected growth numbers continuing. With a transition to two services will come many logistical and practical issues. All areas of the church's internal ministries such as children's ministry, guest ministry and prayer ministry will require two volunteer teams per Sunday. For the worship team, the challenge is more acute as the most practical option (in terms of preparation and rehearsal) would be to have the same team play at both Sunday services. While this may be the most practical and realistic avenue, pastoral concerns must be raised about the emotional and spiritual health of the worship team members especially in terms of commitment and capacity levels.

Many models for church growth anticipate that a church will grow when switching to multiple services, which in turn may produce a greater pool of volunteers. An interim period of teething pains is to be expected as the church and those who serve adjust to the two services. What will be crucial is how the church navigates through this transition and how it maintains and builds on the momentum that has been growing over the past year.

Some practical suggestions and strategies have emerged from this study that would be constructive to the continued development and growth of the culture of worship at ACCW:

Worship in General

- Actively reach out and engage with the various cultural groups within the church and seek out their stories and histories;²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ While this might suggest a Caucasian normativity, the purpose would be to build bridges to community across multi-ethnicities. One way community is built and barriers are broken down is by getting to know one's neighbor.

- Exploration of aesthetic aids. What are other ways the senses can be engaged to help people worship more authentically? Visual aids, painting, dancing and drama are all worthwhile avenues to explore;
- Engage themes of lament and redemption into the flow of worship. Examine which are songs that particularly speak to the community;
- Encourage and facilitate the act of testimony as a powerful part of worship;²⁴⁸
- Provide professional training for sound and projector operators by hiring outside specialists to teach and equip workers within the church;
- Continue ethnographic studies of other churches, especially ethnically diverse churches.²⁴⁹

Music

- Initiate “Nights of Worship” which invites multi-cultural jam sessions;²⁵⁰
- Ensure that the worship team reflects the diversity of the congregation. Currently the team involves a rotation of twelve musicians and singers. Within the team are one Hispanic, two Asians and three Black members;
- Research multi-ethnic worship and introduce more varied musical styles such as Afro-centric Christian music, traditional hymns, Black Gospel, coritos, and multi-lingual language into the worship service.

Building

- Considerable renovations have already taken place. The sanctuary still has to be fully renovated;
- Improve and upgrade musical and sound equipment;
- Wheelchair accessibility and other special needs must to be considered such as bathrooms and ramps;
- Adequate ventilation and lighting.

²⁴⁸ ACCW intentionally tries to coach people on how to share testimony so that it primarily focuses on glorifying what God has done through the testimony.

²⁴⁹ Continued research of this kind will help to stimulate new ideas and ways of enacting and engaging in worship.

²⁵⁰ There are many ways this could be implemented. One way could be to invite neighboring churches and musicians from their worship teams to come together with some of their favorite worship songs. Within close proximity to ACCW for example, are predominantly Ugandan, Indian and Korean churches.

Additionally, to the above suggestions, forming a “worship collective”²⁵¹ offers the potential to bring transformation and innovation to the worshipping community at both ACCW and ACCGB. A key aspect of why Hillsong United and Bethel Music have become such influential voices in modern, contemporary, praise music is that they have both formed their own music collectives that nurture and foster their own artists creating their own musical culture of worship.

Dave and Jon Ferguson argue that artists are essential to the growth and reproduction of church communities.²⁵² The authors suggest that artists help create, catalyze and sustain communities through innovation and creativity.²⁵³ What is encouraged is the fostering of a culture that attracts, trains and equips artists for the work of the kingdom of God. In this environment, a community of faith will thrive and grow. The providing of development and leadership opportunities for others within the church stimulates such a culture. The offering of musical training and opportunities both to plan and lead worship will be essential to developing new leaders and innovators in the worship life of the church. The Fergusons, authors of the book, *Exponential*, suggest a model of apprenticeship that involves the following steps:

Step 1: I do. You watch. We talk.

Step 2: I do. You help. We talk.

²⁵¹ I use the word “worship collective” to mean a team of musicians who work together to form a collective identity through music that is geared towards and centered on worship.

²⁵² Dave and Jon Ferguson, *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Church Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 71.

²⁵³ Ibid., 72.

Step 3: You do. I help. We talk.

Step 4: You do. I watch. We talk

*Step 5: You do. Someone else watches.*²⁵⁴

Several ministries of ACCW already implemented this model, such as small group leadership, and its use has proven successful. Applying a similar methodology to the worship ministry could prove transformational in the development of ACCW's and ACCGB's own identity.

The church building has a large basement area that is currently under-utilized. The space offers the opportunity and potential to be converted into a music recording studio to create and produce original worship music that contributes to a unique voice developing within the church. Creating the means and opportunity to develop the church's own locally produced music gives musicians a platform and the motivation to devote their own talents and abilities for the glory of God.²⁵⁵ Recruiting members within the church to help build and renovate the basement along with acquiring the necessary equipment to create the studio could provide the opportunity for the building of a community united by a common vision. Youth are often particularly attracted to projects that involve a combination of artistic creativity and technology, and building a music studio would provide a place for both.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 79.

²⁵⁵ There are always dangers with such enterprises. There is the possibility that commercial undertones could start driving the music rather than a genuine desire to create music that glorifies God. Ambition and a desire to be as "successful" as Hillsong United and Bethel Music may cloud the original intentions of such an initiative.

Technology is an important component of any contemporary worship service and ACCW is no exception. Many contemporary churches have replaced the traditional hymnal with projector screens and the pipe organ with guitars, drums and electronic instruments. As a result, media resources and technologies need to be explored that will allow the church to stay current and informed with technological advances and social trends.²⁵⁶ Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are still uncharted territory for ACCW that if utilized correctly could provide new areas for evangelism and church growth. Broadcasting services live online and creating podcasts are two ways the church could incorporate technology to its advantage.

Technology and computer software have become the norm in the music industry and the world of contemporary praise and worship has followed suit. It is common practice for many worship teams (including Hillsong and Bethel) to incorporate backing tracks into their live sets in order to augment and fill out the sound of the worship team. Websites such as multitracks.com now provide the original separate musical tracks from many of the professional recordings by bands such as Hillsong United and Bethel Music. For smaller churches, such as ACCW who have a limited resource of musicians, this is an invaluable way still to create live music with excellence and professionalism while still engaging and incorporating amateur musicians. Music software such as “Ableton Live” has become the industry standard for the integration of pre-recorded backing tracks with

²⁵⁶ A counter perspective is to ask if it is possible for the church to become a slave to technology. Is too much dependence on technology a cause for concern? Perhaps a way for the church to be more counter-cultural is to be less reliant on modern technology and more “old school” such as using physical hymn books/song books and printed material? Or at least a greater balance of the two?

live musicians. The church acquiring the relevant software and the worship pastor investing in learning the technology and apprenticing others could be a valuable and worthwhile pursuit for the worship ministry of the church as it struggles with a lack of skilled musicians.²⁵⁷

It is worth pausing here and asking why trying to sound like Hillsong United, Bethel Music or other such CPWM organizations is so important to ACCW/ACCGB. Perhaps the answer would be “it is not,” but the actual praxis of the church at least thus far, speaks otherwise. Arguably, this mentality could tie back to Lynn Nichols’ point that due to the commercialization of so much CPWM, people develop an idea of what “authentic” worship music is supposed to sound like and if it does not fit this description then it is not genuine and worthwhile.²⁵⁸ With such a rationale comes the danger of associating theological identity with musical style. ACCW would insist that their theological identity comes from their understanding and interpretation of scripture and that worship is a reflection and outworking of that understanding. But is that really the case? Could ACCW/ACCGB and the wider Antioch Community Church movement still worship and flourish without CPWM? Would their identity remain intact without CPWM?²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ Some critiques and concerns about the use of integrated backing tracks were raised in Chapter Three. Another challenge of using pre-recorded tracks is it can “lock in” the worship leader and thus prevent any moments of spontaneous worship and unplanned prayer etc. For a church, such as ACCW, that places a high value on spontaneity during worship, this is a concern. There are ways to create on the spot musical repeating loops within the “Ableton Live” software but, nonetheless, some spontaneity is inevitably lost.

²⁵⁸ See Chapter One.

²⁵⁹ A fair answer is probably yes. The Antioch Community Church movement was not founded on a musical style but on a desire and vision to see the gospel shared and preached around the world through

Investing in the appropriate technologies is important, but of greater significance is the investment in people and their respective gifts as they pertain to the body of Christ. Historically, Antioch Community Churches have required that regular worship team members be believing, active members of the church. The reasoning behind this position has been that as musicians on stage for all the church to see, they serve as music ministers and so are endorsed by the church to lead the congregation in worship.²⁶⁰ Subsequently, worship team musicians are held to a higher standard than the regular congregation member. Such a policy carries an admirable integrity, but there is no question that musical quality often suffers as the church is left with enthusiastic but amateur musicians whose skills vary widely.²⁶¹ Many churches do not have such strict policies regarding musicians and are unconcerned with the religious inclinations (or lack thereof) of the musicians. Instead, they are hired for their musical skill alone. To many musicians, a Sunday morning service is just another gig. The question must be asked, however: Is there a middle ground that can be found between these two approaches or philosophies?

Once again authors Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson provide some interesting food for thought under the sub-heading “Let Pagans Play” in *Exponential*.²⁶² They advocate for

church planting. The ACC movement does not seek to import its style of worship around the world but encourages church plants to incorporate and adapt indigenous music where possible into worship.

²⁶⁰ Much like the ministry of the Levites in the Old Testament Temple, (see 1 Chron. 9:33 as an example).

²⁶¹ How the term “quality” is defined is somewhat subjective and mercurial. A perpetual problem for music ministers is the question of doing “your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than men” (Col. 3:23) and balancing sincere Spirit-filled worship with musical excellence.

²⁶² Ibid., 82-83.

allowing non-believers to participate on the worship team when they write, “Since we encourage people at all stages of spiritual growth to use their art for God, we have lots of artists who are recruited by other artists and began doing their art at our church before they became Christ followers. We’re not only ok with that; we encourage it.”²⁶³ This strategy may involve taking some risks, but it would seem that the benefits outweigh the risks. I have already initiated discussions with the lead pastor about finding a middle ground in regards to a church policy on worship team participants. If framed in the correct way, inviting non-believers to partake in worship as musical contributors and collaborators could be a creative method of evangelism that furthers the church’s missional vision.²⁶⁴

As the church strives to be more technologically savvy, the question of aesthetics needs to be carefully addressed. A number of important renovations such as new chairs, painting, and indoor and outdoor signage have already been completed or are in progress. The design and layout of the sanctuary where Sunday morning worship takes place has still yet to be determined. Initial plans for an approach that allows for lightning and projection to play significant roles has been drafted. Regardless of final designs, the execution of such a project presents its own challenges in trying to create an ambience conducive to allowing the congregation to worship with minimal distraction. Many contemporary churches have adopted an aesthetic look that resembles a pop/rock concert

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ This is the ideal outcome but there are inherent risks too. What if the influence works in reverse and faithful members on the team are “evangelized” by the non-believer?

and many Antioch Community Churches have followed suit. Data from the worship survey suggested that aesthetics were somewhat important but not the main concern for the congregation. This data regarding the congregation's opinion towards aesthetics is another factor to be considered with regards to how much time and effort is devoted to such work rather than other areas of ministry.

As the cultural diversity of the church increases, it will be necessary for the church to grow in cultural intelligence. Part of the church's missional practice has to be reaching out to and embracing persons of different ethnic identities who attend the church. As the earlier demographics show, there is a significant African and Asian population within in the church that needs to be engaged and empowered. The encouragement and equipping of leaders is one way to empower minorities. This is not only one of the goals of the worship ministry, but it must also be encouraged in other areas of church ministry. The small group setting has become an excellent platform for the formation of new leaders.

Most of the discussion and recommendations thus far have been regarding the internal activity of the church, but equally if not more important is the church's engagement with and impact upon Waltham and its environs. As a movement, the church believes that it is called to be present in the city as a beacon of light. The church can only truly be effective in this mission if the neighborhood and surrounding areas know the church exists. This calls for greater engagement within the city through actively being present on the streets, talking with people, passing out fliers, inviting people, getting to know neighbors, and engaging in acts of kindness, generosity and social justice. Greater

work is also needed in working with homeless shelters, addiction centers and local government agencies that focus on social justice. Such initiatives raise community awareness that God is at work in their land and also help to serve as a form of incarnational evangelism.

The church has initiated a program entitled “Look” which seeks to invite the congregation to pray about and voice their thoughts and opinions on areas of outreach, where the church needs to focus. Currently, data from the congregation is being collected to formulate a plan going forward that will engage the church in proactive outreach and evangelism. The mission of the church is geared towards both local outreach but also to international evangelism through foreign missions. A significant population of the church was stirred by the recent immigration crisis facing Europe. Over the summer of 2016, as part of a program called “Engage the Crisis,” teams travelled to Germany to work with Syrian refugees. Such narratives inspire the congregation and they serve to remind the church of its missional values.

The year of 2016 was a time of significant change for ACCW/ACCGB. Other than the changes noted above, both the Brighton and Beverley congregations had crises of leadership that saw their senior pastors step down from their positions. The senior pastor of the Beverley congregation, suffering from severe burnout, has left the ministry to pursue a career as a school teacher. The senior pastor of the Brighton congregation, after much discussion with the leadership board of ACCGB, recognized that his role as senior pastor was not the best role for him as the church continues to grow and change.

He has since relocated to another Antioch Community Church in San Diego in a different pastoral role.

While both of these transitions were amiable and were not the product of any animosity, the transitions created a temporary period of instability and anxiety within the church movement. The placement of interim pastors calmed the situations, which seems to have left the congregations largely unscathed. With the departure of two significant leaders, though, questions must be asked about the self-care of church leaders, and what (if any) protocols the church has in place to prevent burnout and vocational misalignments. As the church movement grows, additional official guidelines need to be designed and implemented to protect both the pastor and the flock from the strains and stresses of ministry.

Another issue is sermonic style, material and substance. Ironically, in a church that maintains scripture as essential and central to its identity, one of the main criticisms of the church has been a lack of scriptural teaching through its preaching. A recent Pew Research study found that the quality of the sermons was the single most important factor in helping Americans choose a new house of worship (style of worship and a feeling of being welcomed were also high priority).²⁶⁵ The church has lost several key families due to what they perceived to be a lack of expositional preaching that sufficiently taught scripture with depth and acumen. As the primary preacher, most of the criticism has been directed at senior pastor, Sean Richmond. By nature, Richmond is more a topical

²⁶⁵ “Choosing a New Church or House of Worship,” The Pew Research Center, August 23, 2016, accessed December 18, 2016, <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/08/23/choosing-a-new-church-or-house-of-worship/>.

preacher who uses scripture to exhort and encourage. To his credit, Richmond has embraced the criticism with humility and a willingness to address incorporating more expositional preaching by forming sermon series consults and preaching teams that also allow for other pastors to preach more often.²⁶⁶

The suggestions, ideas and implications put forth in this chapter address a number of key issues for ACCW and ACCGB that have emerged through this study. Identity is one such issue for ACCW as it endeavors to embrace its cultural and ethnic diversity. There are a number of ways this can be can be addressed, including considering how music is used during worship, undertaking to train, equip and empower diversity within the leadership of the church, and promoting cross-cultural community. Further tied to the church's identity is its attachment to CPWM. Questions must continue to be asked about the necessity and validity of such an attachment. Is the church prepared to let go of such an attachment if it helps promotes greater diversity and sense of mission within the church? Not only are these practical questions, but they are also deeply theological ones that will help determine the praxis of worship at ACCW and ACCGB.

Practical considerations of building renovations, the continued consolidation of the three churches and branding (such as new website designs, signage church stationary and letter heading, etc.) are all issues that demand time and attention. The healthy

²⁶⁶ The River does not use a lectionary and is unlikely to ever use one, but it is worth asking what the homiletical style of a preacher/church movement/denomination says about their approach and view of scripture. For the many churches that advocate holding to a high view of scripture, the question must be asked, should the scriptures be allowed to speak for themselves? Is the hand picking of certain biblical passages to support a sermonic message or sermon series essentially using the Bible as a prop or a proof text to support a pre-conceived idea of what the scriptures mean rather than letting the text guide the message? Do we prepare the text or does the text prepare us? One advantage of a lectionary is that it forces the pastor to address texts and cultural issues that might otherwise be ignored. Another benefit is that the lectionary provides a greater sense of the meta-narrative implicit in the Bible.

integration of technology into the worship of the church is also another practical and theological matter to be wrestled through as a clearer collective identity continues to be established. Finally, ACCW's missional role in the city of Waltham and indeed ACCGB's plans and hopes for the New England area are perennial questions that will constantly evolve as the church grows. Which social issues, areas of justice, reconciliation and compassionate care does ACCW feel called to be involved with in the city of Waltham? What and where will future congregational plants take place? How will ACCGB help facilitate, equip and assist in such plants? All these questions provide both challenges and exciting opportunities for the ACCW and ACCGB to grow in their mission and purpose as the church of Jesus Christ.

Appendix A

On May 31st, 2015, I received a text from a young man from The River church I had been spiritually mentoring saying he was concerned that his mother was sick and should perhaps be taken to hospital. I advised he should take his mother to the hospital and the young man agreed. He asked that I meet him at Framingham hospital where he would take her. I arrived at approximately 7pm and provided prayer, comfort and support for the young man. By 9pm the situation had deteriorated drastically. The doctors informed us that an unknown infection was invading his mother's body and that all of her vital organs were shutting down. Sepsis was also attacking her body. The mother was placed in critical condition and was not expected to survive the night. Our Senior Pastor and several other people from the church joined us and we set up 24-hour prayer sign up sheets via email to our church members, which were rapidly filled. The mother made it through the night much to the surprise of the doctors and it was determined that she needed to be med-flown to Tufts medical center for cardiac treatment. The concern was that the mother would not survive the 8-minute flight. The mother survived the flight and was placed in ICU in Tufts hospital. Due to the lack of heart function and blood flow, necrosis was setting in the extremities of her body. This was particularly affecting her hands, feet and nose, which were all turning a purple-black colour. It was determined that she was suffering from an incredibly rare Strep infection that had also developed into meningitis. To save her life and prevent further infection she would have to have both her legs below the knee amputated and both hands also amputated. The surgeries were successful and the young man's mother was transferred to

Massachusetts General Hospital for further treatment and care. After further recovery time, the mother was transferred to Spaulding Rehabilitation Center and received treatment to prepare her for life as a quadruple amputee in the every-day world.

Appendix B

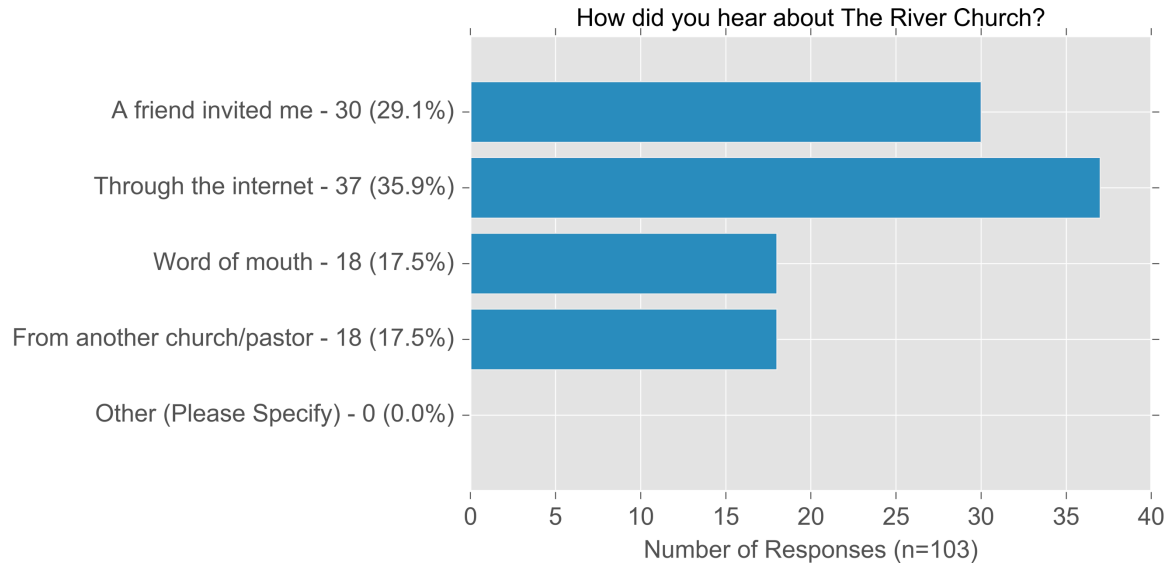


Figure 4 - How did you hear about The River Church?

Other:

- Needed a church closer to us.
- From CFCF
- Part of the original church planting team from CFCF
- I was part of the original church plant.
- Family invited me.
- Helped start it!
- Family member
- Family member.
- Walked past.

- Saw the church sign.
- founding member; former member of CFCF.
- Family invited me.
- Helped start it from CFCF
- Part of plant team
- Been going to Antioch churches over past 10 years.
- A friend invited me
- Family
- Joy and Travis Philips invited us to CFCF
- Member of the church
- Invited by Pastor Sean at Panera while having a Bible study with friends
- Sister
- Google
- Walk by
- met Laura Richmond at BTA
- a church member, Kassidy

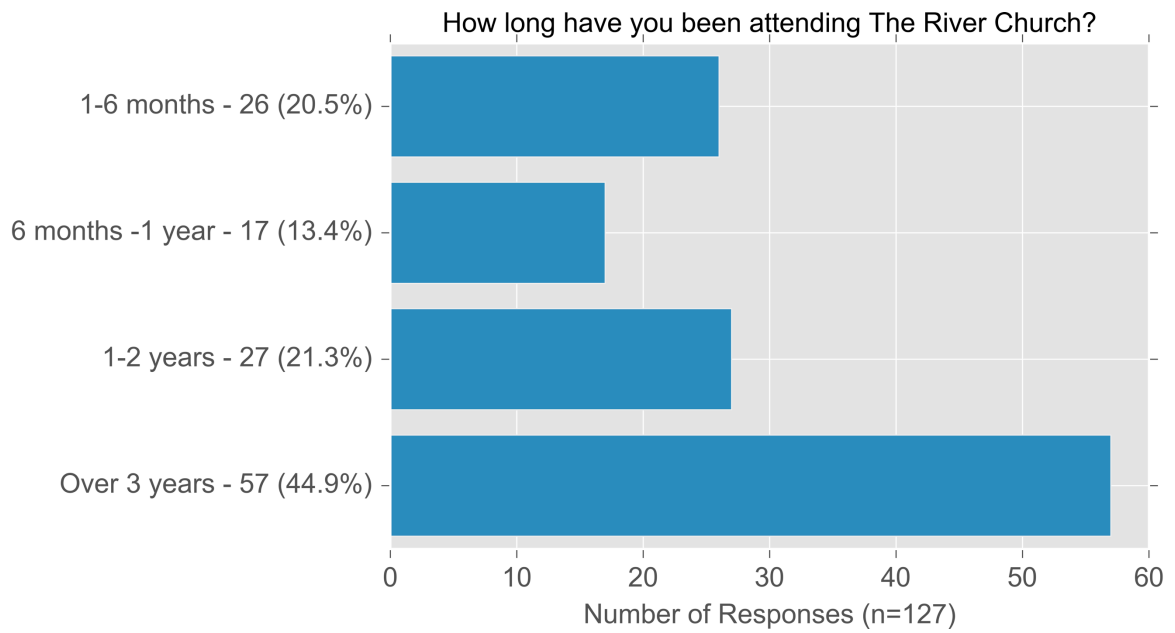


Figure 5 - How long have you been attending The River Church?

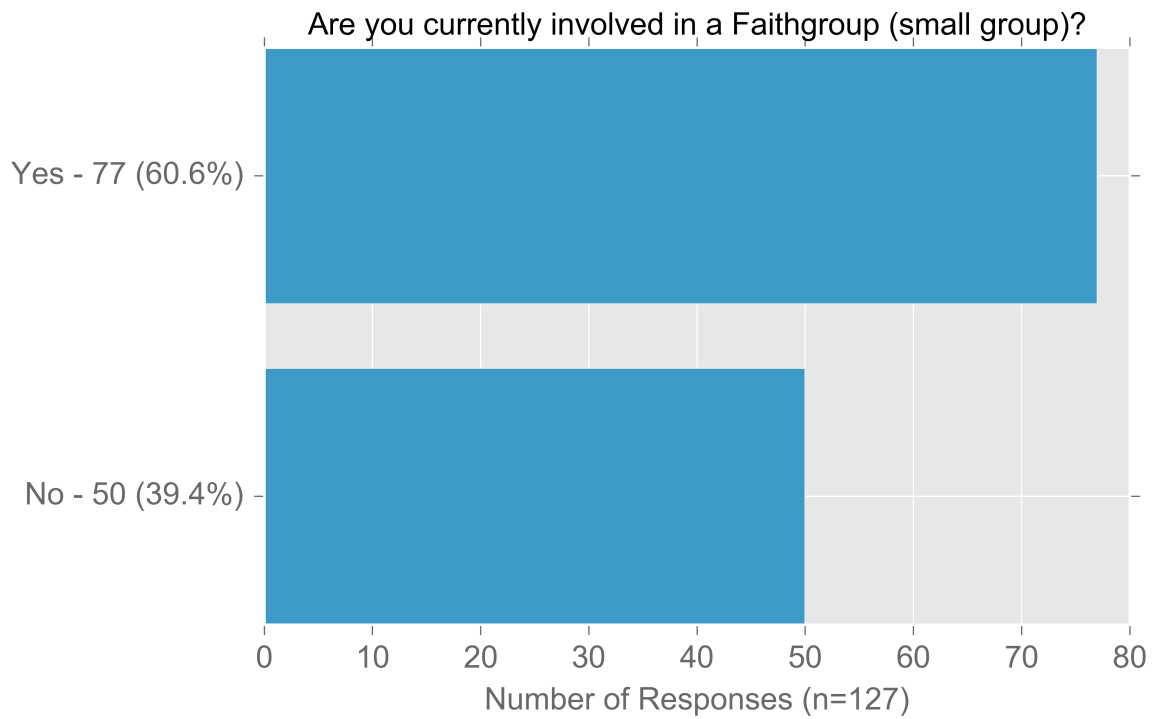


Figure 6 - Are you currently involved in a Faithgroup (small group)?

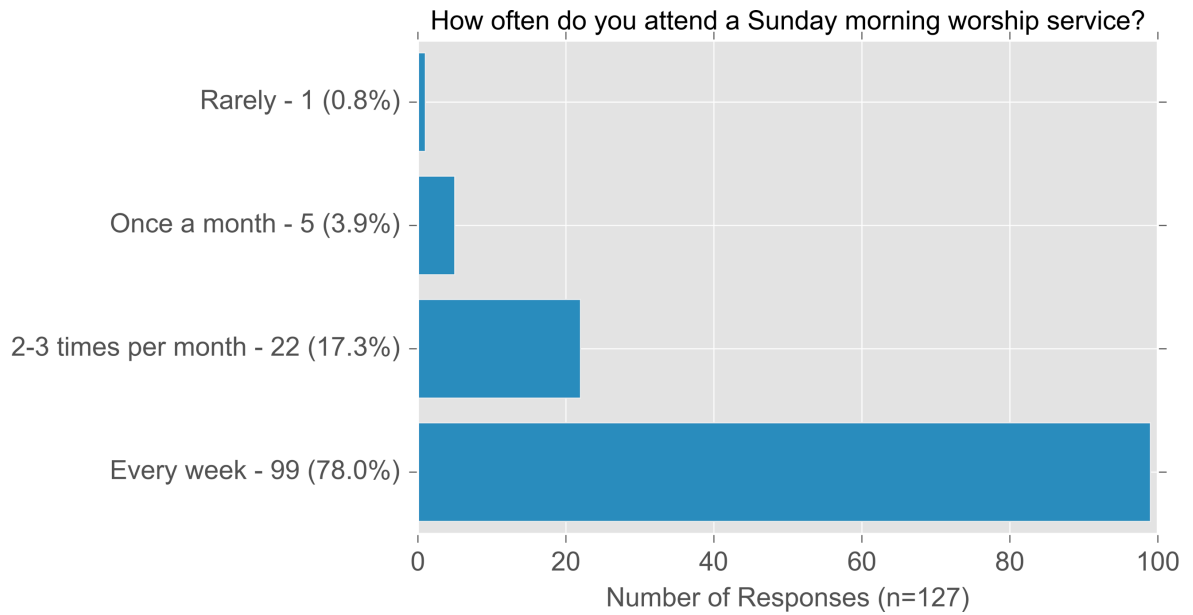


Figure 7 - How often do you attend a Sunday morning worship service?

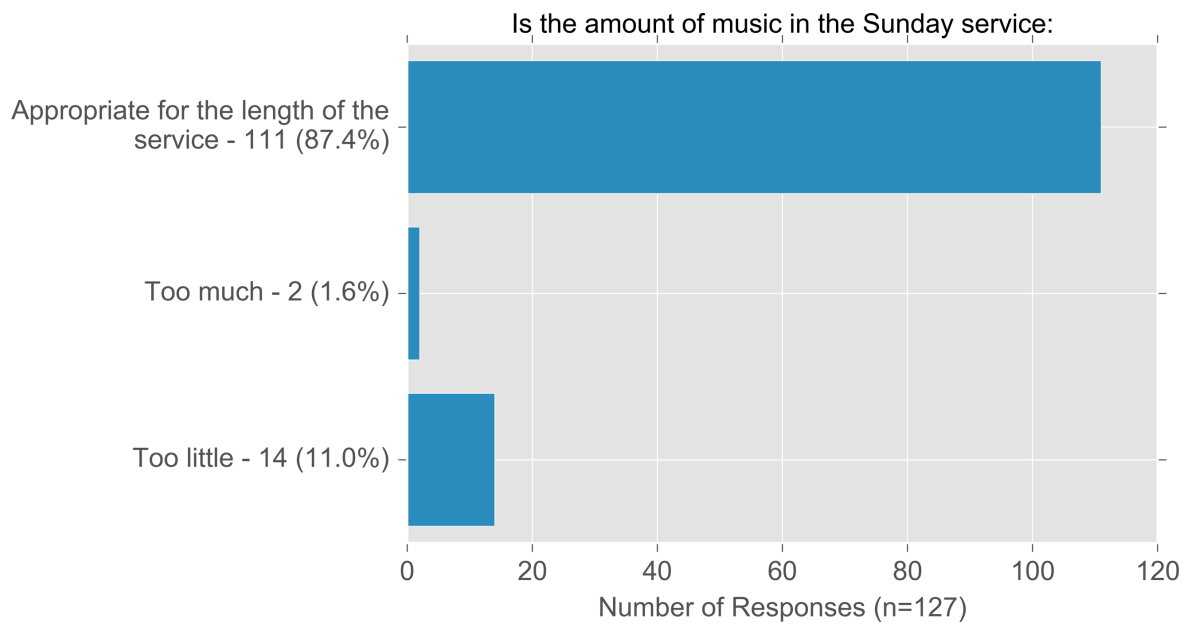


Figure 8 - Is the amount of music in the Sunday service:

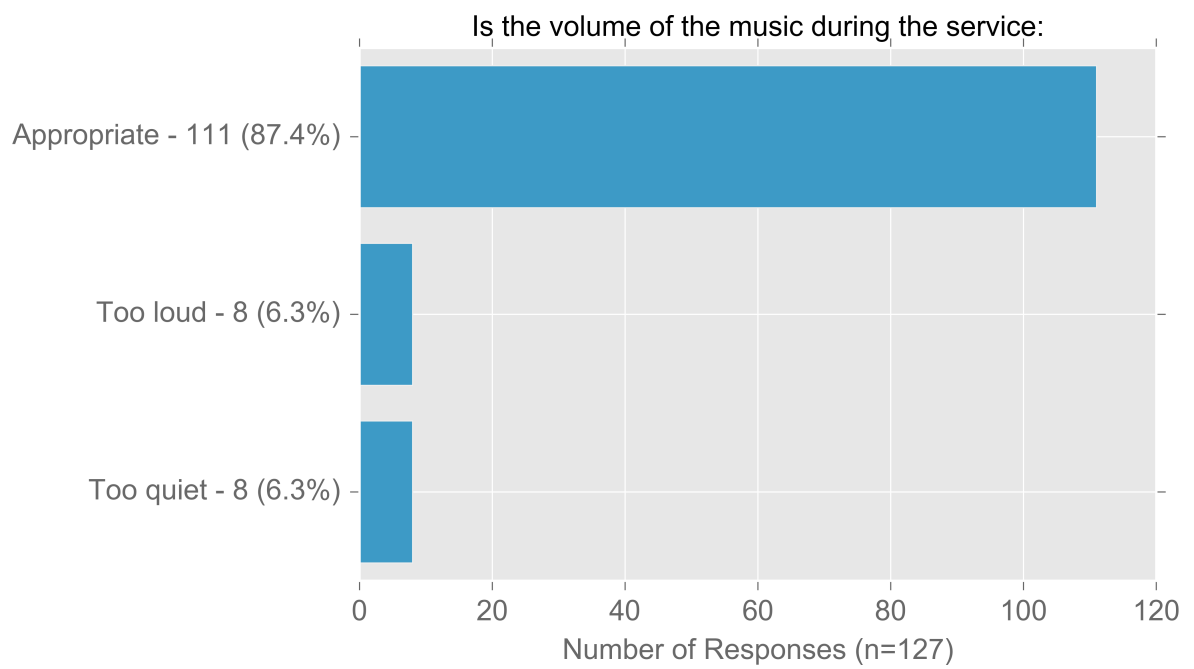


Figure 9 - Is the volume of the music during the service

| - | More Of This Characteristic | About The Same As The Present | Less Of This Characteris tic |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Traditional hymns that are widely recognized to have a quality tune and text | 46 | 62 | 19 |
| Contemporary Praise and Worship Music with pop and rock stylistics such as Hillsong, Bethel Music, Chris Tomlin etc. | 52 | 71 | 4 |
| Contemporary Gospel and praise music such as Kirk Franklin, Fred Hammond and Israel and New Breed. | 37 | 76 | 14 |
| Multi-cultural worship and praise music that reflects the ethnicities of the congregation. | 57 | 61 | 9 |
| Liturgy & planned worship aids, such as prayers, responsive readings, etc. | 33 | 73 | 21 |
| Spontaneous prayer and worship | 62 | 59 | 6 |

Figure 10 - There are a number of musical styles for congregational singing. Based on your understanding of these types, check the categories that indicate your preferences.

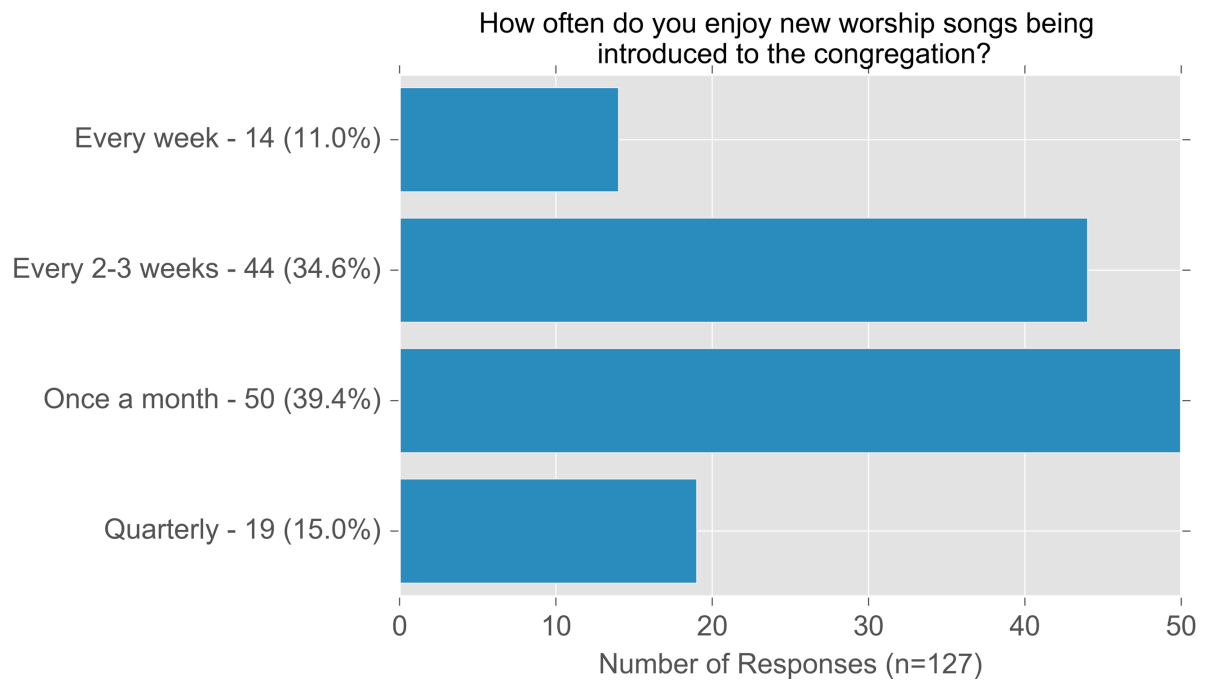


Figure 11 - How often do you enjoy new worship songs being introduced to the congregation?

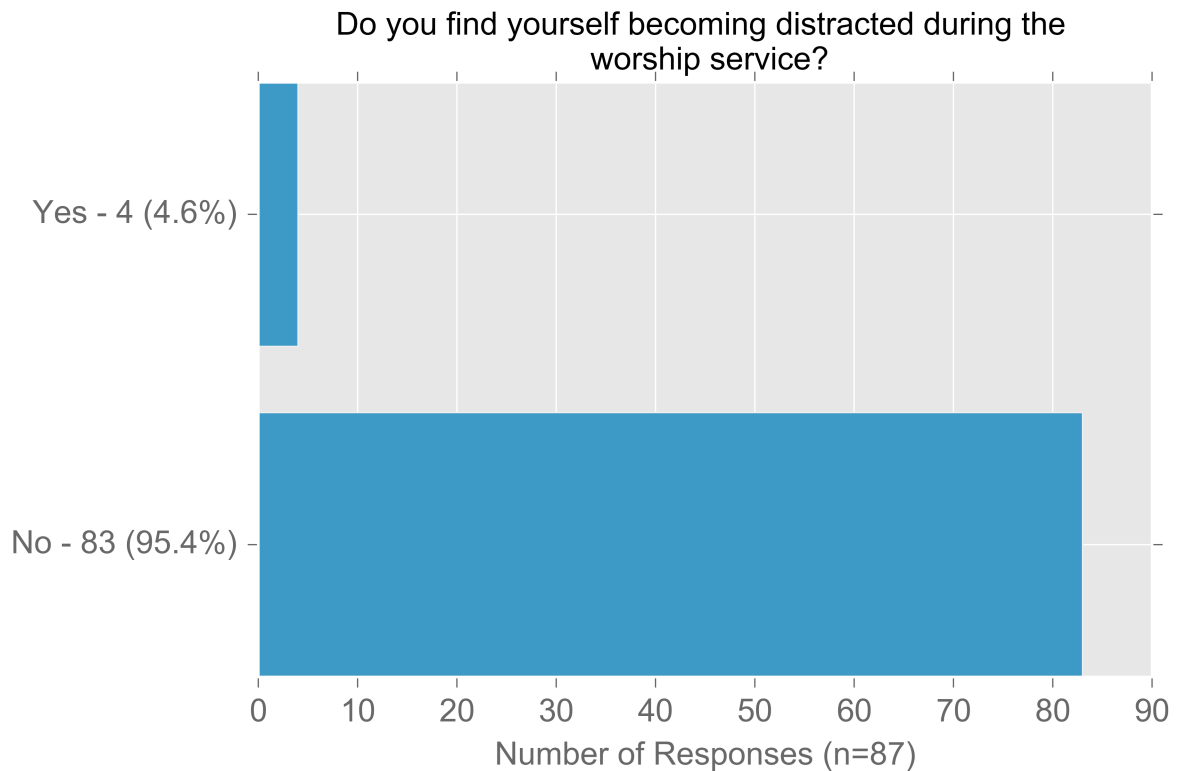


Figure 12 - Do you find yourself becoming distracted during the worship service?

Other:

- My vocal ability is less than the singers so sometimes the singers, but most times they lead me into worship
- Sometimes I'm tired and my mind just wanders
- Sometimes the mind wanders!
- Sometimes by babies crying and running in the aisles.
- The overall church service is a bit long for my attention span.
- Not very often but occasionally. Words from the worship leader help.
- Children and families can be distracting at times.

- Kids sometimes other times I want my kids to worship! We do it well now. Half before dismissal of kids, half after.
- Sometimes my own thoughts.
- Children
- Sometimes during worship especially during slower newer songs.
- Thoughts of what is going on in my life.
- Only when serving in the back-people coming and going.
- Sometimes the mind wanders.
- Sometimes I was distracted by the thoughts in my mind, hard to focus. definitely need prayers about concentration.
- Sometimes, not all the time, but this has less to do with the atmosphere and more to do with the quieting of the mind.
- It sometimes feels like just singing to go with the order of the service absent of sensitivity to the Spirit and his movement.
- Children (my own!)
- Sometimes if there is a lot of interruptions between songs.
- Sometimes loud talking around me can be very distracting including smaller kids and adults alike.
- Cute babies!
- Too many cute babies lol!

- It's only occasionally and I don't know what you do about that! But the lights are high people are moving and talking, babies are crying-it happens!
- When someone comes to talk to me in the middle of worship, especially when my eyes are closed. Children can also distract.
- 2 kids!
- I'm actually quite distracted by music and speaking, like during announcements or prayer. I find it hard to have both at once.
- Usually by cute babies, no fault of the service itself.
- Rarely happens. More if I sit too far back, can't see the screen, don't know the song.
- Sometimes between the break to release youth and announcements and offering song or two because people show up late and then do youth release/announcements/offering all at once.
- If someone is dressed inappropriately it can be distracting
- sometimes I just nod off nothing to do with the content or speaker
- Sometimes I find the message is scattered, which makes it hard to follow.
- These occasions of distraction are rare and rather minor: Projection - next line of lyrics prompted after we've already begun singing it. Person (amazing woman with a beautiful voice! :) singing
- in worship from the soundboard.
- Sometimes crying babies create a distraction

- Sometimes if the lyrics on more modern worship songs are too repetitive or not very deep, I get distracted.
- Sometimes theres toddlers wander over to you
- When my children are present it is hard.
- by my responsibilities
- Sometimes kids are so darn cute and I watch them instead of listen to the songs
- Sometimes during the messages I can zone out a bit when they don't seem to have content that feels relevant to my life.

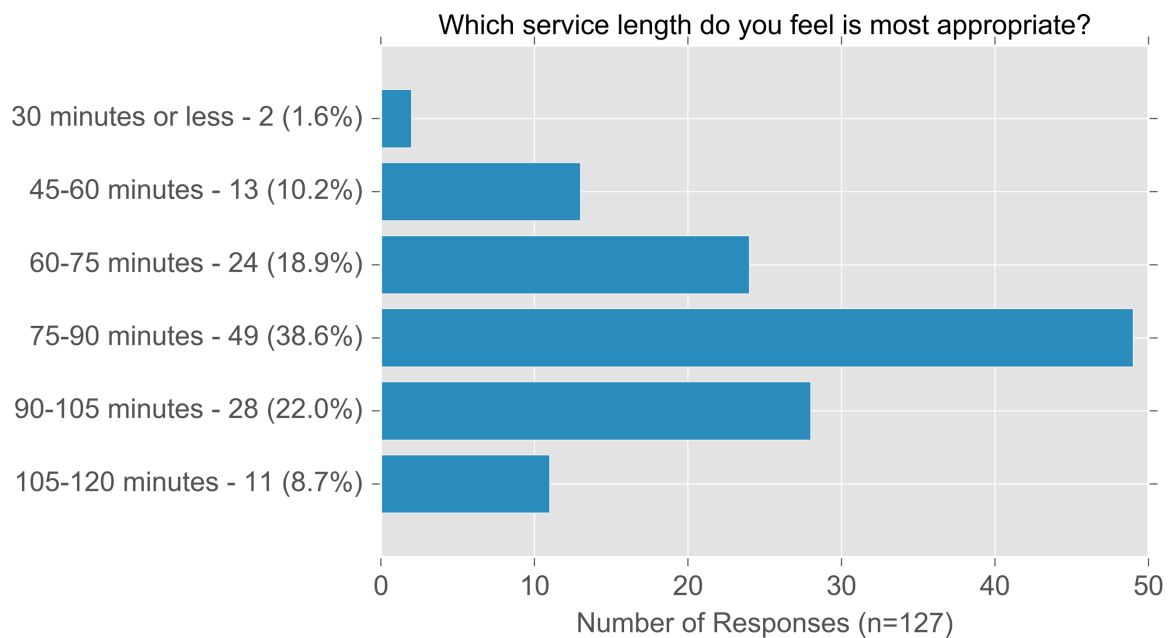


Figure 13 - Which service length do you feel is most appropriate?

Other:

- 30 minutes worship, 45 mins sermon or something like that.
- I think 30-45 mins for a sermon plus 30-35 minutes for church is appropriate.
- I think it could be longer for more worship time.
- N/A
- Prayer, worship and preaching should be 30 minutes each at a minimum.
- I think somewhere between 1 1/2 hours and two hours is a good amount of time to fit in both the sermon and a good amount of worship.
- gives time for all the elements of the service
- 30mins of praise & worship
- 45 mins of sharing the Word
- I like our service length now but it almost always is cut short. A longer message and a response/worship time would be great! Maybe 1 or 2 times per month to have extended service would
- be nice.
- Anything longer than 1.5hours can start to feel long
- 90 mins works well but having up to 105 is a nice buffer if the Holy Spirit is moving.
- It is important to include a good amount of time for response.
- I think a longer response time would be beneficial.
- 90 mins is a good time. I've felt very comfortable with normal schedule.

- N/A
- It is a good length now.
- Best length for people's attention spans.
- Enough time to meditate on the message.
- I think sermons can often be too long. I don't think it necessarily takes 30+ minutes to comprehensively convey a message.
- Allows for longer times of worship and response in addition to the message.
- N/A
- No rush through worship or teaching portion part.
- 90 works well.
- I think past an hour and a half, people can start to get antsy and the focus of the worship is lost.
- N/A
- I feel like allowing the service to run beyond 60 mins gives time for 30 mins of worship and approx. 1 hour of sermon. I do believe that if the Holy Spirit is active and moving and the service goes beyond 105 mins, the service should continue. 90-105 mins should only be a guide not a set in stone figure.
- I think that anywhere from 45-105 mins would be appropriate. It gives enough time for the worship portion and leaves ample time for the sermon allowing for it to be more in-depth.

- Shorter message but longer praise and worship than compared with now.
- To add a bit more during praise and worship and give room for the Spirit to work throughout. Also, time for prayer afterwards.
- To add a bit more during praise and worship and give room for the Spirit to work throughout. Also, time for prayer afterwards.
- N/A
- N/A
- N/A
- I feel it's not too long or short the way it is now.
- 1.5 hours is good. long enough to have good worship and a message that is good. Any longer and it would be harder to engage a broad audience.
- I feel like we need at least 90 mins to accomplish all the important elements. Worship, ministry, teaching and announcements.
- We could have more worship time. It feels rushed. Then word could also be allocated for
- It takes time to enter into the presence of the Lord, for many. We need more and more time in his presence, weekly or monthly worship/prayer (like we have had a few times this year) would
- be good. Transformation and healing.
- I think half an hour of worship is needed at least. Sometimes it is hard to let go of the baggage that you can come in with and get into God's presence.

- N/A
- It's a good amount of time to worship, hear the word of God and receive/give ministry -leaving time after to fellowship more with those you don't see often.
- I like how the service length is now. worship being for part of it and then the sermons.
- The longer the better!
- N/A
- Staff should listen to the Holy Spirit and follow his lead. If he has more to say it should be said. He doesn't follow time frames and you and your congregation won't notice them either if you
- follow him.
- It gives time for worship and sermon comfortably.
- I think that allows time for worship and a message, while also allowing time for fellowship following the service. Too long of a service may be difficult to maintain focus.
- N/A
- I enjoy the worship so I like having ample time to worship and for the word (preaching)I think this would be appropriate time for both.
- The point is widely known. We know why we're here. You're driving the point home!
- Would give more time for worship and praise.

- I think we have a sufficient amount of service time.
- More time with God is always good-more flexibility.
- I believe the current service length works well.
- N/A
- N/A
- Allows for maximum focus.
- Depending on the topic. I would like to have more time for going up for or to pray before parents have to get their kids. But sometimes we need the full 90 minutes when other things are going
- on like communion and such. Our church is awesome! Love the way the Holy Spirit works in worship to get us all ready to sit and receive the message.
- It's good to have enough room for the sermon, worship/singing, and prayer.
- I think the length of service we have now is pretty good.
- 75 mins seems perfect to still allow for the response time after the sermon which I feel is extremely important.
- Worship 45 mins and sermon 45 mins sounds good to me.
- N/A
- 90 mins seems comfortable. I think longer would be too long for Sunday AM because there are those who are not ready for it.
- Average, adding time as appropriate for the Holy Spirit to move.
- Gives sufficient time for hearty worship and for time for teaching of the word.

- N/A
- This seems appropriate based on 1.5 hrs of the entire service. Worship should be about 30 mins.
- Love for worship to be longer.
- Anywhere between 60-90 mins.
- I like worshipping before and after the lesson but I feel the lesson should be the majority if not equal to the amount of time as the worshipping.
- N/A
- I believe this allows for worship/praise, the word/message and misc. aspects necessary without being too brief or drawn out.
- Allows for a good worship length and time to hear God's word without kids "losing it" in the nursery and things like bladder and hunger not coming into play to distract too much.
- The more you seek the more you find.
- Is fine with the time we have now.
- 30-40 mins worship
- 30-40 mins word/sermon best.
- Need enough time to be in God's presence but not to drag things.
- An hour plus 30 mins feels like a good length for the planned portions of the service; but when the Spirit leads let it lead away!

- I could handle a longer service if the service started earlier. Anything past 11:30 though I start getting antsy for lunch. sometimes I think a long service results in rambling sermons. A long
- service is ok if we devote the longer time to more diverse activities: testimonies from CFTS students, call/response, spontaneous worship etc, rather than just lengthening all current activities.
- Ps. I define long as greater than 75 mins.
- Current time is good.
- Not too long, not too short.
- Like current time.
- This allows for an appropriate amount of time to be distributed to all the parts of worship, sermon, reflection etc.
- I think it's tough to get everything in, in under an hour.
- We only gather once in a week. Therefore, when two are gathered in the Spirit, it's very vital we spend more time with God and pray and worship. Also, it's time to belong, become and worship
- as a church.
- 90 seems right to target. Might want to say more and let people out early rather than hold people when we go long. It's all just framing, but to be honest I don't know if we actually advertise the
- End of the service working in the kid's ministry, it seems like the window is too long.

- I like the amount of time to be able to fit in a substantial worship set, to hear the word preached and still have some time for response or spontaneity- but it's not too long for the kids
- n/a
- Good length of worship time and concise message, keeping in mind of people's attention span.
- Too short feels rushed like we can't really settle into corporate time with God- particularly since as a non-liturgical church, The River relies more on waiting for feelings to build vs. using prayers
- we may know and feel connected to by the comforting length of tradition (the feeling connected to Christians across time, space I mean). And if it's too long I'll just feel ok coming half an hour
- late which my husband tells me is disrespectful to God and others.
- The current length of service allows for all the different parts without rushing or dragging on too often.
- N/A
- I think the length needs to be long enough to have sweet amount of time for each part and to be devoted to the worship of God.
- Appropriate time for focus.
- Want lots of time for worship before and after sermon.
- Want lots of time for worship before and after sermon.
- 40 mins of worship + 40 mins sermon + 10-15 for response = 90-105.

- I enjoy a longer message but an hour is typical to be appropriate.
- Good length
- The current length is just right!
- i like this choice the best
- I don't find myself distracted at all so far because everyone is at church as far as I have seen is always focused during time of Worship.
- That length 90- 105 minutes is better because sometimes we miss the time to talk to God in prayers after worship. You feel like I wish we could worship more and someone encourage people
- to say something to God. Because people have even to learn how to talk to God and during worship time when God's presence comes down, that the time you meet with God and tell him
- everything even through worship. I feel okay after worship, but I feel I need more and also to give God a chance to talk to his people. Also, people need that time of fellowship without rushing
- too much. We need to know each other, that's the way to get new friends and ministers as well. But still I know that America is time we have to consider it as well. So far so good I enjoy the
- church and all the members and the Leadership all together, thank you
- it seems like there's more music than sermon
- 25 minutes of worship, 5 minutes of announcements, 30 mins of sermon.

- If people coming to the service arrived at 10 am ready to jump in wholeheartedly, I think there would be an even greater sense of satisfaction and fullness in a 90-min service. As it is, the only
- thing I would want to add more time for is more testimonies.
- Actually, I think 90 minutes is the sweet spot.
- You need enough time to get fully into worshipping, then good amount of time for preaching and receiving the word, then also enough time for truly responding
- I'd like a supplement class to attend on Sunday instead of faith group during the week so I could feel more connected. It's hard to make time during the week and being out of group makes us
- feel disconnected/less bought in
- Ok
- A half hour seems like a good amount of time, but up to 45 minutes would be fine depending on the length of the worship time
- Need more time to talk to God in prayer with others
- I'm assuming this is announcement + music + service together.
- In order to have time for both quality worship and teaching, over an hour is pretty much required. :)
- Not too short or too long
- Anything less takes away either from worship or the message. Anything more will be more difficult for small kiddos.

- The current service length seems perfect. Plenty of time for worship, an appropriate amount of time for teaching - not too long that people disengage. And some time at the for people to
- pray together that is optional.
- There are times when Sean isn't there and they are basically finished sooner than they had planned? Rather than end the service they ramble on to fill up the 10 mins or whatever. God
- works on his own schedule not a clock and He doesn't like babble.
- Two hours ok for main service on Sunday
- If you go longer than 1:15 people will lose their focus.
- To leave enough room for welcome - greetings, worship and prayer.
- been happy with the current length which has been about 60 min. allowing time before and after for fellowship and prayer
- This length of time allows the pastors to have a general plan, but it also allows the Holy Spirit to move and change that plan. Flexible!
- Also, wanted to comment on #7 above. I like the very upbeat praise and worship (hand clapping, dancing, etc.) along with some slower traditional songs. However, our children are growing up
- (at almost every church) not knowing the wonderful hymns. I think a hymn every other week would be a great addition.
- I think the amount of time for the services now is appropriate.

- I think over 75 is a little too long but 60 minutes holds just about everyone's attention. Then it starts to diminish.
- More of Praise and worship and testimonies if any
- No preference. Enjoys all lengths.
- Current format seems to work
- I would prefer a slightly tighter service with less transitions that keeps the focus on worship, equipping, and prayer ministry/response that doesn't go past people's attention spans.

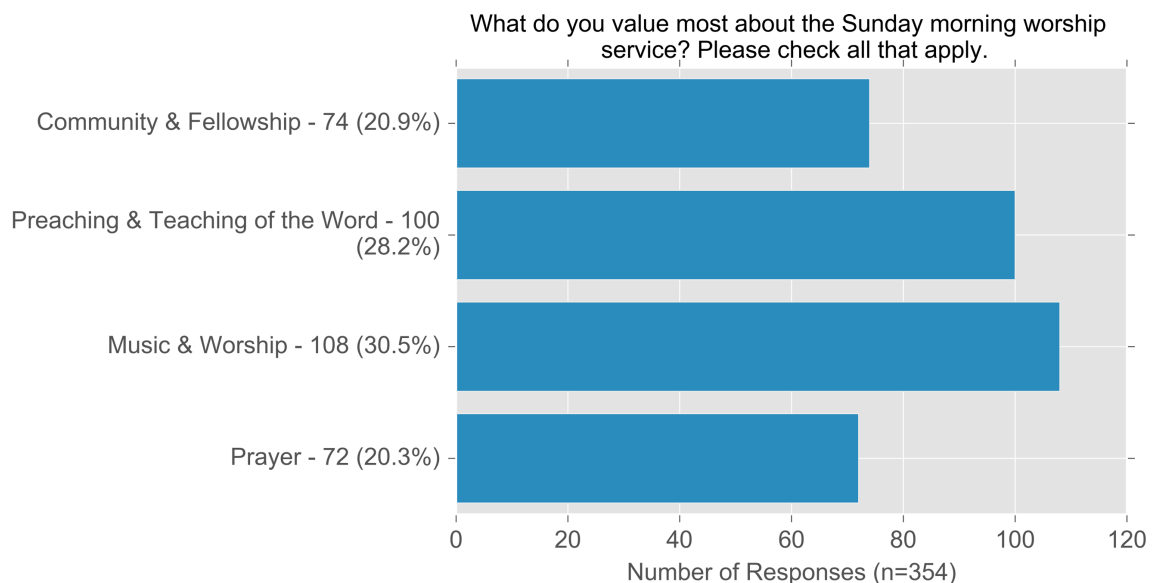


Figure 14 - What do you value most about the Sunday morning worship service? (Please check all that apply).

Other:

- Order of priority: worship, prayer, preaching and teaching of the word, community and fellowship.
- I value all. That's why I love worshipping here.
- Once again we know why we're here.
- Ministry
- Prayer and fellowship go together.
- learning about events/ministries/how the church is moving.
- More teaching of the word can be more advanced.
- Spontaneous words of knowledge, prophecy etc.
- n/a
- Encourage others and show them some love, any way that's fellowship. Eat together. Give to the needy, and Holy communion.
- I like meeting people wish there were more like me and my interests
- I have a hard time separating or ranking the importance of these elemental components of saints coming together.
- Response
- Convenient Location
- followed closely by prayer
- welcoming ushers

| | More of this Characteristic | About the same as the present | Less of this Characteristic |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Formality and dignity | 9 | 97 | 21 |
| Spontaneity and extemporaneousness | 52 | 70 | 5 |
| Reverence and holiness | 47 | 80 | 0 |
| Congregational participation & lay involvement | 37 | 83 | 7 |
| Liturgy & planned worship aids such as prayers, responsive readings | 26 | 77 | 24 |
| Drama, pageantry, & banners | 18 | 78 | 31 |

Figure 15 - Listed below are a number of general characteristics, which can be applied to the “style” in which the worship service is conducted. Based on your understanding of these terms, check the categories that indicate your preferences.

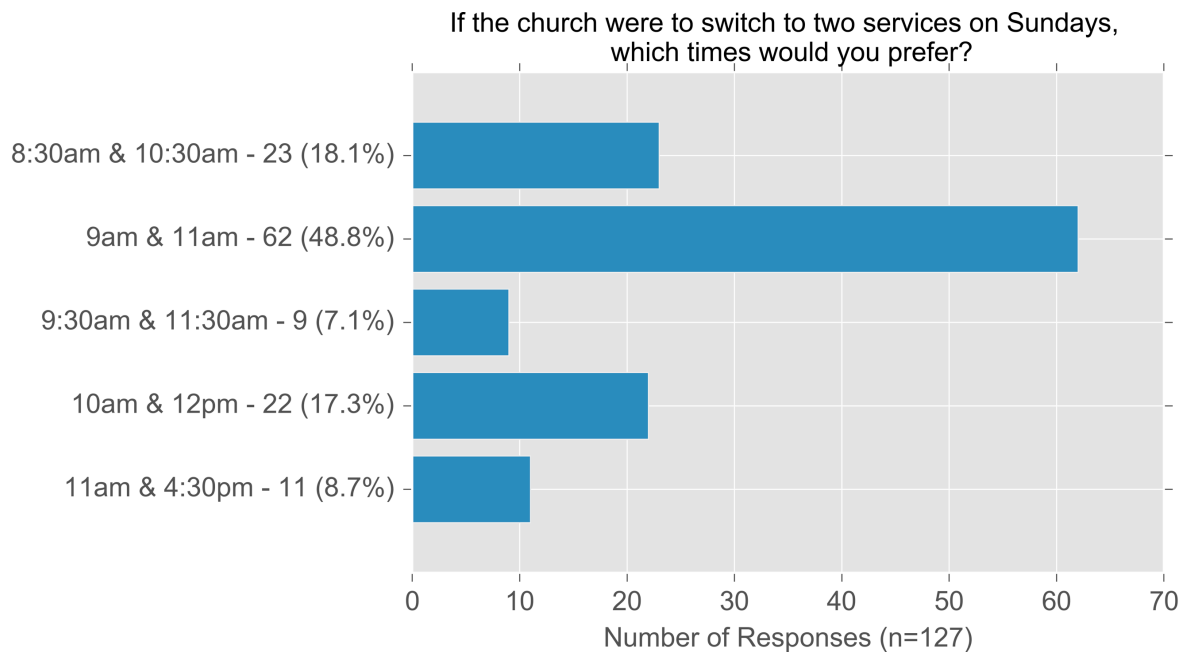


Figure 16 - If the church were to switch to two services on Sundays, which times would you prefer?

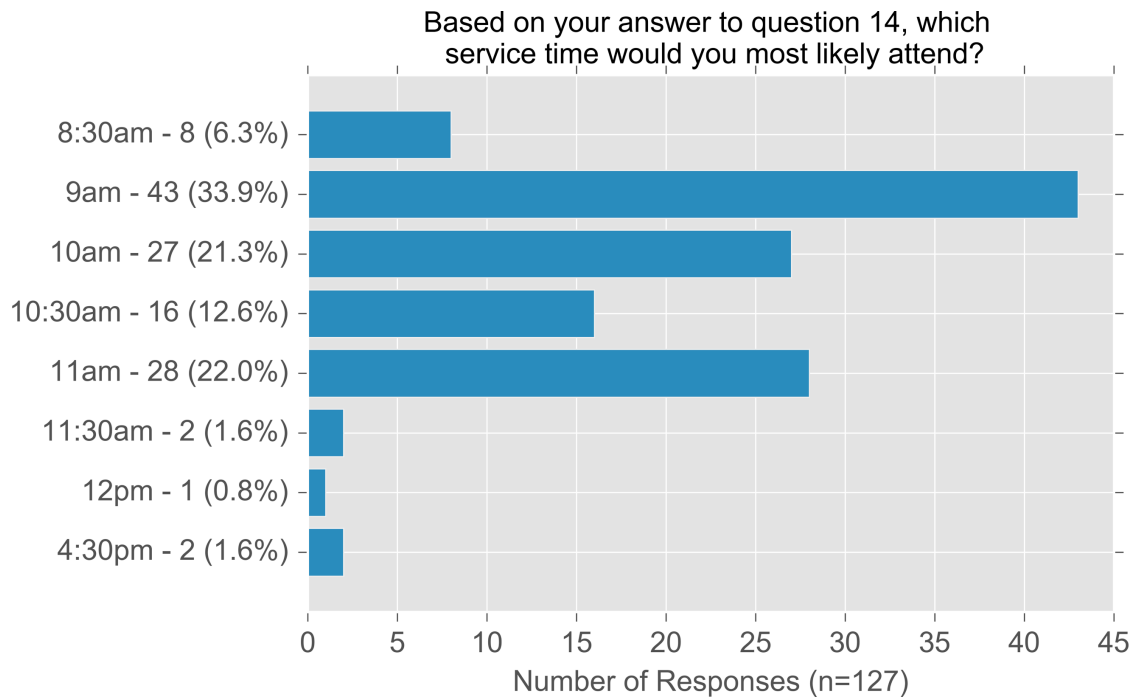


Figure 17 - Based on your answer to question 14, which service time would you most likely attend?

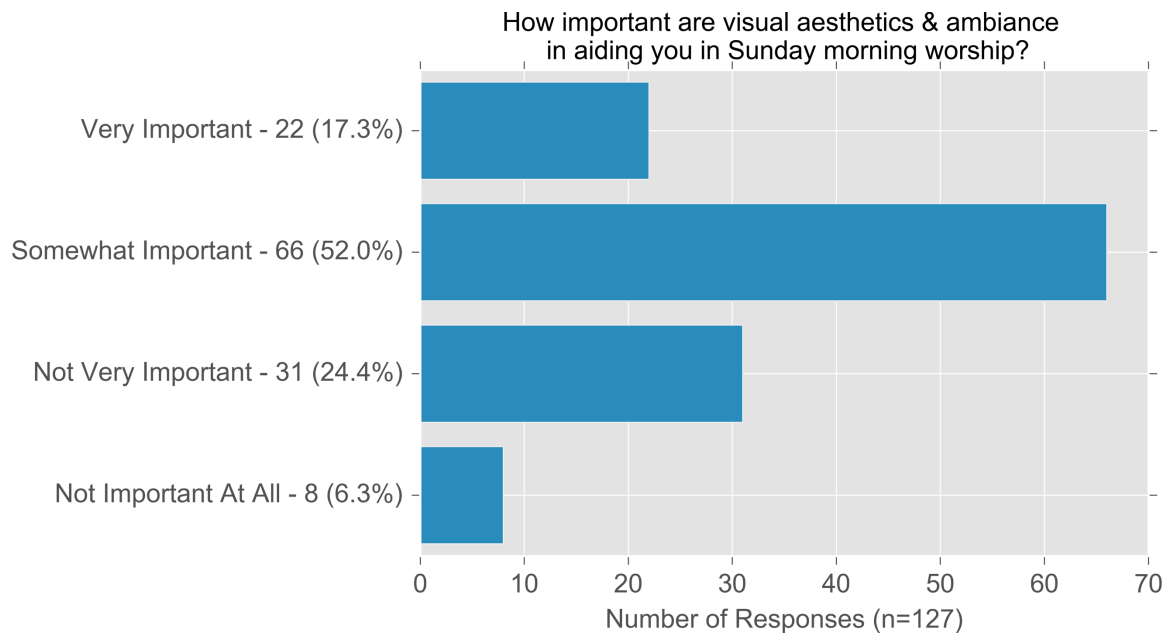


Figure 18 - How important are visual aesthetics/ambiance in aiding you in Sunday morning worship?

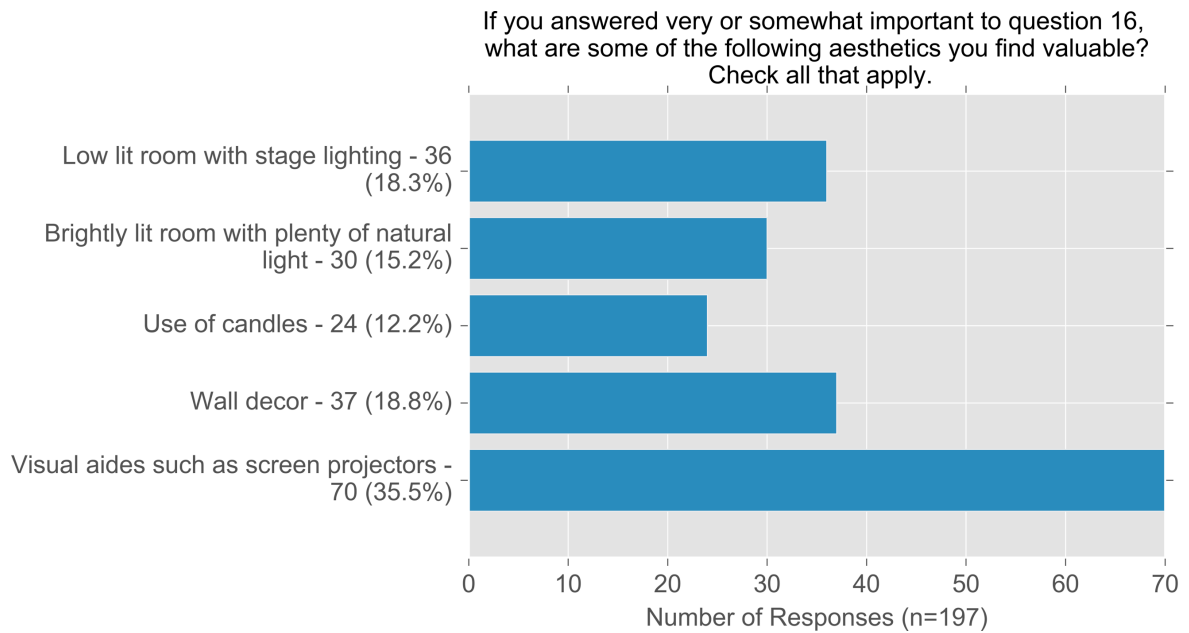


Figure 19 - If you answered very/somewhat important to question 16, what are some of the following aesthetics you find valuable? (Check all that apply.)

Other responses:

- Simple designs, nothing gaudy, I liked the streamers a lot
- No different than it is now, it's just right.
- I don't like low dim lit rooms. Prefer lots of light, preferably natural. decorations aren't a big deal to me.
- Nation flags, mission pics etc. N/A
- The stars at the front right now are beautiful! N/A
- Back lighting, lighting on the stage is so important because it sets the mood for the room. brochures

- the walls are stark white maybe a little softening of the color. Seasonal decorations and changes in the backgrounds/setting Answered not very important on 16
- Also, the doors that are alongside the stage need curtains the windows seem to be distracting
- Cohesive colors, visual layout, decor
- Current lighting is fine. The Christmas decorations were especially lovely this year. Perhaps more variety in the background art? I didn't answer very or somewhat but its forcing me to answer?

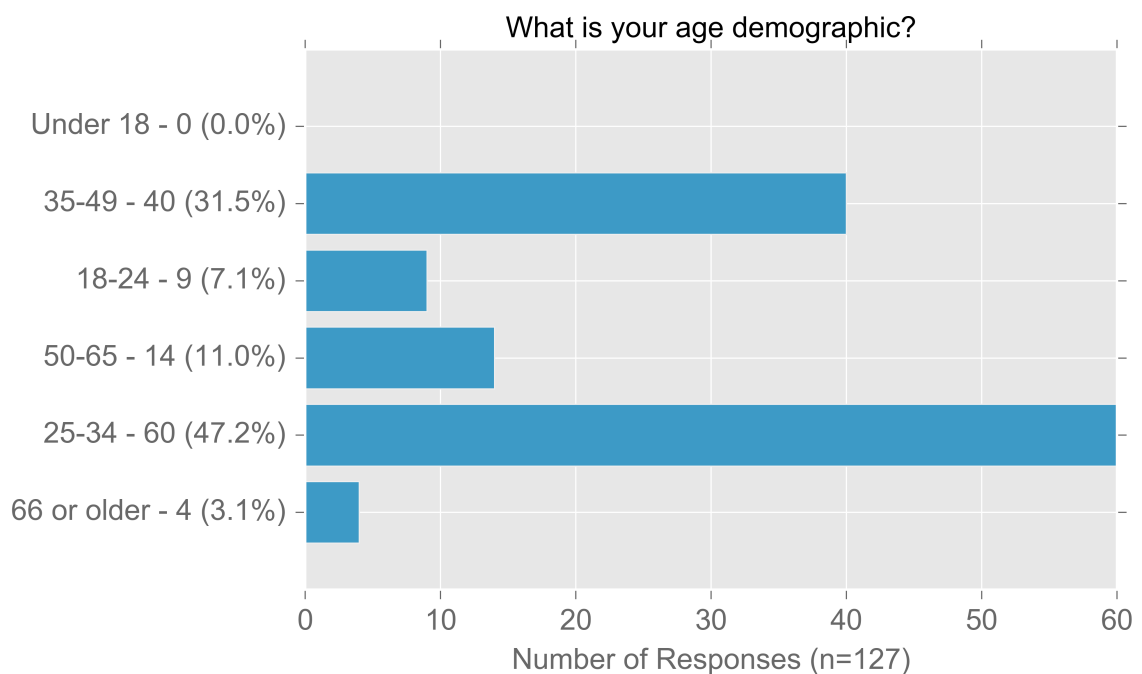


Figure 20 - What is your age demographic?

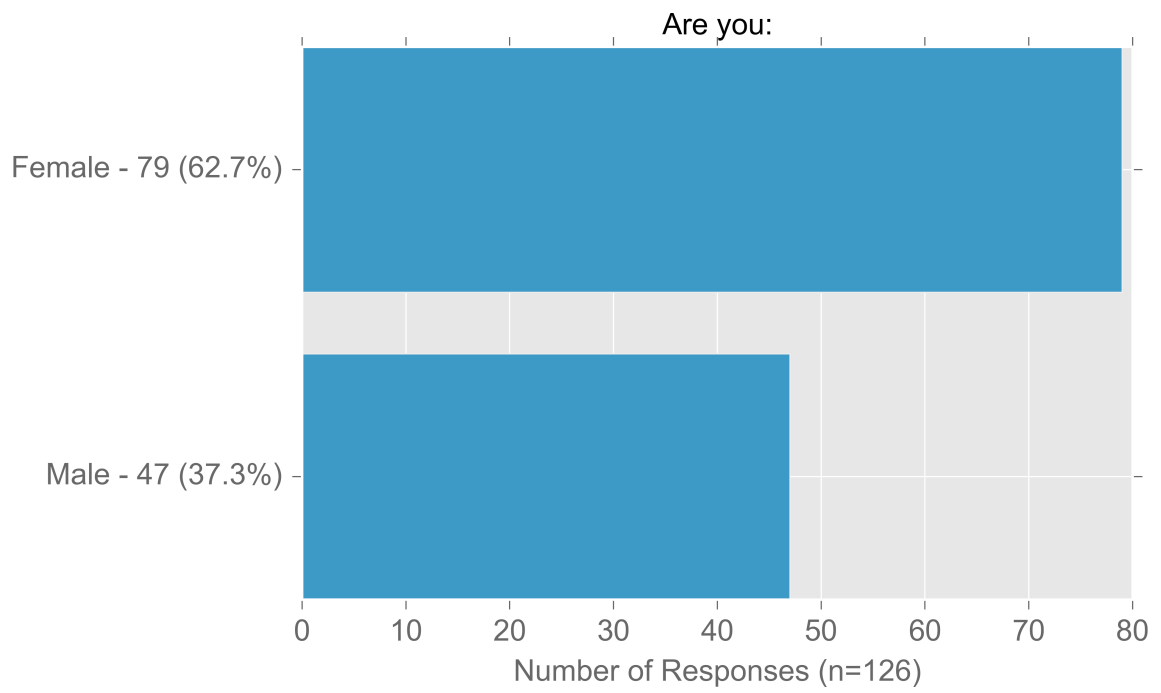


Figure 21 - Are you male/female?

How would you describe your ethnicity?

| Ethnicity | African | African-American | Asian | Caucasian | Hispanic | Indian | Jewish | N/A |
|------------------|---------|------------------|-------|-----------|----------|--------|--------|-----|
| Number | 10 | 6 | 14 | 73 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 13 |

Figure 22 - How would you describe your ethnicity?

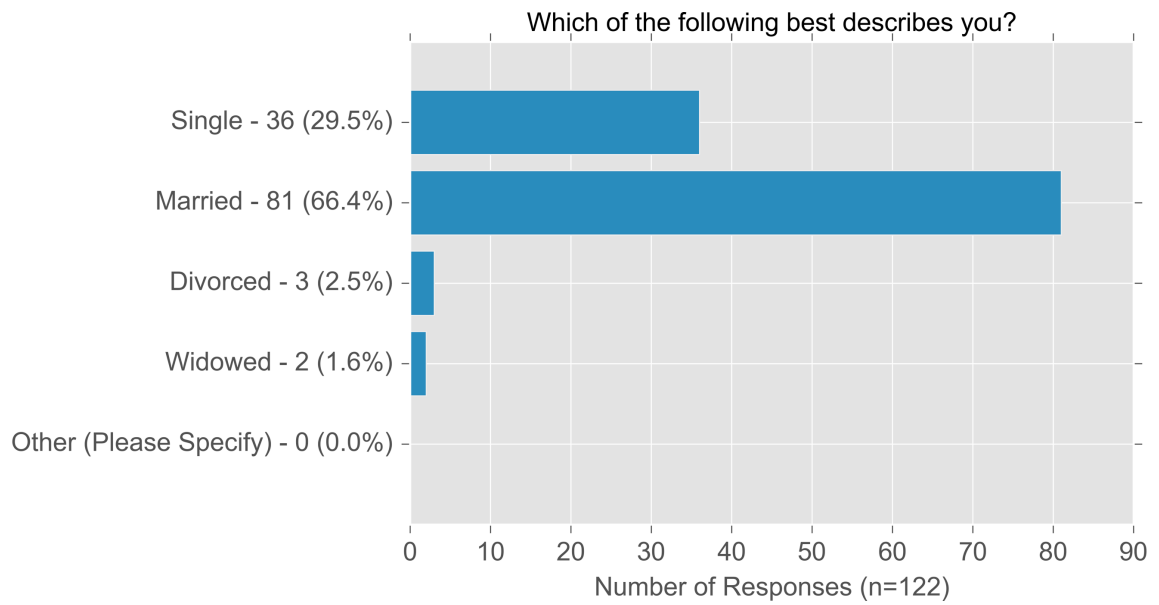


Figure 23 - Which of the following best describes you?

- Engaged!
- Engaged
- Engaged

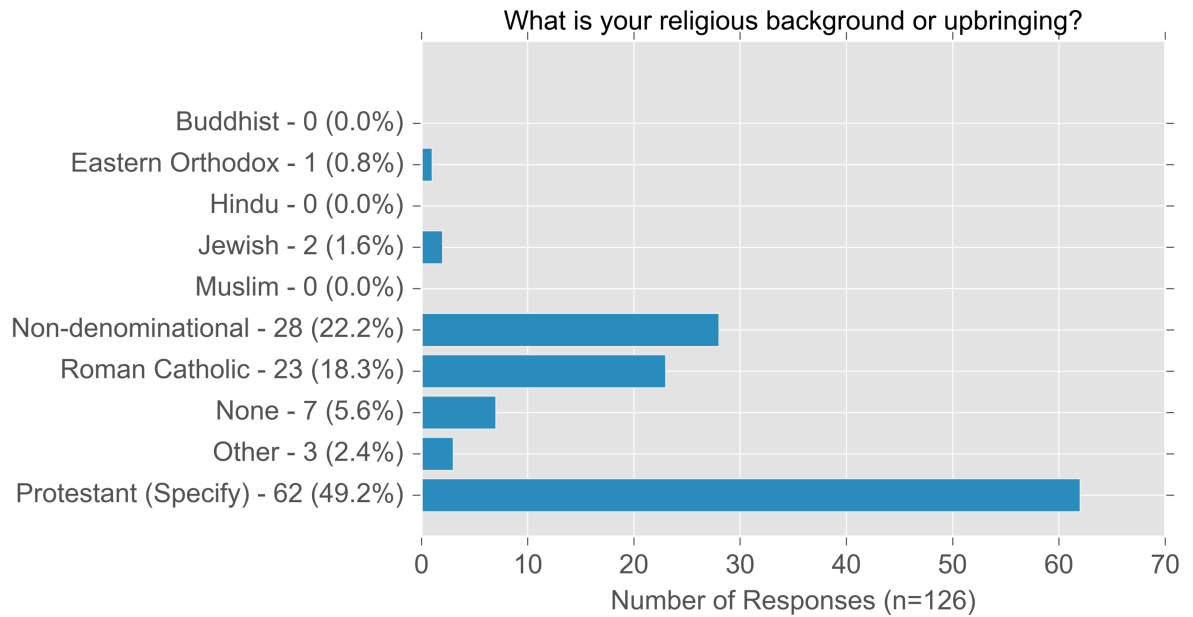


Figure 24 - What is your religious background/upbringing?

- United Methodist
- Roman Catholic
- Baptist
- Roman Catholic
- None
- Pentecostal
- Other
- Southern Baptist
- Presbyterian and Baptist
- Baptist
- Baptist
- Jewish
- Presbyterian and Baptist
- Non-denominational
- Christian reformed

- Roman Catholic
- Seventh Day Adventist
- Baptist
- Non-denominational
- Church of God movement/ non-denominational
- None
- Other
- Non-denominational
- Non-denominational
- Methodist
- Other
- Other
- Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist
- Other
- Non-denominational
- Roman Catholic
- Non-denominational
- None
- Non-denominational
- Presbyterian as a youth.
Evangelical as a youth/young adult.
- Non-denominational
- Independent church that identifies as evangelical, congregational, Trinitarian and international.
- C&MA/Mixed
- n/a
- Presbyterian
- Congregational
- U.C.C.S.A
- Non-denominational
- None
- Roman Catholic
- Baptist
- Roman Catholic
- Lutheran
- Non-denominational
- Non-denominational
- Non-denominational
- Roman Catholic
- Baptist.
- Non-denominational
- Roman Catholic
- Non-denominational
- Roman Catholic
- Non-denominational
- None
- Roman Catholic
- UCC
- None
- Pentecostal
- Charismatic-Spirit filled.
- Evangelical Free
- Non-denominational
- Non-denominational
- Non-denominational
- Other
- Roman Catholic
- Non-denominational
- Other
- Roman Catholic
- Non-denominational
- Roman Catholic
- Roman Catholic
- Non-denominational
- Non-denominational
- Baptist.

- Baptist.
- Lutheran
- Non-denominational
- Apostolic
- Baptist
- None
- Presbyterian-strict formal,
lacking presence of the Holy
Spirit.
- Presbyterian then charismatic
conservative.
- Roman Catholic
- Baptist
- Presbyterian
- Roman Catholic
- CMA
- Charismatic
- Baptist-CMA-Non-
denominational
- Baptist
- Baptist
- Jewish
- Non-denominational

- Baptist
- Non-denominational
- Baptist.
- Non-denominational
- Roman Catholic
- Mennonite/Nazarene
- Congregational
- Non-denominational
- Roman Catholic
- Roman Catholic
- Baptist-but the very religious
bondage type of faith.
- Roman Catholic
- Roman Catholic
- Charismatic/Evangelical
- Evangelical
- Roman Catholic
- Baptist
- Non-denominational
- Pentecostal.
- Eastern Orthodox
- Presbyterian
- I'm not sure I just follow Jesus

Appendix C

Sample Interview Questions

1. Where did you grow up?
2. Describe your religious background and upbringing.
3. When would say, you became a Christian believer and describe your conversion experience.
4. How would you define worship? Do you have a theology of worship?
5. Do you believe God is present in worship?
6. What do you bring with you when you come to worship?
7. How is personal or family worship different from worship in larger groups?
8. How important do you think it is for the church to worship corporately and why?
9. Do you worship privately? What does this look like?
10. Is music essential to worship
11. What roles does music play in our worship?
12. What would worship be like without music?
13. Is music for our benefit or for God's?
14. Why do you think such a high importance is placed on music in worship?
15. Why do you think our church movement gravitates towards contemporary Christian Music/ Praise and Worship music as its main mode of worship music?
16. Do you think that other styles of music would be received well at The River?
17. Why does our church gravitate towards Hillsong and Bethel music etc. as such a strong influence on the music we worship to?

Appendix D

CONFESSIONS

| WHAT WE DO | WHAT GOD SAYS | HOW WE DO |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| We lead with passion. | Psalm 95:1-2 Psalm 149:1-5 | We sing, clap, dance & shout like saved people and show the Church how to worship God the way He showed us. |
| We lead to serve. | Proverbs 27:2 Mark 9:35 Philippians 2:7 | We aren't interested in preserving or sustaining a social status. We are willing to help with any task, big or small. We value every part that is played – both seen and unseen. |
| We lead from identity. | I John 3:1 II Corinthians 3:5 | We aren't moved by criticism or accolades. We listen to learn, not to assess our identity. |
| We lead with integrity. | Matthew 6:6 Matthew 6:9-13 James 1:22-25 Titus 2:7 | We go personally where we want to take people corporately. We do what we're leading people to do. We value the Word of God and personal devotion above all. |
| We lead with confidence. | Hebrews 3:13 Romans 15:13 Ephesians 4:29 Galatians 5:25-26 | We believe the best about one another and encourage one another for the good things we do. We receive encouragement well. We repent quickly of envy and comparison. |
| We lead in wonder. | Romans 12:1 Psalm 90:14 Luke 5:26 Revelation 21:5 | We set Jesus and His grace before us daily and we choose to live in the wonder of His goodness for inspiration and a true perspective of life. |
| We lead in unity. | I Peter 3:8 Philippians 2:14-15 | We choose unity above personal agenda. Not "me" and "my," but "we" and "ours." We step aside to allow others to grow. If the team wins, we all win. |
| We lead with vision. | Matthew 28:19-20 Isaiah 54:2-3 I Corinthians 12:12 | We see ourselves as "precedent setters" for our church and movement. We keep the "whole" in our hearts and minds as we serve our part. |

CONFESSIONS

| WHAT WE DO | WHAT GOD SAYS | HOW WE DO |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| We lead with excellence. | Colossians 3:23-24 II Corinthians 8:7 Psalm 33:3 I Corinthians 13:4-5 | As leaders we must constantly improve and try new things. We value preparation to eliminate distraction. Excellence says "You matter" to the ones we serve, first to God, then to His people. We invite feedback and are not easily offended. |
| We lead in purity | Matthew 5:8 I John 3:3 | We love that Jesus has freed us from the weight of sin and are determined to remain that way by His grace. We are committed to stay in the light in our personal lives. |
| We lead as armor-bearers. | I Samuel 14:7 Hebrews 13:17 | We honor our leaders both backstage and on the stage and make it our goal to support them in their leadership. |
| We lead faithfully. | Luke 16:10 Matthew 25:21 | Faithfulness is the rule. We honor our commitments. |
| We lead leaders. | I John 2:27 II Timothy 2:2 | We work to spot anointing and bring people in with ideas, skill and talent. We are the eyes and ears of the worship ministry. |
| We lead with discernment. | John 14:26 John 16:13 I Corinthians 14:1-5 Romans 8:26 | We keep to forms for growth, but we value hearing God's voice and following His leadership above all. |
| We lead in gratitude. | Psalms 100:4 Psalm 35:18 Hebrews 12:28 | We foster and hone a lifestyle of thankfulness for our salvation and for the opportunity to serve. This gratitude shapes our conversations and checks our temptation to envy. |
| We lead with humility. | Proverbs 27:2 Philippians 2:3-4 | We are the first to admit when we need help. We have no need to boast as we consistently position ourselves as learners. |



Compiled by James Mark Gulley and Owen Wible.

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