

A PLACE FOR THE STRANGER:
WORSHIP AS THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF HOSPITALITY

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Abstract

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By George R. Martzen

This dissertation draws connections between liturgy and hospitality by bringing ritual and practice theories in dialogue with liturgical theology. The thesis is that liturgy is a spiritual practice of hospitality. In the context of hostility endemic to human societies, liturgical action offers a baseline of hospitality, which also involves a re-enchantment of space. By comparing the ordinary actions of people entering and leaving private homes with the entrance and sending rites of worship, this project demonstrates that Christian worship is a spiritual practice that fosters the transformation of individual identities into communities of hospitality.

This project employs a methodology based on critical theory insofar as it places in critical conversation the methods of liturgical theology and ritual theory to disclose the emancipatory capacity of a set of religious activities. The social context of the Liturgical Service at Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church in Singapore serves as illustration for my thesis. My personal observations as participant observer, along with interviews of selected individuals and descriptions of the social and physical context, contribute to understanding the web of meanings within the context. Through dialogue between these observations and the various theories, I have sought to focus on what can be learned from the ritualizing activity of worshippers engaged in the primary theology of gathering in sacred space.

The argument is presented through an introduction and four chapters. Methods of liturgical theology and ritual theory are articulated in light of the tension between

experiences of enchanted space and the disenchantment of modern utilitarian geographies like Singapore. Through a retrieval of Christian traditional teaching about hospitality, an inherent reciprocity of hospitality is noted, in which Christ is experienced in worship as both host and stranger.

By comparing the ritual practices of entering and departing inhabited spaces with the liturgical gathering and dismissal, I posit that worship is operationally efficacious of hospitality, and that it may also form the virtues of hospitality in participants through processes of ritual mastery. These actions and virtues of hospitality are related to Christian traditions that link hospitality to Christology and mission. Implications are drawn for worship order, spiritual formation, identity formation, mission and inculturation in modern churches.

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Thanks go to the California-Pacific Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church for appointing me to the General Board of Global Ministries, which sent me to Singapore for the past 14 year, and granted me a study leave in 2009 to begin this D.Min.

The bulk of this research has been done in Singapore, which could not have been done without the Grace electronic resources at the GTU library, which allowed me to access journals and other resources from overseas. I have also used the library at Trinity Theological College, where I live as faculty spouse. I am very grateful to the staff of the TTC library for book loan privileges, and to the TTC President, Rev Dr Ngoei Foong Nghian, and the Academic Dean, Dr Tan Kim Huat, for allowing me access to the media room to do my oral defence via Skype.

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Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
1. The Place of Hospitality in Worship	22
A. Theological Reflections on Liturgical Space	22
B. The Singapore Context and Issues of Space Limitation	45
C. The Practices of Hospitality in Christian Tradition	60
2. Entrance Rites: Saints and Strangers Gathered into One Place	71
A. Entrance Rites as a Participation in Hospitality	71
B. Ritual Dynamics: The Founding of Hospitable Space	85
C. Unfolding of Entrance Rites at PLCMC	94
D. Theological Reflections on the Hospitable Nature of Liturgical Space	104
3. Sending Rites: Sent into the World as One Body	112
A. Sending Rituals as Enactment of Extended Hospitality	112
B. Unfolding of Sending Rituals in the Liturgical Service	117
C. Ritual Dynamics: Embodied Knowing and Ritual Mastery	121

D. Theological Reflections on Liturgy, Hospitality and Mission	131
4. The Hospitality of Worship and Liturgical Spirituality	149
A. Worship as Spirit Formation: Embodying the Virtues of Hospitality	151
B. Toward an Articulation of Worship as a Spiritual Practice of Hospitality	165
Conclusion	182
Appendix	188
Bibliography	196

Introduction

In 2001, my family and I moved from a place in California that we had called home, and drove across the country to Atlanta, Georgia for United Methodist training in preparation for a mission placement in Singapore. Now after 14 years posted in Singapore, I am still reminded of the vital importance of place, and in particular of the importance of a place where hospitality is offered to the stranger. My family is a small part of the vast history of human migration across the globe. We were privileged to move out of choice, but others have moved out of necessity, and even others have found themselves transported against their will. What I find in common is a longing for places and communities of refuge. This dissertation, “A Place for the Stranger: Worship as the Spiritual Practice of Hospitality,” explores the connection between hospitality and Christian liturgy, with specific reference to the faith community, Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church, a place where I have been on pastoral staff, and found refuge, since 2010.¹

Through this project I have sought to answer a set of questions related to corporate worship as both a centripetal force that encounters the sacred through sequestered gatherings and also as a centrifugal force that encounters the sacred in the stranger.² How do worshippers experience hospitality as they gather around the divine center? Can hospitality also be expressed between different groups and at the periphery of the gathering, so that we

¹ This is my second position as a UMC missionary in Singapore, the first having been an assisting role with the bishop of The Methodist Church in Singapore.

² The idea for this paradox is drawn partly from Thomas Schattauer’s book on missional liturgy, Schattauer, Thomas H. ed. *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999).

encounter the divine in the stranger? Can hospitality be fostered as a practice and a virtue through corporate worship?

While exploring the fields of hospitality and liturgy, the primary purpose of this work is to see them together, to articulate an understanding of Christian worship as seen from the perspective of hospitable action and embodied attitudes. I begin by proposing overlapping definitions, with hospitality as the organizing of one's personal or corporate life so as to include others, and liturgy as the sequencing of prayers and embodied expressions for the purpose of making space for a divine encounter. Fused together, hospitality and worship express intentional ways of doing things that are both sequestered and socially engaged, both contemplative and active, fostering worship that is a spiritual practice of sheltering.³ The expression "spirituality" has been used recently of any kind of interior or energized life, regardless of a religious or ethical tradition (such as "spiritual but not religious"); however in this work spirituality is clearly tied to a legacy of practices associated with Christian worship, what is often called "liturgical spirituality."⁴ While this phrase has come to signify different schools of thought, practices, and approaches to prayer, in the context of this project, liturgical spirituality expresses the relationship

³ The creative tension between contemplation has been explored by a number of writers including a Quaker, Parker J. Palmer, *The Active Life: Wisdom for work, creativity and caring* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990); a Franciscan, Richard Rohr, *A Lever and a Place to Stand: The Contemplative Stance, the Active Prayer* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press [Hidden Spring], 2011); a Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, 2nd Edition, Restored and Corrected (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998); and two evangelicals, Campolo, Tony and Mary Albert Darling. *The God of Intimacy and Action: Reconnecting Ancient Spiritual Practices, Evangelism, and Justice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

⁴ Louis Bouyer, *Introduction to Spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 1-4, classically articulated the relationship between spirituality, interiority and religion.

between worship and living, or more specifically, the alignment of the human spirit and human existence with the Spirit of God encountered in worship.

Essential to understanding hospitality and liturgical spirituality is locating the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion at play in specific contexts. The cultural context of this study is the Southeast Asian city-state of Singapore, a place with its own history of tension between different racial and religious communities. But Singapore also has rich traditions and symbols of harmony, from the mix of Confucian and Taoist ethos that resonate in Chinese families, to the values expressed in such Malay terms as *kampong* (village) and *gotong royong* (mutual aid), which are sometimes sprinkled in local English. While the modern city-state has largely outgrown the *kampong*, I have often heard adults refer wistfully to neighborly values of the old *kampong* spirit. Until the Housing and Urban Development Board brought high-rise subsidized housing, ethnicities tended to band together and build up their own ethnic identities. The *kampong* could be exclusive as well as inclusive. Within the Chinese community, which is the ethnic context of the place where I serve, there are also layers of exclusion and inclusion. While the Chinese communities have been held together for centuries by a common written language, the many dialect groups which immigrated to Singapore since its British founding were kept to largely separate quarters. My context church was founded for the purpose of reaching out to the Hokkien dialect group, but in recent decades has expanded to include

Mandarin, English and one other dialect, Teochew. Annual themes have focused on unity in diversity, because there remains some tension over issues of dominance and exclusion between the different groups.⁵

⁵ The diversification of ecclesial communities, based on music, doctrine, traditional orientation or some other category, could be analysed in terms of identity politics, which focuses on the claims of particular identity groups for redress or restoration over against some universal values. See "Identity Politics,"

Problem of Exclusion and Conflict

Communities of hospitality may seem idealistic in a world of violent exclusion. Across the Mediterranean Sea, the Andaman Sea, the South China Sea and other places, migrants stream from failing states in search of refuge, but often face human trafficking or mixed reception from host countries. Some, like the Rohingya, were homeless to begin with, claimed neither by Buddhist Myanmar nor Islamic Bangladesh. The power politics of Syria and the surrounding region have evicted masses of refugees, a problem compounded in potential host countries by political, social and infrastructure issues that weigh against hospitality. For example, Singapore has generally welcomed workers from neighboring countries for shipyard, construction and domestic labor, but has limited space for assimilation. In America, manifest destiny⁶ assured the inclusion of like-minded white Europeans newcomers, but the exclusion of native American hosts. Africans and other ethnicities were made unwilling guests, and racism continues to fuel exclusion even in faith communities. Recently, in one horrible act of irony, the hospitality afforded a white man at an African-American church in Charleston, South Carolina, became the occasion of violence when he turned and shot nine innocent people dead. The cultural dynamics of exclusion and

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-politics/#5> accessed 10 Sept. 2015). Gordon Mathews, in *Global Culture/Individual Identity: Searching for a Home in the Cultural Marketplace*. London: Routledge, 2000, has further pointed out that with contemporary identity politics, there is no more going home to universal values. On the other hand, Eli Zaretsky in "Identity Politics Is Not Enough." *Tikkun* 28, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 26-29. Religion and Philosophy Collection, EBSCOhost (accessed September 9, 2015), has argued that there is still a place for universals, pointing out that Barak Obama was re-elected because he used "Occupy Wall Street" to forge a rhetoric of universal American values, rather than only focusing on the oppression of particular groups.

⁶ See David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Maryknoll, 1991), 298, et passim, for a discussion of manifest destiny from a missiological standpoint.

conflict frame the ways in which hospitality can and will be enacted in worshipping communities.

Indeed, corporate worship does encompass a tension between inclusion and exclusion, us and them, sacred and profane, saved and unsaved. From the cloistered architectural styles and religious symbols of church buildings, to the use of esoteric texts and songs, to specific rites of passage like baptism, corporate worship tends to be exclusive, often times in order to promote a shared communal identity. On one level, these are the qualities of any community and of ordinary human action in daily survival. But worshipping communities, at the same time that they grow deeper in their corporate identity, must also seek to be inclusive of new people, not only for their own survival, but because every gathering includes an implicit act of hospitality, the sharing of space.⁷ The enclosed worship space has a door that is open to the outside world. One may even discover elements within the liturgy that nurture openness to the stranger and foster missional engagement.

In this work, I will focus on those elements of worship which foster hospitality in order to demonstrate that through liturgical actions, participants can both experience hospitality and develop the capacity to act in hospitable ways. This work focuses in particular on the perceptible beginning and ending of the worship, the entrance or gathering rites and the sending rites. Selecting these two aspects of worship is not a denial of the symbols of hospitality that can be mined from other aspects of worship, such as the sharing of the Lord's table in the Eucharist. Rather, the symbolism of these two functions most aptly

⁷ I will demonstrate that this sharing involves an embodied virtue fostered through the practice of liturgical spirituality.

highlight the dynamism of hospitality that occurs when people enter into and share space with others.

Hospitality in any context, should not be equated simply with being inclusive or tolerant of difference, nor is hospitality simply a task given only the “welcome task force,” thus relieving everyone else of the responsibility. Every community has its boundary forming integrity, and such boundaries can only be made permeable at the will of the community if it is to maintain its integrity.⁸ By giving attention to the rituals of entering and departing, I hope to explore ways in which those communal boundaries may be recognized as permeable, thus more readily fostering hospitality.

Thesis

In a world in which people seek refuge, I assert that Christian liturgy is a spiritual practice of hospitality, whereby participants, inhabiting the divine welcome, embody the virtue of hospitality in the worshipping assembly and beyond. Regardless of the ideology or biblical interpretation of any given community, I will show that attention to the ritual actions of entering and departing worship space creates a baseline of hospitality.⁹ As such, regular faithful, embodied, participation in worship has the capacity to shape persons

⁸ The structure of community has been analysed from various social science approaches, from Ferdinand Tönnies’ delineation of *Gemeinschaft* as opposed to *Gesellschaft*, to E. E. Evans-Pritchard, who observed that each community is made up of other communities, in *Nuer Religion* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), to Paul G. Hiebert, who observed the distinction between bounded and centered sets, in *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1994). A study of Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church, itself an assemblage of diverse yet like-minded communities, would bear fruit from such structural approaches. This study is shaped more by the ritual process approach that Ronald Grimes has drawn from Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner.

⁹ While hospitality can be experienced in a variety of cultural settings as well as sacred contexts, this paper does not bifurcate the practice of hospitality into so-called spiritual and ordinary.

and communities ethically, that is, as moral agents for the life of the world. While attention will be given to ritual behavior, the intention is deeply theological, following the doctrine of *perichoresis*, as stated by the Johannine Christ, “Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).¹⁰

The routine exposure to experiences that evoke feelings and attitudes of awe, contrition, and gratitude, over time, make a permanent mark on the body, and, by doing so, form participants in certain religious affections. The sequencing of worship orients a specific set of emotional responses with regard to the divine. As Presbyterian scholars Kendra Hotz and Matthew Mathews have pointed out, “Worship renews and transforms us because in praising and glorifying God, it graciously shapes, sustains, and directs the religious affections that lie at the very heart of who we are.”¹¹

Others have made claims about the connection between worship and hospitality. According to Christina Pohl, “A life of hospitality begins with worship, with a recognition of God’s grace and hospitality.”¹² Hence, participation in worship is somehow a source of hospitality because of that which is encountered within the context of worship. Letty Russell sees hospitality as “the practice of God’s welcome, embodied in our actions as we reach across difference to participation with God in bringing justice and healing to our

¹⁰ Scripture references will be cited in the body of the text and, unless otherwise stated, are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Regarding the doctrine of *perichoresis*, see E Byron Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity: Practicing Ourselves* (Liturgical Press, 2003), 134. More will be said on the relationship of *perichoresis* and my thesis in Ch. 4.

¹¹ Kendra G. Hotz and Matthew T. Mathews, *Shaping the Christian Life: Worship and the Religious Affections* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 12.

¹² Christina Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 172.

world in crisis.”¹³ Essentially, actions that reach out to those who have been marginalized incarnate divine hospitality. Part of Russell’s value for my research is that she uses a postcolonial framework, recognizing groups previously dominated by colonial and patriarchal rule who are now empowered to gather around the table as equals with former dominating powers. In 2015 Singapore celebrates 50 years of nationhood.

Elizabeth Newman is bold with regard to the connection between worship and hospitality, arguing that “worship itself is our participation in divine hospitality that cannot be sequestered from our economic, political, and public lives.”¹⁴ This is a challenge to assumptions that limit Christian worship to personal spirituality or aesthetics as purely subjective preference. Don Saliers, who has contributed much to the aesthetic framework of worship, also added the phrase *lex agendi* to the adage *lex orandi, lex credenda*, observing that liturgy has the capacity to “be ethically normative”.¹⁵ Personal spirituality and aesthetics are not denied, but framed within the larger understanding of divine hospitality.

If someone should say that such associations between worship and hospitality to the stranger is a modern invention, Amy Oden has aptly reminded us that “the first locus

¹³ Letty Russell, *Just Hospitality: God’s Welcome in the World of Difference*, eds., J. Shannon Clarkson and Kate M. Ott (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 2009), 2.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Newman, *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 13.

¹⁵ Don Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989) 172, 187. Similarly Kendra G. Hotz and Matthew T. Mathews, *Shaping the Christian Life: Worship and the Religious Affections* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 116, instead added the tag *lex bene operandi*, meaning that believing and praying become holy actions in the world. See also the expanded discussion in E. Byron Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity: Practicing Ourselves* (Collegeville: MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 24.

of hospitality within the earliest Christian communities was the house church.”¹⁶ In fact, in that ordinary household setting were brought together hospitality, worship and mission. Mission is directly connected to liturgy, according to the tradition in the Acts of the Apostles, for it was in the context of a liturgical gathering in Syrian Antioch that missionaries sent to the Hellenistic world. “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” (Acts 13:2).¹⁷

Hence, worship as a spiritual practice of hospitality comprises a sharing of space between hosts and strangers in light of divine grace that further emboldens hospitable action, or mission engagement, “for the life of the world.”¹⁸ This project will explore both the inner and outer reaches of that divine grace.

Theological Basis

From a Christian perspective, this assertion has at least three theological affirmations: the divine hospitality as expressed in the economic Trinity,¹⁹ the sacramentality of place, in which people respond to divine invitation into shared space, and the affirmation that we meet God every day in the encounter with strangers in need of hospitality. The ongoing witness to and embodiment of this Trinitarian hospitality takes form in communities of shalom that

¹⁶ Amy Oden, ed., *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 216.

¹⁷ In this verse, “worship” translates λειτουργούντων.

¹⁸ John 6:51, quoted in the Anaphora of the Divine Liturgy of St Basil, becomes the central theme of Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the Word*, 2nd rev. ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973).

identify themselves with the divine acts of hospitality in Jesus Christ and the ongoing work of the Spirit.

Worship begins with a greeting, formal or informal, that references divine invitation into the worship space.²⁰ God is the divine host who welcomes people, strangers and friends alike into shared space that is active with the divine presence. It is an initiative of divine love that risks its own vulnerability in demonstrating hospitality, “for God is love...” (1 John 4:8b).

But just as much as God is the divine host, so God is also encountered in the stranger, the visitor who is different, or the one who remains outside. Hospitality expresses an often mutual relationship between host and stranger. In the Matthean story of the sheep and the goats, the righteous are commended for showing acts of kindness and hospitality to marginalized people, as though they had done it for the king, who would normally be the principle benefactor. “[J]ust as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

Hospitality is in part the act of receiving persons into a hospitable space, whether that space is a purpose-built edifice, a rented cinema or a peach orchard. That any space can become the locus for encountering God and other strangers implies the sacramentality of place, for it is God who welcomes.²¹ of invitation into one’s personal or group space, which assumes some exclusivity. It is my space or our space to which others are invited. Hospitality may

²⁰ Worshippers are be greeted “in the Lord’s name” for “the Lord is present and empowers our worship,” according to *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 17.

²¹ For a conceptual distinction between place and space, see Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory and Identity* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 6.

also take place in public spaces or in places that belong to the visitor, such as when a pastor who comes from the place of worship to visit someone's home, or when people meet in a market-place, on a city sidewalk, or on the beach. In such cases, hospitality may involve a spatial extension, in which some quality of the primary place of worship may be experienced in other spaces. In some religious language, this is the missional function. Assuming divine initiative, one may speak of the mission of God or *missio Dei*, as the divine intention for a global sharing of space, and of "missions" as the activities of particular faith communities and parachurch organizations that seek to extend their understanding of the gospel or ecclesial influence in other parts of the world.²² As much as hospitality renders common space open to God, host and stranger, so the common courtesies and gestures of hospitality are also found to have sacramental qualities that open the community to more meaningful encounters with the divine.

Methodists and other Christians assert that they have a message of good news. While discussion of the kerygma will be limited in this presentation, I affirm that liturgy itself proclaims a missional message, especially in the sending rites. Other authors have discussed the missional character of the church and worship, including J. G. Davis, Thomas H. Schattauer, Ruth Meyers and Clayton J. Schmidt, to name a few. This dissertation will seek to show that the theology and practice of Christian mission is best understood and practiced as a function of radical hospitality, for it is an extension of divine hospitality.

Formative Interests in the Topic

²² See David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1991), 10.

The interest in this intersection between liturgy and hospitality was shaped by both the social reality of inhospitality in the world, as well as concern for the immediate welfare of the context community. Attendance at the English speaking Liturgical Service of Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church has remained static at around 100. Does that lack of growth reflect a lack of hospitality? While an emphasis on numerical church growth may have value, it may overlook other values, such as spiritual formation.²³ Rather than redoing the worship according to current church growth trends, I wanted to explore how the worship structures themselves might contain seeds of hospitality, particularly within the entrance and sending functions of worship. For it is in the normal transactions of entering and leaving worship that hospitality is imbedded.

Regarding the second interest, it was an invitation to speak at the 40th anniversary of homeless shelter that reminded me of both the reality of hostility and the importance of standing up to it with hospitality. In September 2014, I spoke at the annual dinner of Open Gate Ministries in Dinuba, California. Open Gate is a program for homeless families founded by my mother, the late Vivian L. Martzen. I recalled how, as a teenager in the 1970s, I had been conscientized to the realities of marginalized people as my mother opened our house to those in need, and an ecumenical group gathered for several years to pray and discuss how to respond to homelessness. Open Gate was incorporated in 1974, and two years later a house was acquired to take in homeless families. One small town homeless shelter may seem small scale compared to the millions of displaced persons around the globe and ages of hostility toward difference. Yet, the experience of Open Gate

²³ See, for example, Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken, *Renovation of the Church: What Happens When a Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2011). The leadership of that church decided to stop pushing for numerical growth and began to emphasize spiritual formation.

reminds me that hospitality is expressed less in generalities than in particular and interpersonal acts.

Another event in Singapore served as analogy. My wife and I had recently embarked on creating a community garden at Trinity Theological College where she lectures, and where we reside. Since the school's move to a new campus in 2001, one quad sat largely vacant and uninviting. However as we began working its soil, planting seeds and vegetables, something short of miraculous happened. Other faculty, faculty families, staff and students, came to see and to help. Some even began talking about a theology of the land. In the physical process of coming together to prepare the land for a garden, a community was formed. As people gathered, a hospitable social body was created.

In seeking to unpack worship as a spiritual practice of hospitality, these observations and stories highlight for me the actual practices and rituals of hospitality. What ritual practices open up space for hospitality in worship? What ritual practices encourage the formation of a community in which interpersonal exchange is encouraged? These are the actualities which are under consideration in this exploration of Christian worship.

Project Description and Research Methods

This project is to determine the ways in which worship is related to hospitality; namely, how hospitality is fostered in the practices of worship. Worship enacts a paradox in that individual hosts are at the same time guests of the divine presence, who is also manifested to them as stranger. Hence, in the practice of worship boundaries and hierarchies are sometimes relativized. The project will consider two liturgical elements from the standpoint of hospitality, in particular, the entrance and sending rites. Two different fields of discourse, liturgical

theology and ritual theory, are placed in critical conversation with each other in order to disclose hospitality as an essential characteristic of these activities. The research questions require this project to go beyond textual studies to examine the ritual field itself,²⁴ including the physical and social contexts, along with the experiences of the ritual actors. Various conversations, as well as interviews of 19 members of the English Liturgical Service of Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church in Singapore have been included to illustrate the theoretical positions and to highlight points for further research.²⁵ As pastor of those informants, I am also a participant observer in the preparation and performance of the rituals. As a white male pastor in a Chinese Singaporean community, personal reflexivity is critical.²⁶ These observations of the field are correlated to textual resources associated liturgical theology and ritual theory, in particular the ritual theory of Ronald Grimes, and a cluster of positions related to the practice theory of Pierre Bourdieu, in dialogue with the liturgical theology of Don Saliers and others. I want to privilege the ordinary ritual actors in worship rather than the established doctrinal assertions about worship. In other words, rather than simply tending to preaching and verbalized theology, this paper intentionally focuses on what can be learned from the ritualizing activity of worshippers engaged in the primary theology of gathering for prayer.

Anticipated Learning and Goals

²⁴ Ronald Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*. Revised ed. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 3-4.

²⁵ See the appendix for summaries of the interviews.

²⁶ Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, ed., *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2011), xxi.

A project like this necessarily has both academic and practical learning goals. On a simple practical level is the desire to foster a sense of hospitality in the worshipping community, especially with regard to the ways people enter into and leave the worship space. That entails several other questions and learning objectives. How are the ordinary practices of hospitality between friends and strangers in this Singapore context related to the “sacred” actions of worship ritual? What liturgical practices that foster hospitality need to be recovered from Christian tradition? How can worshippers, as ritualizing bodies, develop ritual mastery that applies the habits of hospitality from the worship space to other social spaces? Since I anticipate leaving the current position and returning to America in mid-2016, I want to leave some wisdom behind for future reflection and guidance. Just as people take pictures to share with each other, I hope that this dissertation will not only be a true picture of this community, but also a way of reflecting on that image that will be of benefit of the Methodist Church in Singapore and other communities of faith.

Overview of the Chapters

The first chapter “The Place of Hospitality in Worship” considers the challenge of living and worshipping in one of the most densely populated countries in the world, a place called “home” for over five million people.²⁷ In the understanding that hospitality is a spatial dynamic, I begin with some theological reflections on space, and what makes some spaces sacramental. Purpose-built worship places are usually consecrated, and thus rendered sacred

²⁷ The 2015 midyear estimated population was 5.469 million, including 3.870 m citizens and permanent residents. The remaining over 1.5 million are foreign workers and professional expatriates. “Monthly Digest of Statistics” Singapore Department of Statistics (Government of Singapore, 2015, <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/latest-data#14>, accessed 20 August, 2015)

space for worshippers. Every physical space bears the stamp of those who have met or intend to meet there. People find themselves attracted to particular places, sometimes remembering prior encounters or hoping for future encounters. Spaces can become permeable, porous structures that allow windows of connection for interpersonal and divine encounters.

The basic social geography of the context is described, indicating structural effects on human movement, as well as some of the dynamics of ordinary hospitality whereby people try to maintain a human face in the midst of increasingly crowded settings. In response to the structural issues, Christian communities are gifted with resources in their traditions that can be called upon to foster ways of ethical living especially with regard to the strangers in their midst. Sometimes those resources need to be rediscovered and mined from the community's liturgical and spiritual traditions. So I will consider particular Christian traditions of hospitality and worship, and how they have reinforced each other.

The second chapter, "Entrance Rites: Saints and Strangers Gathered into One Place," recognizes a natural rhythm of every social function. There is a beginning and an end, and every gathering has a point at which people enter into the place of meeting, and eventually reverse the action by leaving. So attention is given to ways in which the first part of worship, the entrance, constitutes hospitality. According to Ronald Grimes, worship begins with ritual actions that establish, or found, the ritual space in relation to a receptive other. The act of entering into a particular place by default involves the sharing of space and some level of response to others. As religious space, there will be those who are already grounded, the "saints," who constitute the social body known as the church. Outside are the strangers.

The nature of hospitality in the Christian context is that diverse groups—saints and strangers—welcome each other and become part of the same body. This may be stated in

terms of unity, where there is “no longer Greek and Jew... but Christ is all and in all” (Colossians 3:11), or in terms of mutual receptivity and interpenetration, where there are many different parts working together, but one body (1 Corinthians 12).²⁸ Hospitality is achieved through ritual activities related to the ordinary gestures of households and market encounters. Presumably within every culture there are ordinary courtesies and gestures that express receptivity. Ritual theories have noted how ritualization is both distinguished from and similar to, such ordinary courtesies. In order to analyse the gathering rites over against commonplace courtesies, this chapter will include field research with worshippers at the Liturgical Service at Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church. Hence, in considering the entrance rites as an enactment of hospitality, I will be drawing a linkage with ordinary courtesies.²⁹

Theologically, the gathering into Christian worship usually involves a sense of divine receptivity, that is both transcendent and immanent. Worshippers ascend toward those symbols of transcendence, offering courtesies, such as bowing in prayer and kneeling, before the One who initiates hospitality. “We love because God first loved us” (1 John 4:19). The divine may also be recognized through immanent encounters, meetings with others who mediate Christ.

The third chapter explores the concluding rites of Christian worship, “Sending Rites: Sent into the World as One Body.” If the gathering corresponds to receptivity and

²⁸ More will be said on connections between community formation and the social implications of the trinitarian doctrine of *perichoresis*, or interpenetration, in the last chapter.

²⁹ The ritualizing of mainline worship is both officially authorized and ritually authorizing, or authentic. Hence there are two sources for the worship order. As the pastor and ritual expert, I will describe what ought to take place and usually takes place with reference to the authorized order of service. But that description is supplemented by the observations of other participants.

inclusion, then what of the part of worship where everyone departs? What does a dismissal have to do with hospitality? Following recent trends relating liturgy and mission, I propose that Christian mission is itself a function of divine hospitality.

A review of current theological reflection will show that the liturgy itself is also the primary locus of the *missio Dei*, for it is in worship that persons encounter and embody divine hospitality. Hence the mission of God which the worshipping community embodies is itself a function of divine hospitality. Recalling Karl Barth's identification of the church itself as the "missionary community" the sending rites enact the divine hospitality for the life of the world.

The mission enterprise of recent centuries deployed workers from developed countries into lesser developed foreign lands for the purpose of planting churches that often had a subservient relationship to the sending church. What if we reframe mission work as part of divine hospitality? The part of worship that corresponds to this idea of missional hospitality is the dismissal or sending forth. If the liturgy is effective in forming people into a cohesive community, then those who enter worship as individuals depart as members of a social body, the "body of Christ," because they will have acquired some ritual mastery during the course of gathering together. Rather than following an empire model that establishes subservient colonies, mission should be about creating communities of mutual hospitality.

Using Catherine Bell's theory of ritual mastery as appropriated in Andrea Bieler's understanding of embodied knowing, I will seek to show how patterns of behaviour mastered in worship may be transplanted in other social spheres. The hospitable sharing of space practiced in worship may impact how one continues to practice hospitality in other settings. Individual reflections from church members on the implications of the sending rites will be incorporated into this section.

The fourth chapter, “The Spiritual Formation of Hospitality in Worship” follows the work of Don Saliers and others who have reclaimed a Wesleyan and Reformed spirituality of worship, raising the operative efficacy of worship. The worship of God has ethical implications for how people relate to the world. Worship is a spiritual practice whereby participants have formed in them the religious affections or holy tempers, including a deeply imbedded habit of hospitality for the world.

Limitations of Scope

A study on religion and people in Southeast Asia by a westerner requires a depth of epistemological humility. Singapore is part of a region that was directly colonized by westerners beginning with the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, but the region had already been dynamic with multiple levels of interactions between local empires, and the peoples of China, India, Persia, Arabia and other parts of the Pacific for centuries prior. There are vast areas of consciousness and interaction of which I can at best skim the surfaces. Given the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual history of the region, an English study is limited to those lines of inquiry that can be accessed through English.

This paper does not test anything new, but rather explores how certain theoretical ideas might work in a particular context. Similar contexts may find my connections helpful. The particular ritual application is to the first and last part of the worship order, the entrance and the sending. Little reference is made to what might be considered the heart of worship, the proclamation and sacraments. Reasons for this selection will become evident with reference to the practices of hospitality. While drawing on topics in social

theory, this is not a social science project. I have attempted to footnote those areas for which there is already relevant research.

Stylistic matters

Four matters of style need to be mentioned. First, with regard to writing voice, while this is objective writing, it will have an element of autobiography, which is to say that a particular perspective will inevitably be presented here. I have a particular point of view that cannot be exchanged for any other. I am a heterosexual male, a husband, a father, a citizen of the USA, a descendent of the Volga Deutsch, gratefully nurtured by the geography of central California, and an ordained clergy engaged in religious work in Singapore under the auspices of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. In the research process one's perspective reflects one's social location, which shapes human access and the flow of information. Being a Caucasian, male, missionary pastor places me in a privileged position that provides access and limits it. Given the history of western colonialism and current trade relations with the U.S., polite access comes easily. However, as pastor and researcher, further points of contact are needed for sustained access, such as knowledge and appreciation of local culture, specific skills and the fact of marriage into a Chinese family. My social location also limits the flow of information and the scope of my research. The particular line of inquiry is as much an expression of myself as a researcher as the field of research itself.

Second, with regard to inclusive language, my style is to use non-gendered references to deity and to people where no gender is required. When quoting other sources,

it will be my approach to simply drop non-inclusive phrases if the sense can be retained while doing so. In cases where a quote is preferable, but the sense cannot be retained by omitting non-inclusive language it will be retained. This will also be the case with regard to gendered references to God, such as the male Trinity, which is part of the custom of the faith community in context.

Third, with regard to Chinese names and language usage, I have retained the Chinese practice of placing the surname first in cases where they are thus published in Asia.³⁰ If a western personal name is used then that will be the first name, and the name order will be as in standard western publications. I am limited in Chinese, but will occasionally need to use Chinese references in the text. These will be indicated with the simplified Chinese character commonly used in China and Singapore, and with the Hanyu Pinyin system of phonetic transcription that is now the standard transliteration in most countries where Chinese is used.

The fourth has to do with Anglicisms. Given that Singapore was a British territory and colony for almost 150 years, some common references will differ from American English, such as “lift” for “elevator”, or “carpark” for “parking lot”. Spelling generally follows American usage.

³⁰ Whether the emplacement of family name before individual enacts a concentric Confucian ideology, or the ideology explains an ancient practice, I do not know, but having been married into a Chinese family for 20 years, it feels more natural to put the surname first.

Chapter 1 The Place of Hospitality in Worship

A. Theological Reflections on Liturgical Space

Worship is like a community garden, a place where people gather to cultivate soil to grow fruit, vegetables and flowers. In the process of such cultivation, they themselves are cultivated. Liturgy might be considered one garden variety among other worship styles, like contemporary, charismatic or emerging; and the term itself has been associated with authorizing texts, like the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, or the baptismal rite. In this project I will follow a broad understanding of liturgy as a quality of worship that is corporate and participatory, that is rooted and nurtured in a tradition of practice that flows into ethical action in the world.¹ I am referring particularly to liturgy as a set of ritualizing practices in continuity with those traditions that stem from the 2000 year witness to Jesus Christ. All Christian worship is liturgical, when it links the Christian community to some form of public service, “for the life of the world.”

As with the practice of gardening, where certain convention guides the selection and cultivation of plants, so corporate worship is also guided by authorizing texts, literal and metaphorical.² First, there are written texts, such as bulletin, prayer or song book, the Bible, and projected texts, the ubiquity of which seems to imply the necessity of literacy for Christian holiness. While bearing doctrinal content, texts are also symbolic and must be

¹ E. Byron Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity: Practicing Ourselves* (Minneapolis, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 29. n .41). He employs a current understanding of practice as “a pattern of action that we do repeatedly, over time, with particular intent. Christian practices include such actions as providing hospitality, intercessory prayer, hymn singing celebrating the church year, preaching, and others.”

² Clifford Geertz has pointed out in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 452, that all aspects of culture may be classified within an “ensemble of text,” including the texts, symbols and standardising practices of worship.

performed, such that the liturgy can be viewed as the enactment of those texts.³ As symbolic, they elicit emotional responses, negatively, for example, in the anger evoked when a name is misspelled, and positively, when leading a well-crafted prayer. The second form of text includes formal oral expression, like the preaching, scripture reading, spoken prayers, hymn singing, anthems, oral instructions and announcements. Third, text can refer to information embodied in various non-verbal cues, routines and ritual action used in particular cultural settings, such as bowing, kneeling shaking hands, etc. “That’s the way we’ve been doing it,” references a kind of authorizing text found in even the most ordinary settings, such as a family gathering. This project gives more weight to the non-verbal dimensions of worship, including spatial dimensions, that invite people into dynamics beyond verbal text.⁴

These dynamics may include a recognition of the divine as both transcendent and immanent as people gather into three-dimensional spaces. Indeed, there is a geography to worship space. Don Saliers recalls Joseph Gelinaeu’s observation that “liturgy itself is a country we must learn to dwell in.”⁵ My goal is to show how such practicing of liturgical space itself mediates the experience of God’s presence, helping believers to dwell more fully in the liturgy.

³ Regarding the performance of scripture see E. Byron Anderson, "Practicing scripture, unsealing the book." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 46, no. 2 (September 1, 2011): 86-104. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed June 3, 2015).

⁴ In the gospel of John, Jesus reminds his interlocutors that the scriptures do not themselves contain eternal life, but point to the source outside themselves (John 5:39). My general critique of text is influenced by the turn to orality traced by Walter J. Ong, *Orality & Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (New York: Routledge, 1999). See also Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Indiana University Press, 1989).

⁵ Don Saliers, *Worship Come to Its Senses* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 139. Gelinaeu is part of the musical inspiration behind the worship style in the community of Taizé.

Liturgy as the enchantment of space

Worship takes place within “dynamic space” that involves the negotiation of three kinds of power: divine, social and personal.⁶ One can see that dynamic in a variety of religious spaces in Southeast Asia, from the Buddhist temple, where individuals may gather before the holy regalia to raise joss sticks to Guanying, goddess of mercy; or the open air “void deck,” of the housing block,⁷ where a bereaved family follows the Taoist priest in procession around the coffin to assist the loved one’s spirit in transition to the next world; or in the unrestricted space of the mosque where the faithful bow in prayer to Allah. More than simply a static geography, religious space is an interaction between the physicality of space and the people who inhabit it and there find not only meaning, but also an invitation to return routinely to that place of encounter.⁸

For Mircea Eliade it is necessary to make a periodic return to the particular place, which represents a people’s originating myth, *in illo tempore*, or sacred time, in order to renew current life according to the original cosmic structures.⁹ “Every consecrated space represents an opening towards the beyond, towards the transcendent.”¹⁰ It is enough at this

⁶ Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *Sacred power, sacred space: an introduction to Christian architecture and worship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008), 3.

⁷ Housing Development Board (HDB) estates are typically built with open space on the ground floor which can be used by residents for special occasions, such as wakes and funerals.

⁸ While the terms “space” and “place” may be used almost interchangeably, in this project “space” will refer more to the generalized or abstract qualities of an environment, while “place” refers more to particular locations, with the incumbent experiential qualities and/or authorizing presence.

⁹ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 80.

¹⁰ Mircea Eliade, *Symbolism, the Sacred and the Arts*, Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 107-8.

point to note that some spaces may be experienced as numinous with the twin qualities of awe and attraction, that which inspires both trembling and invitation.¹¹ They possess the quality of enchantment.

The notion that places may be enchanted is generally relegated to fairy tales and fantasies that begin with “once upon a time.” Ancient religious texts such as the Hebrew scriptures also tell of enchanted stones, pillars, altars and temple mounts which are memorials to a time when angels appeared to people, when the Lord thundered on a mountain top, and when divine glory filled the holy place.

An example of current discourse on the enchantment of space can be found in the many discussions about “thin places” in Ireland or the Hebrides of Scotland. Those who write about their experiences at such places often use the language of attraction or even invitation, as though they felt welcomed by a divine presence. “The energy in the circle seemed warm and welcoming.”¹² In “thin places” the reduced barrier between divine and physical seems to foster a sense of hospitality. Rather than being purely “I-It,” the space entertains inter-subjectivity.¹³ Something or someone – another subject that cannot be

¹¹ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, John W. Harvey, trans. 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 12, 25, 31, et passim.

¹² “Kealkil Stone Circle - How We Find a Thin Place Matters” in *Thin Places: Where the world meets the Eternal World* (<http://www.thinplace.net/> accessed Jan. 23, 2015). This phenomena is only illustrative of the sacramentality of space. Evangelical perspectives include the blog by Mark Roberts on Patheos, “Thin Places.” (<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/markdroberts/series/thin-places/> accessed Jan 23, 2015). Based on a biblical theology he recognizes that any place could be a thin place, but that “[m]aybe we’re too thick to recognize it.” See also Robert Solomon, “Thin Places” in *Methodist Message* (Methodist Church in Singapore, February 2015, <http://message.methodist.org.sg/images/pdf/MM%20Feb15.pdf> accessed 10 January 2016)

¹³ So the famous Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, in *I and Thou*, Trans., Walter Kaufmann (New York: Scribner’s, 1970). Buber distinguished between relationships that are inter-subjective, “I-Thou,” in which the other cannot be manipulated, and those which are subject-object, “I-It,” in which case the effect is often manipulative.

defined – is inviting the perceiver into that space. Is it necessary to define that other subject? In fact many names, faces and images have been offered by religious traditions around the world to the nameless mystery that attracts people into the center.¹⁴

Southeast Asians are no strangers to enchanted places. Several traditional Chinese festivals focus on the ongoing presence of deceased spirits. During “Hungry Ghost Month,” the awakened spirits of those who in died tragically or who in life were especially selfish, wander their old neighbourhoods looking for food.¹⁵ Families need to leave something to satisfy them. During *Qīngmíng*, “Tomb Sweeping Day,” people visit the graves of parents and ancestors. Traditional practices include literally cleaning the grave, leaving food and burning joss sticks. For traditional Chinese, the grave may be a place of communion, a window through which the spirits remind the living of the stories and values that have held them together for centuries, and the obligations of the living to continue that story into the next generation.¹⁶ For Chinese Christians it is still a place of prayer, insofar as the deceased are “in Christ.”¹⁷ The possibility remains in our imaginations, that the divine presence, or even possibly evil spirits, may be

¹⁴ In Acts 17:23 the Apostle Paul drew attention to a nameless deity in the Athens. See also Michael Moynahan, “Liturgy & Aesthetics,” *Liturgical Ministry* 5, (1996 1996): 97-140. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed July 9, 2015), 110. Moynahan discusses the natural attempts to name the mystery which can never be completely named lest their attractive power be nullified.

¹⁵ See Ronald Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone: re-inventing rites of passage* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2002), 5-6, for a discussion on unattended passages.

¹⁶ These graveyard thin places are becoming far and few between in Singapore, as traditional Chinese graveyards are exhumed, the remains cremated and the land given to commercial redevelopment or new transportation routes. Such is the case of the Bukit Brown cemetery. The debate on this cemetery opened up in 2012. See the Singapore press on the issue at that time in AsiaOne News. <http://news.asiaone.com/News/Latest+News/Singapore/Story/A1Story20120306-331785.html>. (accessed Jan 23, 2015).

¹⁷ I once borrowed from the Great Saturday tradition of the Eastern Orthodox church when asked to lead a Holy Saturday memorial service at a Methodist columbarium. I asked the congregants to light candles and to name their loved ones whom I pictured gathered around Christ awaiting the final resurrection.

encountered at certain places. Children are taught to be circumspect when passing temples, so as not to offend the spirits inside.¹⁸ Sometimes exorcisms are employed by churches to remove the unwanted spiritual presence from a new believer's home.¹⁹ This speaks directly to an age-old sense of sacramentality, that the spirit world uses things, or least that the sacred can be experienced in immanent reality. This sacramental awareness, evokes an attraction that goes beyond text and beyond the geometry of the site. There is a kind of relational magic or enchantment that seems to attract perceivers to the particular location, but at the same time an unknown spiritual presence that animates the particular place.²⁰

The enchantment of place implies an animating presence which I connect more the Hebrew affirmation God's breath (*ruach*), the source of all existence, than to Greek notions of an independent human spirit.²¹

While affirming the movement of the Holy Spirit who cannot be seen, I gravitate toward Paul Tillich's ontology of the depth dimension in religion and culture to inform my understanding of spirit, partly because it offers a powerful spatial metaphor.²² Just as a

¹⁸ Conversation with Dr Yu Chin Cheak (my spouse) on what her Buddhist mother taught her.

¹⁹ I have not been involved in this, but several clergy colleagues have described exorcism-like prayers and the physical removal of altars and their contents. Because of the sacral associations, it is sometimes left to the owner whether to discard the artefacts or to entrust with the Buddhist or Taoist temple.

²⁰ Process theologians have written about the divine lure experienced even in relation to things, which is drawing all the world to ultimate harmony in each moment of becoming. See Marjorie Suchocki, *God Christ Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology* (Crossroad, 1992), 46, et passim).

²¹ Granted, all such language of the spirit may well be reduced to a set of neurological functions, but even so it must take into consideration the history of arts, literature, compassion and the religious sensibilities. See, for example, Kirk Bingaman, "The Art of Contemplative and Mindfulness Practice: Incorporating the Findings of Neuroscience into Pastoral Care and Counseling." *Pastoral Psychology* 60, no. 3 (June 2011): 480. Religion and Philosophy Collection, EBSCOhost (accessed April 16, 2015).

²² Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 7, et passim. I would bracket his use of the word "religion" or substitute it with "religious sensitivity" or "spirituality."

large building requires a deep foundation, so the hospitable faith community needs deep foundations or roots to sustain its welcoming branches.²³ The depth dimension also expresses an openness to transcendence, “ultimate, infinite, unconditional,” the ultimate concern. “And ultimate concern is manifest in all creative functions of the human spirit.”²⁴

Spirituality, then, is not just about supernatural things, but about an affinity for the depth of life. It is about connecting the drive for an interior integrity with a particular set of religious practices.²⁵ Christian spirituality, according to Philip Sheldrake, “refers to the way our fundamental values, lifestyles, and spiritual practices reflect particular understandings of God, human identity, and the material world as the context for human transformation”²⁶ While there may be similarities between Christian spirituality and that of other religious traditions, such as Islam or Buddhism, the particular symbols that make sense for practitioners of Christian spirituality will make less sense to other traditions unless they are initiated. Christian spirituality revolves around the story of Jesus Christ which “gives shape to our lives and defines the nature of our existence as a Christian community.”²⁷

²³ Note the biblical image of the tree (e.g., Psalm 1, 92, Ezekiel 17, Luke 13:18-19) with roots deeply nourished by Torah, while the branches provide hospitality to the birds of the air.

²⁴ Ibid., 7.

²⁵ Louis Bouyer, *Introduction to Spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 4. A contention with those committed to “Spiritual but not Religious” is that the very nature of spirituality itself always seeks for an objective religious tradition even if it is one that disavows the existence of God.

²⁶ Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory and Identity* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 7.

²⁷ Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), 16

Nevertheless, contemporary Christian discourse has lost this sacramental sensibility, as modern rationalism has sealed off the permeable links between spirit and matter.²⁸ In philosophy, the sciences, even religion, the wind seems to have gone out of the sails. In his book on the experience of God and space, David Brown discusses that phenomenon:

That development which accelerated in the West from the sixteenth century onwards is sometimes called 'the disenchantment of the world'. The phrase was popularized by Weber... My own view is that one way to recover enchantment and so a holistic view of how God relates to human experience in its totality is through a reinvigorated sense of the sacramental.²⁹

Sacraments and the sacramental are conventionally described as "an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace."³⁰ However, Brown argues for a recovery of sacramental awareness spheres now "relegated to the periphery of religious reflection, but which once made invaluable contributions to a human perception that this world is where God can be encountered, and encountered often, such as drama, sports, art, architecture,

²⁸ Jonathan Z. Smith, in *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 102, suggests that the Sixteenth century reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, marks the beginning of modernism, because in disallowing the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine and rationalizing the communion ritual as a mere memorial symbol, he deprived the church of its spirit and left people with only mental assent, not unlike René Descartes' experiment in doubting all but the process of his own mental processes. Robert Webber also laments this capitulation to Enlightenment thought in Protestant circles, in *Worship Old and New*, Rev ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 88.

²⁹ David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Space: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 5. Harvey Cox in 1965, viewed Weber's disenchantment more positively in the process of western secularization, which to him at that time suggested the logical outcome of a western biblical heritage and involved the desacralization of nature. See *The Secular City: A Celebration of Its Liberties and an Invitation to Its Discipline* (New York: MacMillan, 1965), 17. Cox's later writings moved away from assumption of a progression toward secularity, such as *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Re-shaping of Religion in the 21st Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Decapo Press (1995) 2001).

³⁰ Book of Common Prayer

and home.”³¹ Modernist reductionism has reduced this awareness, and ecclesial institutions have limited the official sacramental means to seven in the Roman Catholic church and two in the Protestant churches. This limits both God and the outreach to individuals whose spiritual experiences fall outside set categories.

For Brown, the lenses of art and architecture allow him to explore the perceptions of enchantment in a variety of places and things, beginning with natural things, followed by the recognition of the sacramentality of built up spaces. Brown understands a sacrament to be a “symbolic mediation of the divine in and through the material.”³² In all, his argument is that the “excitement of place, as with the natural world, is of a God valuing more than the simply human, and instead using the material, even where decisively shaped by human beings, to tell us something of himself and thereby draw us more deeply into his presence.”³³ While Brown’s embrace of natural theology may seem to undercut revealed theology, it should be noted that even biblical revelation defers to the divine word in the speechless heavens.³⁴

Following Brown’s lead, I have observed similar hints of divine immanence within congregational song. Many hymns and choruses, new and old, foster a sense of God’s presence in both natural spaces and the places of worship.

³¹ Ibid., 9.

³² Ibid., 30. John Wesley, drawing on language of the Book of Common Prayer, variously described the sacraments and the means of grace as outward signs, or ordinances, in connection with an inward grace.

³³ Brown, *God and Enchantment*, 152. Brown further argues that one of the results of this neglect in thoughtful theological reflection is the rise of various pseudo scientific, alterative spiritualities have emerged. He considers the Chinese practice of *Feng Shui* to be one such phenomenon.

³⁴ See, for example, Walter Brueggeman’s commentary on Psalm 19 in *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 156.

One hymn, popular in mainline and evangelical communities is “How Great Thou Art.” While the first verse extols the creative activity of God, the second verse expresses what is clearly sacramental wonder while walking in the midst of that creation:

When through the woods, and forest glades I wander,
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze.³⁵

Out of that awareness of the divine inspired by nature, praise of God pours forth in the chorus: “Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee, how great Thou art...” Many of the choruses popular in Pentecostal and charismatic circles also breathe with the presence of God in particular places: “Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place....”³⁶ recognizes the capacity of the Holy Spirit to indwell places where people worship. More contemporary hymn writers also recognize the thin places of worship, such as Keith Getty’s song: “O Breath of God come fill this place.”³⁷ In Methodist hymnody, Charles Wesley was quick to recognize this thinness as people gathered in worship:

Ten thousand to their endless home this solemn moment fly
And we are at the margin come, and we expect to die.
E’en now by faith we join our hands with those that went before
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands on the eternal shore.³⁸

³⁵ Stuart K. Hine, “How Great Thou Art,” in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 77. This hymn is not without its problems and controversies, regarding which, see Carlton R. Young, *Companion to the United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 409-411.

³⁶ Lanny Wolfe, “Surely, the Presence,” in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 328.

³⁷ Paul Getty, “The Risen Christ,” *Worship & Song* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 2011), 3179.

³⁸ Charles Wesley, “Come, Let Us Join Our Friends Above,” in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 709. Other Charles Wesley hymns recognized the thin spaces in worship, particularly with regard to the practice of the Lord’s Supper which was a foretaste of glory and a portal through which the “saints in earth and heaven are one.”

Contemporary Roman Catholic song writers also have no problem viewing the enchantment of their worship spaces. In Marty Haugen's "Gather Us In," the people sing:

Here in this place new light is streaming,
Now is the darkness vanished away,
See in this space our fears and our dreamings,
Brought here to you in the light of this day.³⁹

Similarly, David Haas' work offers prayer as musical incense that mingles with the tangible evidence of the presence of Christ:

Lord, may our prayer rise like incense in your sight,
may this place be filled with the fragrance of Christ.⁴⁰

All this is to say that liturgy is a set of practices performed by particular groups of people that privilege a particular environment, and in so doing, fosters a recognition of the enchantment of place.⁴¹ While a great variety of spatial configurations may suffice, to experience particular place as liturgical is to move beyond the objective, geometric dimensions, and to recognize an inter-subjective quality that renders the space hospitable. Historically, liturgical spaces have been borrowed and adapted spaces, the house-church from the domicile, the basilica from the government hall, the martyrium from the mausoleum. More recently in ecclesial history it is the preaching hall from the town hall and the mega church from the theatre or cinema.

³⁹ Marty Haugen, "Gather Us In," in *Gather* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 1988), 311.

⁴⁰ David Haas, "Lord, May Our Prayers," in *The Faith We Sing* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 2001), 2205.

⁴¹ So Don Saliers, in *Worship Come to Its Senses* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), talks about the capacity of worship to open up the senses in four ways, a sense of awe, a sense of delight, a sense of truth, and a sense of hope. Saliers, for one, makes connection between worship and the development of the religious affections. Also Presbyterian scholars, Kendra Hotz and Matthew Mathews discuss how religious affections foster iconicity and sacramentality, by helping people to see particular objects as windows into the divine and objects of grace. *Shaping the Christian Life: Worship and the Religious Affections* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 18. More will be said on that in the fourth chapter.

All kinds of spaces exist as phenomena, with little reference to subjects inhabiting them. However a place is known and experienced by embodied subjects. To refer to a place is to take it personally, the place where individuals went under the waters of baptism, where solemn vows and stern commitments were voiced, where wedding rings were exchanged, where the stories of Jesus were shared, where gathered bodies felt the reverberations of well-known tunes, and where friends bonded with tears of joy and sadness,. This is the place that invites “me” and “us” to return each week, where the sacred is experienced, welcoming participants to come deeper. This is the place where “my” church gathers around the divine presence who also urges all those gathered to spread their welcoming arms to others.

Liturgy as Emplacement

Over the centuries, Christians have gathered for worship in a variety of spaces, from private houses, cemeteries, court houses, school classrooms, orchards and even cinemas. What is it that turns ordinary space into a place of worship? Why do some kinds of space seem better for meeting God than others? What physical structures and furnishings support the actions of worship?

While physical places have subjective qualities, they are also constituted by the structuring of concrete physical markers. We may sometimes talk about the placement of an object, or the very siting of a location, marking it off from the undifferentiated space into a particular place. Whether shifting office or moving house, people make an effort to survey the site, to place themselves there and also to establish the place of that which is most important to them. Where and how we place an object, idea or symbol indicates the social values that we assign to it. A dining table next to the kitchen indicates eating and

possible fellowship; the placement of a large screen television adjacent to the table may change that dynamic. Similarly, the physical arrangement of a worship environment structures the way participants engage in worship, setting the ritual actors within a ritual grammar.

Jonathan Z. Smith writes that one of the significant roles of ritual is the proper placement of the sacred in the worship space, and the subsequent hierarchical ordering of all things around that placement. He begins his argument with the structuralist claim of Claude Levi-Strauss:

A native thinker makes the penetrating comment that 'All sacred things must have their place.' It could even be said that being in their place is what makes them sacred for if they were taken out for their place, even in thought, the entire order of the universe would be destroyed. Sacred objects therefore contribute to the maintenance of order in the universe by occupying the places allocated to them. Examined superficially and from the outside, the refinements of ritual can appear pointless. They are explicable by a concern for what one might call 'micro-adjustment' – the concern to assign every single creature, object or feature to a place within a class.⁴²

Smith later goes on to talk about religious ritual as a form of geographic classification that is essentially relational. He observes that, according to Emil Durkheim, the first and most significant form of classification has to do with social classifications, with clans. "Society was not simply a model which classificatory thought followed; it was [society's] own divisions which served as divisions for the system of classification."⁴³

Hence, even geographic placement has to do with the human relationships of those on the

⁴² Claude Levi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage* (Paris, 1962), 17 (English translation, *The Savage Mind* [Chicago, 1966], 10; quoted in Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), xii. On page 47 and subsequent pages of Smith's book, he shows how both ordinary and civic powers are placed in the periphery of the central emplacement of sacred objects in the vision of the prophet Ezekiel.

⁴³ Emil Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, "De quelques forms," 67 (=Mauss: *Œuvres* 2:83); *Primitive Classification*, 82-83; quoted in Smith, *To Take Place*, 36-37. Mary Douglas picks up on this same point in talking about natural symbols, in *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1970, 1973, 1996), xxxi-xxxvi.

land. As people first come to a church all of the pews or seats look the same, but over time, they become associated with particular individuals and families and their relationships with each other.⁴⁴

That sense of placement was brought to the fore during the rehearsal for the Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church's 75th anniversary celebration in 2014. The venue had been changed from the four-story church building to the nearby Methodist school hall to facilitate a single space for all seven congregations, Mandarin, Hokkien, Bilingual, English Contemporary, English Liturgical, Teochew, and the bilingual Methodist Mission. The plain concrete space, normally used for student assemblies and exams, could easily fit over 1000 people. During the rehearsal, an older church member and former leader, shook his head and said, "Why are we having the anniversary here? This is not a worship space. We already have our sanctuary. Let's go back." He was reminding us that we were "out of place." After the gentleman was duly reassured, the rehearsal continued, and the celebration took place as planned with a full house. As the service started, the combined choir processed into worship accompanied by a single drum beat, singing in several local languages the simple chorus written by the Indonesian, Christian Tamaela, "Come, O Come, Sisters Brothers Come."⁴⁵ Though "out of place," the intention and actions of people made the empty hall become a sacred space.

Yale theologian, Letty Russell describes another rearrangement of sacred space in Harlem, New York church in 1970. At that time the church had decided to refinish an old

⁴⁴ Of course, since the introduction of pews into church buildings in the Renaissance, they were sometimes purchased or rented.

⁴⁵ Personal recollections. The song is by Indonesian song writer, Christian Tamaela, in *Let the Asian Church Rejoice* (Singapore: Methodist School of Music, 2015).

wooden floor, it was decided afterward that instead returning the pews to the typical lecture set-up, to place the pews in circular fashion, in the round. That assured that everyone was facing each other, and no one was marginalized. It changed the way people worshipped. For Russell, the new way of placing the pews became an important principle in which “outsiders” are gathered round “God’s table of hospitality.”⁴⁶

The experience of relationships at the table brings us to a tension between the process orientation of ritual and the structured spaces in which we dwell. Whether the Christian community worships in an ornate purpose-built basilica, a school room, a theatre, a house, or even a graveyard, the fundamental reality is that we all live and breathe in physical space. While space can be viewed as abstract geometric dimensions, with vertical and horizontal axes, it is also relational. As people move about in the physical space, walking, standing, sitting, kneeling, coming in and going out, looking up and down, and relating to other people, the abstract space becomes a familiar place. Physical space may impose limits on people, but it also opens up the potential for symbolic meaning as people engage with it. A common, empty hall becomes a sacred place, at least temporarily, when two or three or more gather to honor the divine presence.

Just as walls and doors separate the inside from the outside, worship space is sometimes framed in terms of the sacred and the profane, such that both spatial structures and ritual action indicate the boundaries between sacred and profane, inside and outside,

⁴⁶ Letty Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster/ John Knox, 1993), 25. The PSR theologian, C. S. Song, draws similar conclusions in *The Believing Heart: An Invitation to Story Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 9, 30. There he connects the market-place theology of Jesus to the traditionally circular open-air marketplace in Taipei, Taiwan and similar Asian venues. Christian theology should not be merely cloistered, but proved in the same settings in which Jesus ministered, in the face-to-face encounters of the real world.

sinner and saved. Eliade noted how in many ancient religions temples design reflected the *hierophany*, that point of contact between the sacred and the world, as a rupture in ordinary or profane space and time. This referred to the *axis mundi*, the sacred center of the world, which became the pattern for all future human activities. “For it is the break in space that allows the world to be constituted, because it reveals the fixed point, the central axis for all future orientation”.⁴⁷

Ironically, numerous holy sites in Hebrew scripture may be noted as examples of *axis mundi*, including Sinai, where Moses received instructions for building the ark of the covenant and the tent of meeting. Ezekiel’s vision of measuring the temple (Ezekiel 40-42) reinforces the belief that the temple in Jerusalem was supposed to follow a heavenly design. The *hierophany* was frequently envisioned on a mountain, like Jerusalem, or an artificial mountain, such as the ziggurats of Babylon. However, besides Jerusalem, many other holy places claimed significance in the Bible, such as Bethel, Gilgal, Shechem, Gerazim, Shiloh, Samaria, Mt Hermon. Such diversity of “high places” came to be seen as a threat to a united kingdom ruled from Jerusalem, often evoking prophetic rebukes (Ezekiel 6:2-4).

While Eliade’s observations are valuable, they may suggest political effects, as much as cosmic religion. As Jonathan Z. Smith has remarked, “The language of the ‘center’ is pre-eminently political and only secondarily cosmological. It is a vocabulary that stems, primarily from archaic ideologies of kingship and the royal function.”⁴⁸ This squares with a

⁴⁷ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 21.

⁴⁸ Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 17. In the next chapter, I will consider Ronald Grimes’s ritual critique of Smith. C. S. Song in *The Believing Heart*, 60-64, has written critically of theology centered on one thing alone, church-centered,

recognition in biblical history that the Hebrew scriptures are written from the standpoint of a “remnant,” for whom Jerusalem, not Bethel or Schechem or Samaria, was both religious and civic center. Such political structures must be kept in mind when reading early Christian accounts of the Herodian temple, because the revival of the institutionalized Jerusalem temple cult could only increase the regional and intercommunal tensions, and reduce opportunities for hospitality.

The chance meeting between Jesus and a Samaritan woman shifted attention away from placement as politics to the process of relational placement: “[T]he hour is coming ... neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). It was the Johannine account of Jesus at the well,⁴⁹ which raised the geopolitical question of Jerusalem or Mt. Gerazim. In contrast to a worship that is bound by geopolitical expediency, he offered a process whereby people enter into an expansive space that allows for hospitality between multiple centers or orientations.⁵⁰

That process is expressed in the doctrine of incarnation, in which Jesus of Nazareth is the embodiment or placement of God’s presence in a particular time and place, as opposed to merely abstract space. “Not only did Christ enter human time but he also came

Christocentric, or Theocentric. He prefers the term, “orientation.” which implies relationality between objects, a topic of relevance in the discussion on Trinity in the last chapter.

⁴⁹ Some writers, such as Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 52, have suggested that biblical meetings at the well always lead to courtship and marriage. See Andrew E. Arterbury “Breaking the Betrothal Bonds: Hospitality in John 4,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 72, 2010, 63-83, for a critique of that position. Regardless, the well was a place where locals and guests came for water, and so naturally allowed for exchanges of hospitality.

⁵⁰ The ritual process orientation of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner are informative here. The gathering for worship, though not strictly a rite of passage with its three stages, can be described in terms of the transformation in *communitas*.

to dwell among us, occupying a specific and definite place on earth in Judea.”⁵¹ But this particularity of place does not belong to only one physical geography, but to the places where people regularly gather for worship in ways that constitute the presence and ministry of Jesus. All of the synoptic gospels (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-16; John 2:13-17) and John recount Jesus’ challenge to the temple institution by chasing out the money changers, and declaring his own constituted body as its replacement, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (John 2:19). Jesus was presenting a new understanding of sacred space not focused simply on the buildings and political structure, but on the living body – his body. This claim to replace the Temple privileges the body and embodied practice for making a place sacred. It is Jesus’ body, the Church gathered in his name and in the power of the Holy Spirit that sanctifies the place. This critique of political emplacement is in line with Israel’s prophetic tradition that denounced the usurpation of divine placement with the kingly or political rule.⁵²

Keeping in the mind the actions of the body of Christ engaged in worship, James White offers a functional account of liturgical participation in the sacred, with six liturgical spaces in Christian worship: Gathering, Movement, Congregational, Choir, Baptismal and Sanctuary. Both the act of worship, and its study, is about people and their actions of placing Christ’s presence in the liturgical space. “In every age, forming the body of Christ

⁵¹ James F. White, *Introduction to Worship*, Revised Ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 88.

⁵² Smith, *To Take Place*, 49, *et passim*, for Smith’s thorough analysis of Ezekiel’s replacement of the political with the sacred in his vision of the new temple.

is the first act of worship.”⁵³ While the liturgical space may or may not be carved in stone, it is made sacred by the people constituted as the body of Christ.

Every worship space has an entry point that functions symbolically to divide inside from outside, whether it be a narthex, lobby or other transitional space. In many places the physical space is undifferentiated, such as the Fourth floor at PLCMC, while the 2nd floor has a built-in narthex. The lack of such a buffer space may well shape the attitudes of those entering worship.

Movement and congregational space could also be the same geometric space in which people participate in worship. As “Christian worship demands considerable movement,” White argues against popular theatre style or bench seating that fosters passivity and limits movement to upper body at best.⁵⁴ The history of worship has seen a wide ranged of bodily positions, movements, gestures and changes in posture, including entrance processions, kneeling at confession, turning and walking for greetings or sharing the peace, and the moving forward for the offering, Eucharist, or altar call. Congregational space includes the nave, where the people sit or stand to pray, hear the proclamation and make response, and the chancel or sanctuary with the altar and pulpit.

Musical space is often contested space, sometimes taking over the visible focal point of worship, whether a pipe organ or the wired network of the band or the massed revival choir. While music is vitally important, it has a different function in worship than at the concert hall. The latter does not usually tell a story. For Marcia McFee, music in worship is like musical theatre than to a concert, because in worship “the music is there to

⁵³ Smith, *To Take Place*, 93.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 94.

progress the message of the story.”⁵⁵ Music leadership is vital to encourage full participation in the spiritual practices worship.

The baptismal and sanctuary space, where the sacraments of baptisms and the Lord’s Supper occur, both need to be visible and accessible, in order to facilitate sharing. Even if baptisms take place outside, a font in the congregational space becomes an important worship symbol. The sanctuary space (or chancel) around the altar-communion table should be accessible while also fostering a sense of awe, which is traditionally done by having the whole area raised slightly higher than the nave. In all these differentiated spaces the focus should be on the interpersonal dynamics, whereby people establish the place of the sacred.

Liturgy as a Sharing of Space

One of the most concrete social facts about corporate worship requirement to share space. The challenge of sharing space is a global concern, for the fields of ecology and politics, as well as pastoral care and liturgical order. Geopolitical hostility in the Middle East and even indifference in the local church can lead to spirals of violence, with displaced persons in need of hospitality crossing treacherous waters, evoking even more violence and indifference in potential host countries or communities. Even our English words hold a strange tension between inclusion and exclusion. Hospitality is what the guest as stranger

⁵⁵ Marcia McFee, “The Worship Design Studio: The Musical Artist” *Worship Arts* 55, no. 4 (March-April 2010), 7-10, (http://content.yudu.com/Library/A1n655/WorshipArtsMarchApri/resources/index.htm?referrerUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.umfellowship.org%2F%3Fpage%3Dworshiparts_archive, accessed 8 June 2015).

shares, while the enemy is the stranger who receives and offers hostility.⁵⁶ Indeed, while the act of excluding people from worship is a kind of violence, it sometimes seems like the only recourse to prevent a greater harm to the community.⁵⁷

Philosophers from Kant to Derrida have sought to understand how the practice of hospitality can break through cycles of violence.⁵⁸ The ironic problem is that each party in the act of hospitality has her/his own conditions, which if taken to their logical course may well lead to mutual exclusion, if not outright violence. In shared church facilities, it has been my experience that the kitchen, with its potential for breaking olfactory boundaries, becomes the place of shared hostility. While recognizing the integrity of each individual that may enter a given space, as well as the integrity of the host community, there must be a way to transcend the divisions that are inevitably generated by differences, to allow for a kind of mutual inclusion leading to mutual transformation rather than violence.

Within Christian liturgy there can be ways of correcting these cycles of violence, because liturgy includes both ethical and cultic dimensions. Liturgy involves the dynamic

⁵⁶ The words, guest, host, hostility, and hospitality, are etymologically related.

⁵⁷ A missionary colleague reported to me that her Reconciling church (UMC) in New York had to exclude a man from worship because as a registered sex offender who was starting to invite the young men home with him, he was seen as a threat to the community. She said that the community had to be protected. The recent inclusion of a young white man in an African-American Bible study in Charleston, North Carolina was an act of hospitality that turned lethal.

⁵⁸ Hans Boersma. in "Irenaeus, Derrida and hospitality: on the eschatological overcoming of violence." *Modern Theology* 19, no. 2 (April 1, 2003): 163-180. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed April 19, 2015), provides a brief comparison between Immanuel Kant's idea of "universal hospitality" and Jacques Derrida's "pure hospitality". Both positions have built-in conditions, according to Boersma, thus limiting their effectiveness in curbing violence. His solution is in the Fourth century Irenaeus with his mix of apophatic and kataphatic spirituality which recognizes the transcendent host who invites persons into God's hospitable reign. The relationship between transcendence and immanence in the development of liturgical hospitality will be further explored in the second and third chapters.

between individuals gathering together in identification with Christ and the social realities of the particular place where they gather. From the outset, liturgy is about hospitality, the sharing of space and resources. . The apostle Paul compared the official government ministers (λειτουργοὶ) who serve the state (Romans 13:6), and himself as a minister (λειτουργὸν) of Christ for the sake of the Gentiles (Romans 15:16).⁵⁹ When collecting funds for the Jerusalem church , Paul expected the Hellenic Christian communities to likewise offer up service (λειτουργίας) for the those in need ” (2 Corinthians 9:12). Christian worship was not merely private, but had implications for the public sphere.

Ruth Meyers points out the importance of the emphasis on public service, which draws the participants to follow Christ who, as the “liturgist par excellence,” engages the community of faith in offering themselves “with him for the sake of the world.”⁶⁰ Hence, Christian liturgy must not be merely static and inward looking, but dynamic and social. As John Wesley is often quoted, “The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness.”⁶¹ Indeed, if the problem of sharing space has ethical

⁵⁹ See James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 26, et passim, for a discussion on the church’s appropriation of λειτουργίας that indicated a sense of public service in in their worship.

⁶⁰ Ruth A. Meyers, “Missional Church, Missional Liturgy” *Theology Today* 67, no. 1 (April 1, 2010): 36-50. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed January 5, 2015), 47.

⁶¹ John Wesley, “Preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems” 1739, *Works of John Wesley*. Jackson V 1, CD version, Franklin, Tenn: Provident House Publishers, 1995) 322. However, Wesley’s understanding of “social” gospel should not simply be confused with Rauschenbuschian or later renderings of social gospel to the exclusion of evangelical faith. Wesley recognized and demanded communal dynamic in the working out of salvation, especially through involvement in societies, class and band meetings. One approach to this social dynamic has been reinvigorated through the work of David Lowes Watson, *Covenant discipleship: Christian formation through mutual accountability* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources 1994).

implications for all creatures, then a liturgy by which a local community is sharing of space, cannot ignore the world outside its doors.

. Liturgical space allows for a range of sharing space, from the sharing of public space between preacher and people, to the social space between people in the pews and during fellowship times, to the personal and intimate sharing at other times.⁶² The development of the church from domestic to public places, must certainly have influenced the ways in which space was shared. Early Christian writings reflect a network of house churches, which would mingle both social and personal spatial zones, hence the value of the “holy kiss” as a means for strengthening identity (Romans 16:16).⁶³

As places of worship became more purpose-built, from modified houses to basilicas in the fourth century, there would be a commensurate expansion of social and public space, to the reduction of the intimate family space. What is desirable is to maintain in Christian worship a spatial orientation that allows people to move easily from the sharing of public space to more personal sharing. Singapore is a place that is not unfamiliar with these

⁶² The study of proxemics by Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (Anchor, 1990),

known as the “personal reaction bubbles” describes four levels of subjective space, intimate, personal, social and public, with the intimate zone reserved for only the closest relationships, personal space for good friends and family members, social space for interaction with acquaintances and public space meaning the distance useful for public speaking. See also Laura K. Guerrero and Michael L. Hecht, *The Nonverbal Communication Reader*, 3rd ed. (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 2008), 186. Further reflection could be done on the different levels in which individuals may be inclined to share space during worship.

⁶³ Michael Philip Penn, *Kissing Christians: Ritual and Community in the Late Ancient Church* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2005), 120. Penn, who analysed the practice of kissing in worship during the first five centuries, found that the sharing of intimate space fostered both stronger boundaries and social bonds. Multiple guidelines restricted the use of the kiss to differentiate the profane from the holy.

concerns of alienation and limited space to share, which will be discussed in the next section.

B. The Singapore Context and Issues of Space Limitation

Singapore, “Where I know it's home”

Singapore is a unique place with a unique history and identity. Every year during the Singapore National Day festivities on August 9, the nation celebrates and commemorates its independence. During the lead-up, the mood turns to enchantment, with songs reminding Singaporeans to stay put or return home if they left. In 2007 the National Day theme song was “This is home, truly,” sung by popular female singer, Kit Chan:

Whenever I am feeling low
I look around me and I know
There's a place that will stay within me
Wherever I may choose to go
I will always recall the city
Know every street and shore
Sail down the river which brings us life
Winding through my Singapore.

This is home truly, where I know I must be
Where my dreams wait for me, where that river always flows
This is home surely, as my senses tell me
This is where I won't be alone, for this is where I know it's home⁶⁴

The Republic of Singapore celebrated in song is a relatively new invention, a city state with persistent Asian roots but cast into a western mould. The telling of Singapore's

⁶⁴ Dick Lee, “Home,” LyricWikia
(http://lyrics.wikia.com/wiki/%E9%99%B3%E6%BD%94%E5%84%80_%28Kit_Chan%29:Home accessed 5 January 2015).

modern history usually begins with the arrival of Stamford Raffles in 1819,⁶⁵ his negotiation with the Sultan of Johor for the use of Singapore as British trading post, and the development of the port of Singapore with the rapid migration of workers from the surrounding Malayan region as well as from India and China. By 1826, Singapore joined Penang and Malacca in the Malaya peninsula as the Straits Settlements of the British East Indies Company.

Of course, Singapore and the region, has a history that precedes Western presence. Even before the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British tried to carve out their empires, Singapore or Temasek, had been part of various empires for at least the previous millennium. The mouth of the Singapore River was a sparsely settled fishing village and trading center in the Malay kingdom of Srivijaya until the fourteenth century when title passed to the Javanese kingdom of Majapahit, and it became known as Singapura (“Lion City” in Sanskrit).⁶⁶ However, until British arrival, Malacca was the greater trade center.⁶⁷ When the British moved into the area they sought to offset the Dutch and Portuguese control, by claiming Singapore in

⁶⁵ A statue of Raffles overlooks the mouth of the Singapore River in front the Victoria Concert Hall, the first part of which was built in 1862 as a town hall, and used in 1885 by Methodist missionaries as a preaching hall.

⁶⁶ A fanciful “Merlion” design maintains the tourist consumption of the legend about a Thirteenth century Srivajayan prince who spotted a lion-like creature when hunting along the island coast. Statuary and pendants of the Merlion abound in the touristy areas. See Mary Somers Heidhues, *Southeast Asia: A Concise History* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd, 2000), for a brief background on the Srivijaya and Majapahit empires.

⁶⁷ The ruin of St. Paul’s church in Malacca tells the story of European mission and colonial struggles. In front is a statue of the Jesuit, Francis Xavier, the first recorded Christian missionary to the region, who used the chapel after it was built in 1521, and was later temporarily buried there after his death in 1552, before interment in Goa, India. Excavated tombstones lining walls of the original nave, are inscribed in Latin from the Portuguese era, in Dutch from that brief colonial period, and a few in English, though more English tombstones are found at the base of the hill in an Anglican chapel.

1819.⁶⁸ Soon workers migrated from southern China, southern India, and Malaysia, turning the island into a polyglot shipping center.⁶⁹

Independent of British control since 1963, Singapore became its own nation in 1965, and is now home to about five and a half million people, having grown by nearly two million in less than fifteen years.⁷⁰ Resident population in 2014, including citizens and permanent residents, was 3,870,739, while the non-resident or foreign population was 1,598,985.⁷¹ English remains the primary language of government administration, while education uses English and one of three “mother tongues,” Mandarin, Tamil or Malay.

Singapore’s economy and global standing is now well established, being a leader in the regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). But its quick rise from colony to nationhood suggests a pragmatic or utilitarian ethos, in which Singaporeans were assimilated into “a global culture that was essentially instrumental, technically-oriented, consumption-conscious, and utilitarian.”⁷² Even as the population grows there are increasing population pressures, including a decreasing ratio of working to retired people,

⁶⁸ Heidhues, *Southeast Asia*, 104.

⁶⁹ Among Singapore residents the ethnic distribution has remained fairly stable, with the 2010 census showing 74.1 percent Chinese, 13.4 percent Malays, 9.2 percent Indian, and 3.3 percent others. *Census of Population 2010 Advance Census Release*. Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade & Industry (<http://www.singstat.gov.sg/pubn/popn/c2010acr.pdf> accessed 2 May 2012).

⁷⁰ When my family and I arrived in Singapore at the end of 2001, the total population was just over 4 million.

⁷¹ “Monthly Digest of Statistics” Singapore Department of Statistics . Government of Singapore, 2015 (<http://www.singstat.gov.sg/publications/publications-and-papers/reference/mdscontent#population> accessed Jan. 18, 2015)

⁷² Tong Chee Kiong and Lian Ken Fee (eds.), *The Making of Singapore Sociology: Society and State* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 2002), 1.

partly due to an increasing older age, lower birth rate and the choice of many residents to move abroad for education and work.⁷³

This utilitarian approach is explained by University of Singapore sociologists Tong Chee Kiong and Lian Kwen Fee, who observed that statehood was initially unintended, but was the rushed results of largely colonial pressures on the region, and by its expulsion in 1965 from an intended Malaysia Federation.⁷⁴ They argue that Singapore was forced, for the sake of economic survival, into a highly utilitarian approach, in which the “past was forgotten” as a “hindrance to the task” and Singaporeans were forced to be assimilated.⁷⁵ In this they see Singapore as the “product of Western modernity,” specifically with regard to three critical structures: capitalism, industrialism and the nation state.⁷⁶ This section focuses primarily on the latter with additional attention to the religious texture.

The driving force is the development of the nation state which is to survive with minimal land and natural resources. The utilitarian need for this drive subordinates a number of other social forces, including the claims of diverse ethnic populations. Besides the colonists, three Asia ethnic identities have remained prominent, Chinese, Malay and

⁷³ These population pressures are discussed in full in “A Sustainable Population for Dynamic Singapore: Population White Paper,” National Population and Talent Division, Prime Minister’s Office, Government of Singapore (<http://population.sg/whitepaper/downloads/population-white-paper.pdf> accessed Jan. 17, 2015).

⁷⁴ Tong Chee Kiong and Lian Ken Fee (eds.), *The Making of Singapore Sociology: Society and State* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 2002), 1.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2. Singapore’s utilitarianism did build up the nation’s economic strength, but not without costs to physical and human heritage, with not only older buildings, but also century old burial grounds giving way to shopping malls and expressways. Such is the case of the historic Bukit Brown Cemetery. The Bukit Brown Cemetery Documentation Project has set out to gather and document the social history of the oldest Chinese municipal cemetery, part of which has been demolished to make way for new road construction. See <http://www.bukitbrown.info/whatisbbc.php> (access 13 July 2015).

⁷⁶ Ibid., 11.

Indian. The primary focus of this paper is within a Chinese community. One of the factors within the dominant Chinese sector of the population is the fact of different dialect groups and how British colonial rule used those natural divisions for their own benefit.⁷⁷ Many different dialects are spoken in the different provinces and villages of China, and when the Chinese migrated to Singapore they attempted to hold onto their village traditions and ties. The dominant dialect group was and remains Hokkien.⁷⁸ With the growth of national identity and strong economy, the government sought to de-emphasize clan loyalty and clan associations were urged to open their doors to other clans and ethnic groups, even as various integration policies were established, such as the planned high rise housing and national service.⁷⁹ While policy has tended to minimize the dialects, they did not erase clan loyalty and dialect groups, which are still alive in religious associations, such as Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church, that foster the continuity of tradition.

Singapore is home to many regional religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.⁸⁰ Clearly, how the adherents of these and other religious

⁷⁷ Singapore geographer Cheng Lim-Keak pointed out that the British used the natural development of the “bāng-structure” (邦), or dialect group associations and networks, to maintain authority through a divide and indirect rule strategy, similar to the apartheid of South Africa. See his work, *Social Change and the Chinese in Singapore: A Socio-Economic Geography With Special Reference to Bāng Structure* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985), xvii, et passim.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 29. This dialect can still be heard commonly in the “hawker centres” and other popular eating places, as well as numerous churches where Hokkien is still used. It is less common in the younger generations, since Mandarin is the only Chinese taught in schools and government sanctioned media outlets cater only to four languages taught in schools – English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. Stamford Raffles divided the arriving Chinese partly by three economic functions, “merchant, artisan, and cultivator,” with the merchant being the most respected class in the trade-based colonial economy, and also partly by indigenous rule; i.e., according to the dialect groups which fostered the bāng-structure.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 190. The Housing Development Board was set up just prior to national independence in the mid-60s.

⁸⁰ Nearby Indonesia has the world’s largest Islamic population.

persuasions on the ground view each other has implications for hospitality. The government has maintained both a multiracial policy, and a policy of “religious harmony,” because of the history of tension between practitioners of various religions.⁸¹

Because Singapore was a British colony, just like the United States of America, one can draw some social and religious parallels. Singapore’s ethnic mix is obviously different from that in America, but some commonalities can be traced, including the nature of religious affiliation.⁸² Religious affiliation in Singapore is higher and more diverse than in America, but one commonality is the growth of the unaffiliated. Generally religious affiliation has remained relatively stable between 1980 and 2010, with the exception of general losses in Taoism, corresponding gains for Buddhism and Christianity, and an increase among the unaffiliated. Buddhists and Taoists together made up 51 percent of the population.

Since the 1990 Singapore census religious affiliation has seen important changes, especially in the Chinese sector, with Taoism initially declining, then growing in the period 2000 to 2010, from 8.5 to 10.9 percent of the total population. Buddhism showed increased in 2000, with 51 percent of total population, but decreased to 33.3 percent in 2010.

⁸¹ A declaration of religious harmony which all religious organisations are encouraged to recite and uphold, affirms tolerance of differences and maintaining common space in the framework of a secular state. See the appendix for the text. In addition, several programs and institutions promote religious dialogue, such as the Inter-Religious Organization (IRO) which represents 10 religions in Singapore. See the website at <http://iro.sg> (accessed 17 February 2016)..

⁸² Statistical figures in this section are based on the Singapore government’s decennial census, which includes basic reporting of religious affiliation. *Singapore Census of the Population, 2010: Statistical Release 1: Demographic Characteristics, Education, Language and Religion* (Singapore Department of Statistics; http://www.singstat.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/publications/publications_and_papers/cop2010/census_2010_release1/cop2010sr1.pdf, accessed 20 March 2015). The religious affiliation data corresponds to that listed by the Pew Research Center. http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/singapore/#/?affiliations_religion_id=0&affiliations_year=2010®ion_name=All%20Countries&restrictions_year=2013 (accessed 7 June 2015).

Christianity which used to be a small minority went from 14.6 to 18.3 between 2000 and 2010. Islam and Hinduism, corresponding largely to the Malay and Indian populations, remained stable, with Islam constituting 14.7 percent, including some Indians, and Hindus was just over 5 percent. The most significant changes are in the Chinese population, where so-called traditional Asian religion decreased, with a concurrent increase in Christian faith and “free thinkers” those with no religious affiliation growing in that 10 year period from 14.8 to 17 percent.⁸³

Census trends in the Chinese population correlate Christian faith with increased prosperity, as suggested by four indicators: age, language, education and income. Among English educated Chinese households, Christianity made up the largest religious group, while Buddhism and Taoism were strongest where Mandarin and Chinese dialects were the primary household languages. Education is also a factor in Christianity’s gain from 11 percent in 2000 to 17 percent of the Chinese population in 2010, with one out of three university graduates being a Christian. While the census did not directly correlate income and religious affiliation, it did note an important indicator of income, namely ownership of private property versus ownership of HDB (government subsidized Housing Development Board) flats.⁸⁴ Christians comprised 34 percent of private flat and house dwellers, compared to 20 percent of the total population, while the vast majority of Buddhists and Taoists lived in the cheaper HDB flats. While Christian affiliation increased across all ages, Buddhist and Taoist affiliation decreased among all age groups, though still retaining the

⁸³ I have baptised and received into membership several persons who claimed to be originally free thinkers, but through marriage decided to become Christians.

⁸⁴ Housing Development Board flats are the common high-rise subsidized housing where about 80 percent of Singaporeans live.

majority among older adults. While 21.8 percent of Chinese are unaffiliated with any religion, those between 15 and 34 are twice as likely to be unaffiliated as those 55 and over. This is similar to age correspondence for the “Nones” in America, where the predominant age group for the religious unaffiliated in 2008 was 18-29.⁸⁵ It would appear that the more educated, English speaking and financially established Chinese will be affiliated with Christian churches.

Western sociological tradition once posited an evolutionary move away from religion as magical, toward an inevitable secularism. While the increase of the religious unaffiliated may bear that out, the new religious growth may argue against that assumption. Critical voices such as Singapore sociologist, John Clammer, have raised critical questions about these assumptions of secularization, noting more evidence of religious revival than secularization in Singapore.⁸⁶ Tong also questions the applicability of the “the secularization hypothesis to ‘Asian’ belief systems, such as Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism”⁸⁷

Using the religious subcultures of Wade Clark Roof, the fastest growing segment in the Singapore religious market-place is the Born-Again/Charismatic. Several mega-churches stand out, such as City Harvest and New Creation, which boast of 20,000 to 50,000 memberships, both with high-tech worship services driven by pop-Christian music.

⁸⁵ American Nones: The Profile of the No Religion Population: A Report Based on the American Religious Identification Survey 2008 (Hartford, Conn.: Trinity College, 2008), Highlights.

⁸⁶ John Clammer, *The Sociology of Singapore Religion: Studies in Christianity and Chinese Culture* (Singapore: Chopman Publishers, 1991), 109 and passim. According to statistics the Christian numbers are increasing. See also British sociologist Colin Campbell, “The Secret Religion of the Educated Classes.” *Sociological Analysis*, 39, 2 (1978), 146-147, who observed differences among sociologists, suggesting that the confusion comes in part from the misreading of Earnst Troeltsch, and turning his “trichotomy” of religion into a dichotomy that neglects the third category, “spiritual and mystical religion.”

⁸⁷ Tong, et. al., *The Making of Singapore Sociology*, 399.

In response, many churches now not only have alternative contemporary services, but they are the main service. These churches have followed the Evangelical and charismatic trends of the 60s and 70s, which is in continuity with nineteenth-century revival movements.⁸⁸ As an example, Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church, where I am part of the pastoral staff, has two English services, labelled the Contemporary Service (CS) and the Liturgical Service (LS). What is relevant at this point is the relation of these stylistic concerns to Singapore culture. Clammer, noting the sociological supposition that charismatic activity is “a response to powerlessness,” goes on to trace the particular powerlessness within Singapore society to the “highly bureaucratic, paternalistic and centralized nature of Singapore political culture,” of which average citizens have little access.⁸⁹ This is a nation with one of highest population densities in the world,⁹⁰ and with over 80 percent living in these high rise flats.⁹¹ Add to this the crowded conditions of average Singapore living, the highly utilitarian economy which demands long work hours, and “there is a profound powerlessness in Singapore for the bulk of the population.”⁹²

⁸⁸ See James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* Rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 154, et passim, for a brief review of the frontier and revival traditions.

⁸⁹ Clammer, *The Sociology of Singapore Religion*, 54.

⁹⁰ The population of Singapore in 2011 was 5.18 million. With a land area of 714 square kilometres, that comes to approximately 7,257 living per square kilometre (“Key Annual Indicators”, Singapore Department of Statistics <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/stats/keyin.html#note1> accessed 2 May, 2012). This is felt in a number of areas, but especially in terms of residence.

⁹¹ At the time of Singapore’s independence in 1965, the ruling People’s Action Party began a project to improve housing by the creation of the Housing Development Board (HDB). The ensuing elimination of the old *kampong* (villages) had numerous side-effects, the reduction of colonial apartheid divisions, but also the loss of traditional neighborhoods, open space and possible break down of extended families, as it would be more difficult to live together in the high-rise flats.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 54. Ironically, this utilitarian economy has seen tremendous growth in the hospitality industry, including hotels, restaurants and convention centers, for the purpose of increasing revenue. According to the Singapore Hotel Association, 15,466,000 international visitors came to Singapore in

These realities have implications not just for belief and worship stylistics, but also for the ways in which religious adherents share space. This project explores the negotiations of space within a particular Singaporean faith community to understand the ways in which its members act hospitably in this dense urban context.

The Context: Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church

The Methodist Church in Singapore (MSC) is the largest of the Protestant denominations in Singapore with forty-three local churches and over 30,000 members, and it has seen steady increases over the years.⁹³ The year 2015 marks its 130th anniversary, having been established in 1885 by missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church (America). Of the seventeen congregations of the Chinese Annual Conference, the membership for 1999 was recorded at 10,303.⁹⁴ Records for 2012 show a membership increase of over 30 percent, to 13,857.⁹⁵ There are significant entry points for families with children, including the fifteen Methodist schools which are open to anyone without regard to religious affiliation, and various youth organizations, preschools and kindergartens, which many Methodist congregations operate.

Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church (PLCMC) is one of the congregations that

2013. See the Singapore Hotel Association Update, Oct – Dec 2013, p 17
http://sha.org.sg/userfiles/member/SHA_Update_Oct-Dec_2013.pdf, accessed 7 July 2014.

⁹³ MCS is organized into three annual conferences, largely along ethnic and linguistic distinctions. CAC has historically focused on Chinese dialect groups. Emmanuel Tamil Annual Conference has 8 congregations among Indians and other south Asians. Trinity Annual Conference has 20 congregations serving English educated of all the ethnic groups.

⁹⁴ The following statistics are from the 2000 and 20012 editions of the Journal of the Chinese Annual Conference.

⁹⁵ The report lists the annual increase for 2011-2012 at 1.8 percent.

constitute the MCS.⁹⁶ Like the nation, it is a polyglot, with seven worship services, offered in four languages, Hokkien, Mandarin, Teochew and English.⁹⁷ Founded in 1939 among Hokkien speaking Chinese, the congregation is associated with the Chinese Annual Conference (CAC), with current members of about 1,500, making it one of the largest in the conference.⁹⁸ For the first three decades the community worshipped at the TRAC Paya Lebar Methodist Church.⁹⁹ Hokkien Christians, many of whom had come from churches in China, became transmitters of those traditions when they arrived in Singapore, just as other Chinese villagers transmitted other traditions when they immigrated. Along the way, some PLCMC members trace their conversion to the work of the Chinese (Hinghwa) evangelist, John Sung, who was holding evangelistic services in Singapore in 1935 at Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church. In 1968 a two-story building was completed with social hall on the first floor and sanctuary on the second, and in 1969 a Mandarin worship service started.

Over the years the church neighborhood changed from kampong to suburb, with high rise condominiums and shopping centers nearby, and the quiet two lane road the fronted the church is now a busy six-lane artery. The road widening cost the church half

⁹⁶ The Methodist Church in Singapore was founded in 1885 by missionaries supported by the Methodist Episcopal Church (America). It has since grown to over 30,000 members in 43 local congregations.

⁹⁷ Hokkien, a common group of dialects in southern China, including Taiwan, is the next most common language spoken by Chinese Singaporeans. Teochew is spoken mostly by the elderly.

⁹⁸ "Local Church Statistics," Amalgamated Reports of the 35th Session of the Chinese Annual Conference, The Methodist Church in Singapore, 15 November 2010.

⁹⁹ TRAC is Trinity Annual Conference, one of three conference structures in MCS, which is primarily English speaking. The history up to 1980s comes from Theodore R. Doraisamy, ed. *Forever Beginning: One Hundred Years of Methodism in Singapore* (Singapore: The Methodist Church in Singapore, 1985), 195.

of its parking lot, so that now only thirty cars can park comfortably, and those who drive must hunt for neighborhood parking.¹⁰⁰ The road is serviced by public buses and the nearest subway station is a ten to fifteen-minutes walk away.

Among the families, Christianity cannot be expected to appear as a significant strata within their cultural history. Parents or grandparents are more likely to themselves as traditional Chinese with some form of piety based on Buddhism, Taoism or Confucianism. It is not uncommon to see homes with a family altar featuring a statue of the Buddha, Guanyin, or a Chinese deity, along with photos of deceased parents or grandparents.¹⁰¹ Though a British colony for over a century, the local Chinese remain part of a global Chinese culture that can be characterized by certain traditional foods, family religious practices, and a self-balancing, concentric ethical system, encompassing everything from the family to government and the cosmos.¹⁰²

The culture interest in harmony may be seen in attempts to maintain a kind of family unity among the diverse groups within the church, which may be further demonstrated in the congregation's previous theme, "Unity in Diversity: Rooted and Fruitful." The concentric view was expressed in a more recent theme, "One Family in Christ; Christ in our Families." In my observation this concern for concentric harmony is also expressed in a preference for consensus building and an aversion to open debate in committee meetings.

¹⁰⁰ These and other numerical details were given by the church office and/or the church's property committee.

¹⁰¹ For a discussion on the configurations of Chinese religion see Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 3, et passim.

¹⁰² Li Yih-Yuan, "Notions of Time, Space and Harmony in Chinese Popular Culture," in *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*, Chun-Chieh Huang and Erik Zürcher, eds. (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1995), 384-386. See also *Confucian Ethics Today: The Singapore Challenge* (Singapore: Federal Publications, 1984).

As the church grew, the two-story building was enlarged with two more floors. Since 1980 two English language services were started at Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church. The first is now dubbed the Contemporary Service (CS), while the second, the Liturgical Service (LS), which began in 1999, with a set of preferences that distinguished it from the “praise and worship” style of the existing English service, including a preference for the worship order of the parent Hokkien service and an openness to the liturgical reform represented in the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal and other UM resources.¹⁰³ Average Sunday service attendance for each of the English services is currently about 100.

As one of eight pastoral staff, and a United Methodist Missionary assigned by special appointment from the conference president to LS, I am a participant-observer for this project. As a pastor, I have a leadership role, , but I feel like a stranger.¹⁰⁴ As such I feel some resonance with Clifford Geertz when he first went to Bali as an anthropologist and found that everyone ignored him, until he was linked to them by a shared crisis.¹⁰⁵ I think after My role and experience sets me up as ritual expert, but also dependent upon the church members to inform me of the local sensibilities.

¹⁰³ Liturgical scholar Lester Ruth has highlighted the problems with the taxonomy of contemporary and traditional or liturgical, but for practical purposes, the designations have stuck. See “A rose by any other name: attempts at classifying North American Protestant worship.” *American Theological Inquiry* 2, no. 1 (January 15, 2009): 85-104. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed May 10, 2015).

¹⁰⁴ I am *ang mo*, Hokkien for “red hair”, a mildly pejorative term for western people. A popular local film, “I Not Stupid” (Jack Neo, MediaCorp Raintree, 2006) used the term for an American expatriate whose marketing proposal hilariously clashes with local Chinese culture.

¹⁰⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* New (York: Basic Books, 1973), 412. After leading a few funeral services, I felt more welcome.

The Liturgical Service gathers on the fourth floor sanctuary (L4) at 11:45 am Sunday.¹⁰⁶ It is accessed by one elevator (lift) and three stairways, two of which enter from two corners in the “west,” or behind the nave.¹⁰⁷ The stairs enter onto the rear of the congregational space from stairways, while the doorway to the lift is stage left, next to the organ. Those who come late by this door are seen by everyone. There is no separate gathering space, such as a narthex or lobby, on this floor, so people enter directly into the congregational space, and directly into whatever ritual action is taking place. As the HS has more aging people, the exits and entrances tend to be very crowded during the transition between the two services. Occasional tempers flare, especially in the limited parking lot.

The design of L4 sanctuary has a “divided chancel,” an attached liturgically east-facing altar, larger pulpit on the north (stage right) for preaching, and the smaller lectern on the south, for reading scripture and other lesser matters.¹⁰⁸ Both are usually covered by paraments in seasonal color. The chancel is accessed by four steps on the extreme sides of either pulpit or lectern or through the middle between the communion, or kneeling, rails. This and another set of kneeling rails in chancel around the freestanding altar table (at kneeling height) physically set apart the inner sanctuary space. It has been the practice for the pastor and those assisting with communion to kneel around the altar for the Lord’s

¹⁰⁶ Previously, it began at 11:30; however, because the larger Mandarin Service shifted from 8:15 am to 8:45 to encourage more participation, and the Hokkien Service shifted from 10 to 10:15 am, the LS was obliged to move up 15 minutes as well. Prior to the Hokkien Service L4 is occupied by the Mandarin Service, so it is a full house on Sunday morning.

¹⁰⁷ Cardinal directions of the interior of the sanctuary are based on traditional designation of the altar/communion table in the liturgical east.

¹⁰⁸ For a brief description on the development of the divided chancel see James F. White, “The Spatial Setting,” in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, eds. (New York Oxford University Press, 2006), 804.

Supper.¹⁰⁹ While seating is provided in the chancel area are for preacher, liturgist, and other helpers, there is no designated choir space. Two musical instruments, a grand piano and electronic organ console are positioned in the front of the nave, the organ on the south side below the lectern and the piano on the north side. The east-facing altar forms the base of a large vertical stained glass cross, about 10 feet tall. Typically live flowers are placed on this altar each Sunday, coinciding with the colors of the church year. There are no other stained glass windows or artwork on the walls. There are 13 sets of pews in the nave, in two sections, so that they are accessed by center aisle and two side aisles. The pews are wooden backed benches with Bible/hymnal racks set in the backs. The ceiling is about 22 feet high at the peak. The space sits about 550 people, plus another 30 in the rear alcove and 20 in a small balcony.

C. The practices of hospitality in Christian tradition

Just as gardening must concern itself with the care of roots and soil, as well as the flowers and fruit, so any cultural exploration must also be concerned about tradition. In this case I want to explore a tradition of Christian hospitality, in relation to the practices of people gathering for worship. It should be noted that the concept of tradition as understood here is a complex process whereby culture, including religion, dynamically reproduces itself from generation to generation and from one context to another, a process already inherent in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Kneeling is still the preferred posture for receiving the communion elements, though attempts have been to introduce a standing posture. Pastors and servers usually kneel around the communion table only for saying the Lord's Prayer following the Great Thanksgiving and for distributing the elements to each other. Congregants are usually seated during this portion.

¹¹⁰ The "traditioning" process is suggested in 1 Corinthians 11:2, where the apostle affirmed the Corinthians for keeping the tradition (παρέδωκα; Vulgate, *tradidi*), just as he had "handed it" over (παράδοσις). The pattern of receiving and handing over continues in verse 23 with a description of the

Christian hospitality is essentially Christocentric as is shown by the sixth-century Rule of St Benedict. “Let all guests who arrive be received as Christ, because he will say: ‘I was a stranger and you took me in’. And let due honor be shown to all, especially to those ‘of the household of the faith’ and to wayfarers.”¹¹¹ Implied in this statement are several features of hospitality that can be discerned in Christian tradition: first, a sense of moral obligation; second, a sharing of space; third, a sacramental framework; fourth, a participation in the life and mission of the church; and fifth, the reciprocity between host and guest.

Because hospitality is often assumed in the records of scripture and tradition, its study calls for a methodology that must often search underneath the given topics of ancient Christian literature.¹¹² For example, Jesus assumed the hospitality of village householders when he sent the disciples into the towns and villages.¹¹³ “And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart” (Matthew 10:11).

First of all, hospitality can be seen as a moral category, a category that was reinforced in Jesus’ teaching, especially in Lukan table talk (Luke 14) and the Matthean story of the sheep

Lord’s Supper. One traditioning approach is the process of “inculturation,” by which established practices find new expression in subsequent times and locations, as expressed by the Dominican, Anscar Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis* (Collegeville, Minneapolis: The Liturgical Press, 1992). See also the Anglican, Philip Tovey, who observed a dialectical process in the primary theology of gathering and encounter in worship that naturally leads to adjusted faith formulations, in *Inculturation of Christian Worship: Exploring the Eucharist*. (Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 151. More will said on this in chapter 4.

¹¹¹ *Holy Rule of St Benedict*, Trans. Rev. Boniface Verheyen, OSB (St. Benedict’s Abbey, Atchison, 1949. Pdf version, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, www.ccel.org), 63.

¹¹² Amy Oden, in her review of historic texts, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 26, points out that hospitality was “an ongoing part of the Christian life,” but not usually stated as the main part of a document. Hence, the method for discovering the place of hospitality is to “look through as many windows as we can.”

¹¹³ The expression, “he sent them out” (Luke 9:2; καὶ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτοὺς; *et misit illos*), implies a missional deployment.

and goats (Matthew 25), in which devotion to “the son of man” rises or falls on unassuming care for the “least of these.”¹¹⁴ Amy Oden notes that the “least of these” is a common phrase in the patristic exhortations to show hospitality to those in need as though caring for Jesus.¹¹⁵ Hospitality is a sacred obligation.¹¹⁶ There are only a few direct exhortations to hospitality in the Christian scriptures. Paul, in a prominent parenetical list, exhorted the Romans to “show hospitality” (Romans 12:13) and further in the same letter: “Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (Romans 15:7). The first letter of Peter urges gracious hospitality: “Be hospitable to one another without complaining” (1 Peter 4:9), and the book of Hebrews recalls the example of Abraham in its exhortation “to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” (Hebrews 13:2)¹¹⁷ Of course, hospitality is not limited to religions of the Bible, but has been seen as a moral category with roots in many cultural practices. “The sense that strangers warranted protection is found frequently in the most ancient Greek literature,” including divine human visitations

¹¹⁴ Thomas Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 1-2, asserts that hospitality is the core metaphor of the moral life, that “to be moral is to be hospitable to the stranger.”

¹¹⁵ Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 18-19.

¹¹⁶ Another way to think of the morality of hospitality is in terms of gift exchange, which has built within it always a sense of obligation for prior debts, as shown by Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. (Ian Cunnison. London: Cohen & West, Ltd., 1966). The problem with Mauss is that there is no such thing as purely altruistic or selfless giving (or sharing of hospitable space), the only exception being God, according to John Milbank, “Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysic.” *Modern Theology* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 1995): 119-161. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed April 9, 2015).

¹¹⁷ Orthodox iconographers have recalled this hospitality offered to three strangers by Abraham and Sarah, who turn out to be angelic visitors. Icons, such as that by Rublev, depict them as the three persons of the Trinity, sitting alone at the table, while other traditions show Abraham and Sarah on the sides offering food, so that the levels of host and guest are multivalent.

(*theoxenia*).¹¹⁸ Many early Christian writers expressed a virtues ethic, such as John Chrysostom who preached that if you have a “hospitable disposition, you own the entire treasure of chest of hospitality, even if you possess only a single coin.”¹¹⁹

Second, the practice of hospitality involves the sharing of space, whether a natural or built up space. In the synoptic gospels when Jesus calls and sends the disciples to announce the reign of God, he instructs them to locate a hospitable household and to stay there for the ministry in each town (Matthew 10; Mark 6; Luke 9 and 10). “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me” (Matthew 10:40).¹²⁰ We find an example of such sharing of space in the Lukan account of Martha and Mary, when Jesus and the disciples stay with them (Luke 10:38-42). In that account, Martha demonstrates one aspect of that hospitality by opening the door and seeing to the physical needs of the guests now sharing her space. The Pauline letters include lists of such hospitable households, since early house churches were by nature a sharing of space. Church leaders throughout the centuries either opened their own homes to guests or established hostels, including monasteries. The dominical statement in Revelations 3:20, often used in evangelistic contexts, has its literary context in the problem of inhospitality in

¹¹⁸ Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 18.

¹¹⁹ John Chrysostom, 1 Homily on the Greeting to Priscila and Aquila, *Migne, Patrologia Graeca* 51:187, trans Catherin Kroeger, in *Priscilla Papers* 5/3 (Summer 1991):18, in Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 172. Miroslav Volf affirms the priority of this moral category in describing the wisdom of the cross: “the will to give ourselves to others and “welcome” them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity,” in *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 29 (author’s italics).

¹²⁰ This welcome saying is repeated in a variety of formats and settings in the synoptic gospels, reinforcing the importance of practical hospitality in the early Christian environment.

the Laodicean church: “Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me .”¹²¹

New Testament scholar John Koenig notes how the spatial metaphors of divine presence in the New Testament are linked to hospitality and community-building. Drawing from the emphasis on mutual hospitality in Romans 1:11-12, he shows how the giving and receiving of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 14:4, 7, functions to build a house (οικοδομεῖ) of hospitality for each other. “If God’s own dwelling is being built on earth through gift exchanges among humans, then the visiting of one’s sisters and brothers for the purpose of a mutual, charismatic strengthening turns out to be not just a courtesy but the very work of the gospel.”¹²²

John Chrysostom urged his often privileged churchgoers to reserve a room in their homes for hospitality. “Surpass us in generosity. Have a room, to which Christ may come. Say, ‘This is Christ’s space. This building is set apart for Him’ Even if it is just a basement, and tiny. He won’t refuse it. Christ goes about ‘naked and a stranger.’ It is only a shelter He wants.”¹²³ Paulinus of Nola, also a bishop in the early fifth century, encouraged people to think of their homes primarily as a place to be shared with others. “You play host in your house so that your house may be a hospice... You do not crowd your houses with dining tables, or cram

¹²¹ This remark appears at the end of the “letter” to the Laodicean church which has the qualities of self-sufficiency criticized in the tradition for the failure to offer hospitality.

¹²² John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 59.

¹²³ Chrysostom, “Homily 45 on the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. J. Walker and J. Sheppard, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 1st ser. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1889), XI:275-77), in Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 62.

them with masses of furniture or wealth. You measure off a corner for yourself and fill the house with travelers and beggars. You live as a fellow servant with your own slaves.”¹²⁴

Third, the association of Christ with a stranger in need, suggests a sacramental framework. As already mentioned with regard to Greek tradition, there is nothing new about divine visitation in earthly form. There are at least three biblical images of hidden divine visitation, in which the stranger in need turns out ironically to be the divine host: the story of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18 being visited by three strangers at the oaks of Mamre; the Matthean parable, already mentioned, in which those faced with the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and imprisoned people, did not recognize the “king’s” hidden presence; and the Lukan story of the disciples going to Emmaus, who meet the risen Lord, but do not recognize him until he repeats the common actions of table fellowship (Luke 24:13-35).

Commenting on Abraham, Chrysostom combines elements of these images to urge his hearers toward hospitality:

Let us discover and emulate the just man’s virtue... The loving Lord’s intention, you see, was that we should not be indifferent about such friendship nor be too picky about our visitors – hence his words, ‘Whoever, receives one of the least of these in my name receives me.’ So don’t pay attention to the status of the visitor nor despise the person on the basis of what you can see, but consider that in the visitor you are welcoming your Lord.¹²⁵

Fourth, Christian hospitality often includes a sense of participation in the life and mission of the church. The Lukan account of Martha and Mary highlights a tension on this matter, for Martha rightly opens the home, but Mary goes further by sitting as a disciple,

¹²⁴ Paulinus of Nola “Letter 24,” trans. E.P. Walsh, *Ancient Christian Writers*, no. 36 (New York: Newman Press, 1967), 112, in Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 44.

¹²⁵ “Homily 41” in *Homilies on Genesis: Saint John Chrysostom*. Volume 2:18-45, translated by Robert C Hill. *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, vol. 82 (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 408, quoted in Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 66.

something which angers her sister. Mary's hospitality is not that of a functionary, but of one who takes an interest in the life and work of the guest.

Letty Russell, noting the cities of refuge as an instance of biblical hospitality, in which wrongly accused persons could flee for safety, suggested that safe houses in the New Testament also provided a place for differences.¹²⁶ The power differential between Martha and Mary may provide an example. because Mary broke from the limitations of the only role left to her, subordinate to her sister, in order to become like the male disciples. In fact, in this case the operation of hospitality may have looked unkind, because it broke with tradition.¹²⁷

Christian hospitality has never been *carte blanc*. Each community has its own integrity and boundaries, which can only be redrawn through dialogue, not force. Within the first-century Christian communities there were already boundary issues that made mutual hospitality questionable in some cases, if the community needed to be protected against predation. One of the Johannine letters responds to such concern with those promoting a Christology at variance with that of the author. "Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching; for to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person" (2 John 1:10). The "elder" instructs the community to withhold hospitality lest they be implicated in the heterodox teaching. Some communities may appear exclusive because of their own history of being marginalized. According the Russell, "Some communities, like black churches, or the Universal

¹²⁶ Letty Russell, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox, 2009), 86.

¹²⁷ See also R. Alan Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. IX (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 231-232.

Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, are formed because they have been excluded, and they need to form a sense of identity in a situation of involuntary exclusion.”¹²⁸ But this is different from churches that intentionally exclude people who are different.

Similarly, the gospel accounts of Jesus sending the disciples to preach leaves open the possibility that some households might not accept the peace which the apostles shared. They were to brush the dust off their feet when they left such a town. In other words, hospitality is to some extent contingent upon agreement between guest and host. Particularly when ideological concerns are at stake it has been necessary to provide credentials, such as the authorizing letters offered by the Council of Chalcedon (451).¹²⁹ In today's contexts with the proliferation of guns and violent attitudes the question is raised whether persons entering church for worship or a Bible study need to go through a background check or metal detectors.

Fifth, the tradition of Christian hospitality involves the experience of reciprocity between host and guest. The host is naturally the one sharing out of his/her resources, but “the host also receives by participation in the economy of hospitality whereby God’s grace gifts both host and guest... the identification of host and guest with one another creates a dynamic tension among having, giving, and receiving.”¹³⁰ Often both receive honor in the process. Christ, the supreme stranger, comes seeking shelter, yet turns and becomes the host who breaks

¹²⁸ Letty Russell, *Church in the Round, Feminist Interpretation of the Church*. Louisville, Kentucky (Westminster/ John Knox, 1993), 158.

¹²⁹ Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 19-25.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

bread. It is an irony that emerges from the communal reflection on captivity and exile, and the implication for ethical action. “You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:19). The care one received as a stranger must inform how one acts as a host to other strangers.

Chrysostom continues that same reflexivity with the irony that being a stranger on earth should mean the Christians are not strangers in heaven. “Don’t you know that we live in a foreign land, as though strangers and sojourners? ... but seeing we are by nature sojourners, let us also be so by choice; that we be not there [with God] sojourners and dishonored and cast out.”¹³¹ Indeed, the liturgy involves the recognition that as fellow strangers, we are welcomed by the same divine host. Similarly, Augustine highlights this as motivation for hospitality. “Acknowledge the duty of hospitality, for by this some have attained unto God. You take in some stranger, whose companion in the way you yourself also are, for we are all strangers.”¹³²

Unfortunately, the emphasis on hospitality was faltering by the time the Reformation. Christina Pohl notes that while the reformers continued to see hospitality as a sacred act, they did not promote physical space, and “they simultaneously undermined some of the mystery that had undergirded the potent earlier understandings of hospitality.”¹³³ Enlightenment thought let the wind out of the sails in protestant sacramentality. At the same time the work of hospitality was being handed over to civic

¹³¹ Chrysostom, Homily 16 on 2nd Corinthians *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ser. 1, vol. 12, 359, in Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 39.

¹³² Augustine, “Sermon 61,” in *Homilies on the Gospels*, trans. R. G. MacMullen, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed Philip Schaff, 1st ser. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887), VI:445), in Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 45.

¹³³ Pohl, *Making Room*, 53.

and commercial concerns, with the result that Christians were less concerned for strangers as they themselves grew self-sufficient. Even John Calvin, observing the growing number of inns to provide accommodations for travelers in sixteenth-century Europe, lamented the decline of hospitality among Christians.¹³⁴ The eighteenth-century English reformer, John Wesley, re-established important frameworks for hospitality, by encouraging all to participate in the means of grace in the process of sanctification, including acts of mercy, and also through the development of clinics, schools and shelters.¹³⁵

Unless churches have a spiritual framework for hospitality, they will lose their institutional relevancy. Two experiences illustrate this point. While working as a small town journalist in central California in the 1970s, I was attending a country church. One Sunday I heard a commotion in the rear as I was about to leave. A homeless man had entered the church and some leaders were arguing with him. He left and began walking away. A bit frustrated with the church leaders myself, I chased after the man, took him for lunch, got him some medication and eventually left him with a Catholic shelter for the night.

On another occasion, while at United Methodist meeting in a major California city, I was walking with a pastor friend through an outdoor mall where homeless persons were begging. My friend commented that we shouldn't respond to them because it is the government's responsibility. While agreeing on the need for more equitable policies and the pitfalls of giving money, I believe that religious institutions have a responsibility to

¹³⁴ Ibid., 36.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 53-54. While Wesley followed the Reformers' emphasis on justification by grace, his doctrine of perfection in this life (perfection in love) propelled him to foster concrete change in people's lives.

foster the virtue and practice of hospitality. In America, the practice of offering shelter to the homeless and needy is largely left to strapped parachurch and government agencies. My criticism is that such neglect avoids the sacred obligation of hospitality?¹³⁶

In another era, an 80-year-old John Wesley recorded in his journal: “All my leisure hours this week I employed in visiting the remaining poor, and in begging for them. Having collected about fifty pounds more, I was enabled to relieve most of those that were in pressing distress.”¹³⁷

What is clear from early sources is that hospitality is a spiritual practice incumbent on all Christians, not only to care for strangers, but to welcome the divine presence, the ultimate stranger who invites both saints and strangers to come and share sacred space with each other. As the apostle wrote: “Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (Romans 15:7).

¹³⁶ In September 2014, I spoke at the 40th anniversary of Open Gate Ministries, which was started by my mother, Vivian (Gray) Martzen, who had been shocked to realize that the churches in her Central Valley region were not doing anything about increasing homelessness.

¹³⁷ John Wesley. *Journal*. Works IV, Jackson ed. 261. Wesley had established clinics, schools and poor houses. This entry indicates the extent to which he was personally engaged in their support.

Chapter 2 Entrance Rites: Saints and Strangers Gathered into One Place

A. Entrance Rites as a Participation in Hospitality

We have seen that hospitality is no mere peripheral or afterthought in Christian tradition, but a central element in the faith, and it is also part of the texture and acoustics of worship. As Christina Pohl points out, “Hospitality begins in worship, with a recognition of God’s grace and generosity. Hospitality is not first a duty and responsibility; it is finally a response of love and gratitude for God’s love and welcome to us.”¹ But while worship is a means of grace, it is more than just a response to the divine. It is a participation in the divine welcome, by which people enact corporately a sense of moral obligation fostered in worship.²

In corporate public worship the divine mandates are recalled from scripture. Even as the ancient Israelites prepared to enter a new place after fleeing Egypt, they were told to remember that they had been strangers in a foreign land, and to welcome other strangers because God had also welcomed them. Christian worship, taking that reflexivity to heart and acting upon it, becomes a spiritual practice, which forms in its participants certain attitudes, like love, gratefulness and hospitality. Such attitudes are not simply mental constructs, but are based on bodily postures, even ritual-like activities, that involve

¹ Christina Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 172.

² That worship fosters a sense of moral obligation is viewed here in a positive light. However, as Catherine Bell recognized in *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 218, ritualization has a sometimes ambiguous relationship with power and control, that it has the capacity to foster both “consent and resistance” to social control.

standing, sitting, bowing, kneeling, singing, stretching arms to welcome others, and raising arms to beseech God.

In order to demonstrate the connection between worship and the attitude of hospitality, we must attend to those aspects of worship by which people are actually participating in hospitality. This occurs first in the entrance rites, that part of worship where people are gathering together in one place. Elizabeth Newman uses Gregory of Nyssa's analogy of an ever-flowing stream to talk about the inexhaustible mystery of the divine encounter. "As God's *oikos*, we are called to participate in God's abundance and to be ready to receive God, no matter how surprising we might find God's presence. Nothing is stranger than God's presence among us as Christ's body and our incorporation in this body."³ Through the entrance into worship people embody the spiritual practices of hospitality by being drawn into a shared liturgical space with God and other strangers.

To help us better understand what is taking place in the gathering of saints and strangers, we can explore parallel actions in more domestic settings, such as the act of entering a home, for which we need the tools of practice and ritual theory to help us understand the connection. This chapter lays out several theoretical observations about ritual practice, which will at the conclusion of the chapter inform theological reflections on entrance rites.

Theoretical Framework of Ritual Practice

³ Elizabeth Newman, *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 58.

To view specific activities, including ritual behavior, as a practice is to acknowledge certain persistent or habitual ways of acting that are integral to those activities. The last few decades have seen a number of theories about practice which seek a middle ground between individual oriented theories and social structural theories that emphasize universals. Sherry Ortner observes that “modern practice theory seeks to explain the relationship(s) between human action, on the one hand, and some global entity which we may call ‘the system,’ on the other,” in which influence may flow either way, from the practice to the system and vice versa.⁴

Ortner’s view is that even random appearing action is usually done in relation to enduring social structures, and from a long-term perspective, they can be seen to have “developmental” structure.⁵ Even insignificant, random activities have in themselves some purpose, which may be motivated either by a certain “interest” or a “strain” in relation to a certain structures. Interest theory sees people “rationally” operating for self-interest, going after what is “materially and politically useful for them”, while the strain theory sees those people “experiencing the complexities of their situations and attempts to solve problems posed by those situations.”⁶ The latter perspective makes more sense in this research, as it takes seriously the realities of well-meaning persons who often face challenging structures.

As people move in and out of places of hospitality they also seem to face structures of

⁴ Sherry Ortner, “Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (1984), 148. While this project draws more on ritual theorists and liturgical theology, recognition is given to the trajectory leading through such writers as Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). The last chapter will draw on his theory of the habitus as a way of talking about the embodiment of Christian virtues.

⁵ Ortner, “Theory in Anthropology,” 150.

⁶ Ibid., 151. Ortner gives more attention to strain theory as demonstrating the social forces on actors, as opposed to the psychological emphasis of interest theory.

resistance and obstacles that need to be overcome, and they seem willing to make the effort despite the challenges.

While this theory of practice with its dialectical critique of economic and political dimensions is related to Marxist (praxis) theory with its political implications, Catherine Bell also connects practice to performance theory, in the sense that practice literally exists only in the performing.⁷ There are at least two ways in which liturgy as practice can be viewed as performance. First, things are done in relation to and before some kind of an audience. However, Bell sees practice as being less concerned about conventional artistic or entertainment performance activities, like dance, theatre or musical concerts, and more about “how cultural activity in general works”.⁸ Second, practice involves the performance, enactment or embodiment of some kind of text.⁹ One proponent of a performance theory of liturgy, Margaret Mary Kelleher observes that “liturgy is performative. It exists only in performance. We have many liturgical books, ancient and new, that are rich resources for liturgical studies; but liturgical texts do not become liturgy until they are performed by concrete local assemblies.”¹⁰ In fact, J.L. Austin’s theory of performative utterances can be

⁷ Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1997), 76.

⁸ Ibid., 76. Even so, one classic way of seeing worship as performance is that which takes place before an “audience of one;” that is, the worship of the whole congregation is a performance before God alone. For a brief analysis of Søren Kierkegaard’s drama analogy see Emily R. Brink, “Trends in Christian and Reformed Worship” *Calvin Theological Journal* 32, no. 2 (November 1, 1997): 395-407. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed June 11, 2015). Brink’s critique of Kierkegaard is that it fails to consider how God is also an actor in the liturgy. Later in this chapter I will also address the sense in which all ritual is done before what Ronald Grimes calls the “face of receptivity.”

⁹ As was already highlighted in chapter 1, text may refer to embodied or social texts as well as words on a page.

¹⁰ Margaret Mary Kelleher, “Ritual Studies and the Eucharist: Paying Attention to Performance,” in *Eucharist Toward the Third Millennium*, Edited by Gerard Austin et al. (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1997), 52.

applied to ritual action, and thus would allow for a broader understanding of those actions, because the speaking of an illocutionary or performative utterance actually participates in the doing for which it speaks.¹¹ Such a perspective allows for criticism of liturgy and other ritual practices, such that even though the liturgical rubrics may look good on paper, if its “performance” doesn’t actually elicit the intended results, then it may be considered to have failed, such as an altar call with no response.

From the perspective of Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass, Christian practice takes divine influence into consideration in the analysis of practice. Christian practice involves those “things Christian people do together over time in response to and in the light of God’s active presence for the life of the world.”¹² Such practices address oppressive structural issues with concrete action; they involve collectivity over a period of time; they recognize “standards of excellence;” and they recognize that God’s action is somehow “tangled up” in ordinary actions.¹³ Given these defining principles, Christian practice would have its epicenter in worship, which Bass and Dykstra refer to as a rehearsal. “A Christian community at worship is a community gathered for rehearsal. It is ‘practicing’ the practices in the same way a child practices catching a ball or playing scales.”¹⁴

¹¹ Ronald Grimes, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory* (Waterloo, Canada: Ritual Studies International, 2010), 152, et passim, applies Austin’s theory to discuss why some rituals fail. See also J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, J. O. Urmson and Marin Sbisà, eds. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962, 1975).

¹² Dorothy C. Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997), 5. This definition is based on Dykstra’s more elaborate definition, which draws from the understanding of ethicist Alistaire MacIntyre.

¹³ Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*, 7-8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

In general, practice theory is a wide angle lens that allows for the framing of more cultural activities, such as common acts of greeting or the ways one walks around and shakes hands in a defined space. By making correlation between the more defined, authorized ritual of the Sunday liturgy (the rubrics) and the ordinary acts of hospitality, I intend to demonstrate how the liturgy, and in particular, the people's gathering into liturgical space is itself an act of hospitality.

The Hospitality of the Domestic Entrance

The act of entering into a residence would seem to be a commonplace exercise. Whether it is a one-room flat, a mansion or a cardboard box, the process of entering that domicile follows a general routine. One approaches the entryway, passes through and then finds one's self inside the particular geometric enclosure. In fact, this ordinary act may also hold multiple levels of symbolic meaning.¹⁵ It involves at least the transition, or procession, from public space to more personal space, a social domestic space reserved for friends and family. One has gone from outside to inside, from unsheltered to sheltered. Physical actions in such transitions sometimes include a physical challenge, arriving at the location via car, walking or public transport and climbing steps or finding the elevator in some locations. While the joy of making entrance may, for some, overshadow the challenges of arriving, others may give up before reaching the doorway. While public housing estates (HDB) are usually placed within easy access of public transportation, many

¹⁵ Entry as spatial metaphor of the rites of passage finds resonance in the ritual process of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. Though neither the entrance into a house or a place of worship constitutes in itself a liminal stage in their theories, some elements of worship can certainly be seen in light of Turner's *communitas*.

private condos in Singapore, and definitely the landed homes in Singapore make access very difficult without a private vehicle. The transitions from outside to inside may take on a ritual-like quality, with typical gestures and words of greeting, and an exchange of gifts or other signs of appreciation. It also comprises a set of sensory experiences, whether interesting aromas, sounds or images that stimulate memories of similar experiences, thus evoking feelings and opinions that become associated with that setting. Finally, unless coercion is involved or memories evoke negative feelings, the fact of entering the space comprises an act of hospitality, because the entering of a domestic space at least implies permission, if not wholesale welcome.

When LS members were asked their understanding of hospitality in general, a frequent comment was that it is about making others “feel welcome.”¹⁶ It is about “making a person feel accepted in a place, so that a person looks forward to coming back.” The capacity for hospitality is also a reflection of one’s own comfort level, as one LS member commented, “Hospitality is about welcoming people into your life, but if you’re not comfortable with yourself, you can’t really open up.”

What are the usual practices of hospitality in the home? Simply having a place for welcoming people is important, as one respondent who lives in a terrace house noted, “Place is important – it needs to look welcoming, a pleasant place.” It should be noted that most of those responding live in high-rise HDB flats while few live nearby in landed or terraced housing and even fewer live in private condominiums.¹⁷ One respondent

¹⁶ Reference to interviewees in this section are anonymous, in keeping with research protocol.

¹⁷ Housing Development Board flats are the common high-rise subsidized housing estates where roughly 80 percent of Singaporeans live, according to the *Singapore Census of the Population, 2010*: Statistical Release 1: Demographic Characteristics, Education, Language and Religion (Singapore

commented on the problem of space limitations: “Singapore houses are getting smaller, and people getting busier and buying more things to cram in their homes, so there is no more space.” Another landed home resident pointed out the importance of making an effort to show hospitality: “You have to go out and greet them at the gate.” She emphasized the importance of showing courtesy by personally bringing the guests and then introducing them to the family or other guests, and without showing any partiality.

The inhabited home may also carry a symbolic distinction between inside and outside, clean and unclean. A common unspoken characteristic of entering any Asian home is the practice of removing one’s shoes, which are usually left outside the door. While the common spoken rationale is that householders want to keep their floors clean, a deeper reason is evidenced in the shocked expressions when you forget and walk in the house with shoes on.¹⁸

Opening the door, inviting guests inside, offering a place to sit and offering food seemed to be most basic courtesy. The handshake is common, but some considered it too formal.¹⁹ A few of the senior ladies hug, but no one kisses in public. In the presence of elders, a slight nod of the head is usually appropriate. Most all agreed on the importance of food and drink. In fact, when people first meet, rather than saying, “How are you”, it is more common to say, “Have you eaten (taken your lunch or dinner) yet” (Nǐ chīle ma 你

Department of Statistics; http://www.singstat.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/publications/publications_and_papers/cop2010/census_2010_release1/cop2010sr1.pdf, accessed 20 March 2015). The percentage is slightly lower among interviewees, though no statistical analysis is made for the LS population in this project.

¹⁸ These are distinctions I learned after marrying into a Chinese family.

¹⁹ Within the mix of cultures in southeast Asia there are several different ways of greeting that have largely lost their use except in formal occasions. One can still note distinctions of greetings in the way one offers a gift or transacts at the grocery store. Handing over or receiving a gift with two hands and a slight bow is considered more courteous in Chinese culture. While in Malay culture it is more courteous to transact with the right hand while using the left hand to lightly grasp the right arm from underneath.

吃了吗)? An older woman commented, “We’re Chinese, so welcoming always involves sharing food; even if not the meal time, we offer a drink.” When hosting guests for a meal, it is preferable, if possible to have a round table. “In Chinese culture it is preferable to have a round table,” so that “there is more participation”, and “we share a common dish, so you feel like you always have enough food.” Sometimes when I take lunch after the ladies Bible study on Thursday mornings we will squeeze around a round table at the local open air coffee shop, and they will order several common dishes to share.²⁰

Food may have stronger symbolic value for the older generation, according to one young adult. The “elders are more focused on food” because they remember a time of scarcity; whereas for the younger, “we didn’t grow up with hunger” so we don’t think so much about food. For him, rather than welcoming people with food it is more important to express “true friendship, that says ‘I’ll be there for you’”.

This acting out of hospitality is especially characteristic of the particular type of home visitation practices (*bàinián*, 拜年) associated with the Lunar or Chinese New Year, which is celebrated in Chinese communities throughout the world. Chinese New Year naturally follows the lunar calendar, placing it between the end of January or middle of Feb in the Gregorian calendar.²¹ Normal courtesies are heightened, such as sharing food and gifts. Elders and married couples give out money-filled red packets (*hóngbāo* 红包) and

²⁰ The symbol of a round table is picked up by Letty Russell as a model of Christian hospitality in her book, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster/ John Knox, 1993).

²¹ Chinese New Year occasionally coincides with the beginning of Lent, with the eve of the holiday falling on Ash Wednesday, creating a dilemma for Chinese Christians who observed the seasons. For some, Ash Wednesday is still observed in church, after which the family gathers for a reunion dinner. Others, such as most Methodists in Singapore, may ignore Ash Wednesday and other Lenten exercises in such cases.

friends and relatives visit each other in their homes. For that reason families clean out the old, decorate the house festively, and prepare goodies to give away to visitors. The festivities begin on the eve of the first day with a family reunion meal, most likely in the house of the parents, eldest brother or other designated home. In Chinese culture, noted one respondent, especially for visitation during Chinese New Year, it is “an obligation, a duty, of elders to host the younger.”²²

During the ensuing days, people visit the homes of friends, colleagues and family members to wish them a happy or blessed new year. In church practice, various members and cell group leaders will invite other members to their home. A common Singapore practice is to bring a pair of mandarin oranges or a box of New Year cookies, and offer it to the householder with a new year greeting. In my experience, at the conclusion of the visit, the host will then offer another pair of oranges to the parting guest. While the householder receives the guest, it is the guest who honors the household by offering blessings, and the act is reciprocated at the end of the visit when the householder gives new oranges. As people sometimes spend a day visiting homes, those oranges may be transferred several times in multiple acts of kindness and blessing. In the process, the boundaries are blurred between host and guest, insider and outsider, as gifts to the host later become gifts to the guest.²³

²² This corresponds also to the Confucian ethic of mutuality, according to Taiwanese American scholar, Tu Wei-Ming. “The father should be loving. This enables the son to become filial. The son should be filial so that the father will be further encouraged to love.” *Confucian Ethics Today: The Singapore Challenge* (Singapore: Federal Publications, 1984), 9.

²³ But note Bourdieu’s caveat on gift-exchange, that it must be “deferred and different.” *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 5. The giving of oranges at the beginning of the visit, with the reciprocation at the end creates the mood of a game, yet the obligation is there, so it clearly symbolizes the mutual obligation of gift exchange. See also Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. (Ian Cunnison. London: Cohen & West, Ltd., 1966).

In the Christian practice of hospitality, one often finds a blurring of the roles between saint and stranger. Jerome tells a story of two desert hermits, Paul the first Hermit and Antony the Great, in which the two blurred the lines between host and guest. Antony, wandering in the wilderness came upon the cell of Paul. After embracing and conversing with each other, a raven brought them one loaf of bread. They gave thanks for the bread, but then disputed over who should break the bread, which is to say, who would be the host. Jerome writes: “At length it was arranged that each should seize the loaf on the side nearest to himself, pull toward him, and keep for his own the part left in his hands. Then on hands and knees they drank a little water from the spring, and offering to God the sacrifice of praise passed the night in vigil.”²⁴ How blessed it is to share hospitality.

The Hospitality of the Worship Entrance

Like the entrance into a residence, the entrance into worship can be described as an ordinary set of actions necessary to transfer one’s position from outside to inside the worship space, yet in those simple actions hospitality is enacted. The transition also involves some physical challenges, including how one arrives at the building and accesses the space. One may think of historic religious sites, like Angkor Wat in Cambodia and similar ancient temple sites, where one must cross a mote, pass through labyrinthine passage ways and finally climb very steep stairways before reaching the internal sacred spaces.²⁵ Modern worshippers face new

²⁴ Jerome, “The Life of Paul the First Hermit,” in *Principle Works*, translated by W. H. Fremantle, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2nd ser. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1893), VI:301, in Amy G. Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 120-121.

²⁵ Shrines to national heroes may also present a physical challenge to reach the heights. The memorial to Dr. Sun Yat Sen in Nanjing, considered the father of modern China, requires pilgrims to walk

challenges. The 5000-seat sanctuary of New Creation Church, in the massive Star Theatre sits atop three floors of commercial mall (not including basement parking). Advance seat booking is available online.²⁶

As individuals, friends and families find their way to the Paya Lebar church building, some via car, others by walking and many through public transport, they find the doorway, enter and take their places. In the process of entering worship, certain ritual-like activities related to the entrance, passing through a doorway, shaking hands or nodding the head to others, sitting down and bowing the head to pray, all highlight multiple levels of symbolism of up and down, inside and outside. It also involves a sense of hospitality, because people are entering a space shared with other people and also the welcoming presence of a sacred host. That hospitality has been described variously as “genuine interest” or “warmth.” In fact, several interview respondents, whose parents came through the ministry of the Hokkien or Teochew services, talked with longing for a warmth observed among those communities. The Hokkien service has a practice, unlike the other services, of welcoming people at the front door. LS members observed that the elders take a “genuine interest in people.” One young adult offered a reflexive observation, “Every time I worship and slow down, I’m also more welcoming. But when I get caught up in work, it’s more difficult to open up to others. I think young people seem to favour more effectiveness, instead of people.” One of the challenges of a church divided between young and old is that youthful “effectiveness” is unconstrained by the wisdom of age.

up 400 steps. My late father-in-law, Yu Yong Ting, who was an admirer of Dr Sun, had the chance to visit the site in 2004, and proudly made the arduous climb.

²⁶ The website says it all. <http://www.newcreation.org.sg/> Interestingly, one of the worship sites for another Singapore mega-church, City Harvest, is three floors below ground. More will be said in the last part of the chapter on symbols of verticality and the theology of transcendence.

The presence and participation of other people is essential for the expression of hospitality. Even Internet worship, if it is truly corporate, requires all participants to be on the same website or the same social network. Participants must enter into the same space, virtual or physical. The entrance into worship is both physical and metaphorical. For as people gather into a space there is also a sense in which they are entering another realm. Alexander Schmemmann discusses worship as a “procession” into the “dimension of the kingdom of God.”²⁷ Like the movement from one space to another the movement into worship requires the temporary departure from one kind of space, which may be called profane or secular, and entrance into sacred space.

The way in which one describes such an entrance is to place it at a particular point within the spectrum of meaning. After all, some actions appear to be purely random without any purpose other than the flexing of muscles, while others are experienced as having explicit or implicit meaning. Sometimes these actions follow according to a traditional or prescribed pattern or system of beliefs, a faith story or myth of origins.

To refer to the liturgical rites of entrance as an enactment, is to recognize bodies doing something in correspondence to that system of beliefs. Did the idea of hospitality come first with ritual acting upon it to demonstrate itself, or did bodies simply share space and then it was called hospitality? This relates to a long-standing discussion among religious historians, ritual theorists and liturgical theologians regarding the relationship between myth and ritual.²⁸ While recognizing that ritual may sometimes be a re-enactment of a myth, Ronald

²⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*. 2nd rev. ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 26.

²⁸ Robert A. Segal, “Myth and Ritual” in Jens Kreinath et. al. (eds), *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 101, et. passim, briefly covers history of debate

Grimes observes that how people “narrate” rituals may change with context and perspective.²⁹ Is the entrance into worship necessarily the enactment of the sacred story,³⁰ or simply a set of ritual actions similar to those engaged by persons seeking entrance into a domicile, which could then given new meaning by the sacred story? Indeed, on walking into a house one receives the greeting, “Welcome home,” while the words offered when entering liturgical space is, “Welcome to the house of the Lord” or “The Lord be with you.” If these words and actions are taken as performative then we can say that the entrance to worship effects some level of hospitality.

Before going too far with what can be called liturgical efficacy, we should hear Lutheran scholar Michael Aune. He offers a cautionary note to the liturgical theologian or ritualist with grandiose or romantic assumptions about what the liturgy can actually do, as though we can simply pull out a pre-set sequence of songs and prayers and automatically produce a conversion.³¹ He notes two ways in which efficacy has been discussed with

over the priority of myth or ritual, from E. B. Tylor who asserted the priority of myth, William Roberson Smith, who asserted the priority of ritual and those who followed them. Catherine Bell attempts to fuse the dichotomies between the thought and action of the ritual actor in her theory or ritual practice, such that the myth gains meaning only through the ritual performance. She sees this in Geertz where the twin emphases on ethos and world view brings together people’s conception of order and disposition for action. Thus, she prefers the active expression “ritualizing” to the static expression “ritual.” See *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 21, 23.

²⁹ Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 9-10. Grimes gives the example of how a divorced person might downplay the narrative of an earlier wedding to a potential new mate.

³⁰ Such as a entry into the presence of God or a provisional re-entry into paradise, Edith M. Humphreys suggests, drawing from current Orthodox theology, in *Grand Entrance: Worship on Earth as in Heaven*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011), 19, et passim. She draws significantly from Orthodox myth-making about the liturgy.

³¹ Michael B. Aune, “Ritual Practice: Into the World, Into Each Human Heart,” in *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission*, Thomas H. Schattaer, ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 156. For example, one can find churches in Singapore following the ritual pragmatism of Charles Finney’s new measures as standard operating procedures.

regard to liturgical practice, namely, doctrinal efficacy and operational efficacy.³² Doctrinal efficacy refers to the ritual enactment of the theological presupposition, such as the claim that the acolyte walking into worship with a lighted flame, signifies the presence of Christ, or conversely, carrying the flame out is enacting the church in mission. Operational efficacy indicates the ways in which ritual action enacts certain social or psychological effects, so that as participants gaze on the flame it either helps to generate, or remind them of, the feeling of awe or some related sense of sacredness. Operational efficacy is tied to the actual contexts and historical situations of the people participating. Hospitality can be positioned at a doctrinal level, which I have done by observing its practice and theological framework within Christian tradition. However, the practice of hospitality also relates to the operations of people actually sharing space with other people, which actually generates or performs an enduring ethos related to that and similar spaces.

Bell recognizes these interplays in her definition of ritualization. “When analyzed as ritualization, acting ritually emerges as a particular cultural strategy of differentiation linked to particular social effects and rooted in the distinctive interplay of a socialized body and the environment it structures.”³³ My position is that worshippers gathering together are enacting hospitality on an operational level, which is then explained according to the Christian story, and thereafter is viewed doctrinally as a particular Christian act.

B. Ritual Dynamics: The Founding of Hospitable Space

³² Aune, “Ritual Practice,” 157.

³³ Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 7-8.

So far we have seen that worship is carried out by subjects, sensing, perceiving, thinking bodies engaged in ritual or ritual-like activities, which occur in the dimensions of space and time. I have been focusing especially on the spatial dimension, which can be understood as both the environment of ritual and also something created by ritual activities. When going to worship service, one might conventionally expect to enter a purpose-built construction, or one go to a cinema, a classroom, a house, or an agricultural field or a street corner.³⁴ Out of different physical settings over the centuries different design features have emerged: the ordinary house, remodeled for larger crowds and baptisms; the elongated space with apse from the Mediterranean basilica; the open hall with portable chairs from the meeting house; or the cushioned seating and sloped auditorium from theatre and cinemas. But what is most necessary is that there are living bodies engaged in ritualizing activities to give the space life, to make it a hospitable place of worship. The relationship between those ritual subjects, their culture and the structured systems in which they operate is a dynamic one, so that while the ritual environment, the brick walls or pre-set seating arrangement, may impose certain limitations on the ways of acting in it, people in turn give new meaning to the space. This set of relationships between actor and physical environment in a worship setting is the liturgical space. It is a dynamic phenomenon that must be renewed at each gathering.

To demonstrate that the liturgical space is also a place of hospitality, I have compared the activities of people entering domestic spaces with the activities of people

³⁴ Several worshipping communities in Singapore began by renting cinema space on Sunday mornings, while others have used school halls. I once attended a Methodist worship in La Paz, Bolivia, in a peach orchard, and I have gathered for prayer during protests on public land. Each of those spaces is associated in my memory with a sense of the sacred.

entering worship spaces. Within the set of activities that constitute the entrance, the ordinary acts of entering from the street, whether by car or foot or from the bus, walking through the parking lot, to the elevator or stairs and into the worship space, the greetings, whether formal or informal, and the search for a place to sit, all take on new meaning in the context of the liturgical space. To explain this new situation and meaning as people enter worship, I turn to the ritual theory of Ronald L. Grimes.

The Authority of Ritualization

Ronald Grimes expresses this relationship between actors and ritual space in terms of a “founded place.”³⁵ Every community, especially those steeped in a tradition, will seek some authority for how ritual is done. For LS it is in part the United Methodist Hymnal and the United Methodist Book of Worship. I am often asked why I have chosen a particular hymn or worship pattern that is not explicitly stated in one of those sources. My response is that the rubrics allow for freedom within the Ordo.³⁶ In fact, no matter what is explicitly printed in the bulletin, people will supplement or alter it with the implicit script that their bodies have authorized.

Grimes, who compares his criticism of “sacred” ritual to the movie or theatre critic, takes to task external, “doctrinal” ritual authority that is not balanced by ritual’s own

³⁵ Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*. 3rd ed., (Waterloo, Canada: Ritual Studies International, 2010), 51.

³⁶ The underlying structure of worship understood by comparison of historical and ecumenical worship practices. Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, Asheleigh E. Moorhouse, trans. (Portland, Maine: The Faith Press, 1966), 38, et passim, discusses the problematic of the ordo in relationship to the layering of “popular” worship practices. He observes two extremes, that either the ordo is taken legalistically to the exclusion of local and popular practices, or that the popular practices take on a life of their own and the historic ordo is forgotten. The task of the liturgical theologian is to relate the ordo to the church’s life.

“operational” authority.³⁷ He advances a living, breathing quality of ritual in this “soft” definition: “Ritualizing transpires as animated persons enact formative gestures in the face of receptivity during crucial times in founded places.”³⁸ The value of a good ritual definition is that it provides clear functional categories, while not restricting the emergence or process of ritual action in varied contexts. Steering between tradition-bound understandings of rite, and its popular negative connotations, Grimes recognizes the emergent quality of ritual, a birthing process evident in new as well as “old” ritual action.³⁹

Grimes’ focus on “ritualizing” as a process of embodiment contrasts with the idea of ritual as merely prescribing an action. It is something that “transpires;” it has a period of gestation, whether short or long, and then emerges like the process of birth, or the germination of a vegetable seed. It is like those who come forward for foot washing during a Maundy Thursday service, or when individuals respond to a message, weeping and kneeling at the communion rail.

Ritual is done by living people, – “animated persons” – not the traditional authority of a set of rubrics or scripture on a page, though such guides should not be discounted. Grimes refers to the book or the tradition as a grave from which ritual must be “raised up constantly” and “performed” by people.⁴⁰ When done rightly the ritual should be sensed

³⁷ Ronald L. Grimes. *Ritual Criticism* 158.

³⁸ Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*. 3rd ed., (Waterloo, Canada: Ritual Studies International, 2010), 51.

³⁹ Ibid., 51-52.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 52. Grimes understanding of performance comes from Richard Schechner, *Essays on Performance Theory, 1970-1976* (New York: Drama Books, 1977). The idea that the book is a grave comes from the practice of the botanist, who presses flowers between the pages of a book, as mentioned by Walter Ong: “The dead flower, once alive, is the psychic equivalent of the verbal text.” *Orality & Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 81.

deeply in the marrow of the bones.⁴¹ That people are animated implies a spiritual quality. Whether one takes a Durkheimian notion of “effervescence” or a religious idea of supernatural presence, in ritual people are somehow vitalized or energized. My approach as a Christian pastor is more like Dykstra’s understanding of Christian practice that recognizes the divine presence.

Ritual is an enactment, in the sense that it always involves embodied action that is not clearly distinct from drama, both involving some level of pretending or acting and attraction or entertainment. While it may have a transcendent frame of reference, even when a particular ritual action, such as meditation, may seem to deny physicality, Grimes points out that it is the body which is engaged in the practice.⁴² Indeed, much of the established Christian liturgy has dramatic potential, and may be said to be a re-enactment of the gospel.⁴³ But ritual is not thereby limited to merely illustrating the sacred story.

Ritual itself is “formative gesture,” which is to say that the bodily actions, postures and gestures, have their own symbolic value apart from any overlay of doctrine or other meanings. “Authentic worship,” according to Don Saliers, “needs living symbols. Living symbols focus the forces of life and death, and generate meanings that take time to unfold.”⁴⁴ For Grimes, ritual action is primary, while intellectual or doctrinal formulations are secondary. “The ritualizing moment, when enactments begin to form, is a nondiscursive, bodily way of knowing, not to be disparaged when it lacks narrative or

⁴¹ Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 7.

⁴² Grimes, *Beginnings*, 90.

⁴³ Robert E Webber. *Worship Old and New*, rev ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 86

⁴⁴ Don Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality*, 2nd ed. Akron Ohio: OSU Publication, 1996), 27.

systematic elaboration.”⁴⁵ This is at the heart of the discussion within liturgical theology over the direction of *lex orandi, lex credendi*. Are doctrinal formulations informed by the actions of the liturgy (primary theology) or are liturgical actions merely the enactment of pre-set doctrines?⁴⁶ It may be more helpful to see a dialectical relationship between ritual action and theological formulation in which both play important roles.⁴⁷ Most critically, bodily participation in ritual action is formative of spiritual and ethical attitudes, recognizing that attitudes have their basis in bodily posture. More will be said about this in the last chapter.

Counterpoised to the active voice of ritualizing is the posture of “receptivity.” Whether it is the divine face or a purely social phenomenon, Grimes asserts that “some aspect of the cosmos must appear to be responsive in order for ritualizing to gestate.”⁴⁸ Even sunflowers turn to face the sun. Hebrew religious sensibility looked to the face of God for survival. “When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die” (Psalm 104:29). Don Saliers’ observes similarly in the ancient worship

⁴⁵ Grimes, *Beginnings*, 56.

⁴⁶ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 218, et passim, has articulated the historic debate over the dictum. Aida Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1984), David W. Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima: What is Liturgical Theology*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2004), and Don Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), have weighed in on the priority of liturgy, “primary theology,” to inform doctrine and ethics, “secondary theology.” Singapore theologian Simon Chan seeks to carve a middle ground, “Making primary theology explicit is the task of liturgical theology,” *Liturgical Theology* (Downer’s Grove: IVP, 2006), 51.

⁴⁷ Phillip Tovey, *Inculturation of Christian Worship: Exploring the Eucharist*. (Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 151. Tovey discusses a dialectical movement from entrance into worship with preconceived ideas, divine encounter as antithesis and an ensuing faith adjustment as synthesis. See also Anscar J. Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis* (Collegeville, Minneapolis: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 29, et passim.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 59. As indicated before this is similar to the notion of the audience of one as derived from Kierkegaard.

of Israel that “not to be remembered by God is a profound threat to humanity. For the biblical writers not to be remembered has the force of death.”⁴⁹ In Liturgical Service worship, it is sometimes about “coming to meet Jesus,” and it usually involves an element of contriteness or gratefulness, whether or not a prayer of confession is used.⁵⁰

All of this takes place within “crucial times,” which is to say that there really is something to the Chinese notion of an “auspicious” date for a wedding. Within Christian tradition, liturgical time pertains to the ritual orientation toward the unfolding story of Christ.⁵¹ The crucial times may refer to the existential crisis of a particular church member or an important date in the church calendar that commemorates a historical, collective movement from crisis to resolution. The liturgical service must plan for the latter, while being open to the former.

Founding and Grounding

The final part of this ritual definition recognizes that ritualizing transpires within “founded places.” As with J.Z. Smith’s idea of emplacement, Grimes recognizes the importance of turning abstract space into a ritual place. “Space, which is empty, uniform, and abstract, is given shape and life so it may become a ritual place, such as a burial ground,

⁴⁹ Saliers, *Worship as Liturgy*, 11.

⁵⁰ In a communal setting, receptivity also means paying attention to the places of vulnerability in the ritualizing bodies, for that is often where people are most receptive. People interacting together may be mutually receptive to significations of each other’s actions, somatically through the face or other receptive and vulnerable parts of the body. “Face,” for example, is a vital cultural symbol in Chinese culture, as expressed in the common expression “lose face” (diūliǎn 丢脸).

⁵¹ Chupungco, Anscar, ed., “Liturgical Time and Space” in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies V, Liturgical Time and Space*, (Collegeville, Minn: The Liturgical Press, 2000), xix. Hence the tradition of building worship spaces to face liturgical east in eschatological anticipation.

dancing ground, or cathedral.”⁵² This is sometimes done once for all, either by physical designation or ritual actions which mark the space with “perspectival boundaries” such as “inside/outside, hidden/revealed, open/closed, front/back.”⁵³ Ritual space is always in some way “sequestered,” or set aside as sacred, often meaning that it is a walled structure separated from other types of structures, if not also zoned by for religious purposes by governmental municipalities. Established religious bodies typically work with municipalities to place religious sites according to an official urban plan. The worship space will be designated both physically and ritually, as they are usually built to purpose and then consecrated by an official rite.⁵⁴ The worshipper does not expect that it must be re-consecrated every time religious activities take place. Yet even while ancient temples and monasteries that are being absorbed back into nature may continue to hold an aura of sacredness, its meaning and ongoing vitality are restored and sustained through ongoing ritualization.

Given local land scarcity, many Singapore worshipping communities locate themselves in cinemas, industrial centres, and classrooms; yet as worship takes place those geometric spaces become sacred ritual places.⁵⁵ “Ritual place is a matrix of ritual life. It

⁵² Grimes, *Beginnings*, 61.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁵⁴ Such as “A Service for the Consecration of a Church Building” in *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 637.

⁵⁵ At one cinema rented to a Methodist community for this purpose, the pastor informed me that a prayer team comes early to pray specifically for the re-consecration of the space each Sunday. One section of Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church worships in a set of school halls, which must be returned to teaching space once their worship service is concluded.

is a generative center, though it may be geographically on the edge.”⁵⁶ Also certain entrance rites, including processions, are ways of marking the distinctions between ordinary or secular space and sacred space.⁵⁷ Grimes points out that the founding of ritual space may take place only in the duration of the ritual activity, such that “the founding ends the moment the action ceases.”⁵⁸ This will be more so if the ritual site is not a purpose-built space, or it is multipurpose, or completely unenclosed. In the moment of the ritualizing, the space becomes sequestered, even if 10 minutes later, it is overrun by a completely different activity.

Ritual actors are not unaffected in this process of founding ritual space. “Not only is space founded to become ritual place, but actors themselves become grounded by acting in it.”⁵⁹ This is an important process understanding of liturgical space, which involves a dialectical relationship between actors and liturgical space. Like the gardener who is cultured by the gardening, ritual actors turn generic space into a founded place, and in turn they are unconsciously “grounded” by that ritual environment, which feeds back into ritual behavior. This process has been described variously as practical mastery or ritual mastery, by which the activities that people are engaged with on a regular basis in particular places eventually become

⁵⁶ Grimes, *Beginnings*, 61.

⁵⁷ Stational liturgies that were developing from the Fourth century in urban centres highlight the capacity of ritual to found public worship space, even as that space was sometimes contested by different religious groups. See John F. Baldovin, “The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy,” in *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* (Rome: Pontificia Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987), 210; and Robert F. Taft, *A history of the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, vol. 2: the great entrance: a history of the transfer of gifts and other pre-anaphoral rites*. 4th ed. (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Orientale, 2004).

⁵⁸ Grimes, *Beginnings*, 61.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

second nature.⁶⁰ In the context of entrance rites, Andrea Bieler uses these ideas to discuss how people mark a space as sacred:

“Bodies create sacred space by ritualizing how to enter or exit a place for worship. They mark the space as special by employing a wide range of strategies for how to be religious persons in a space set apart for worship. They perform a script that feels in many cases almost natural.”⁶¹

By way of illustration, Mary McGann draws on Grimes in reference to the founding of worship space in the African-American heritage of Our Lady of Lourdes in San Francisco. She observed that such places have been founded by a variety of means, but primarily through the people in communal ritual activity.⁶² The worship space of Lourdes is not just in its architecture and furnishings, but the way in which “the community moulds the space in its ritual action, by the cultural assumptions brought to the worship by its members, by the felt qualities they generate within the liturgy, by the other ‘realms of space’ they evoke in the action – all of which mediate a sense of the community’s identity.”⁶³ This is instructive for my context in that the bodily interaction within the liturgical space is ultimately identity forming. As members found the ritual space they also become grounded ritual masters. More will be said on the implications of ritual mastery and identity formation in the fourth chapter.

⁶⁰ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 107. She follows the concept of practical mastery in Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline*, 162-3.

⁶¹ Andrea Bieler, “Embodied Knowing: Understanding Religious Expression in Ritual” in *Religion: Immediate Experience and the Mediacy of Research: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Objectives, Concepts and Methodology of Empirical Research in Religion (Research in Contemporary Religion)*, Hans-Gunter Heimbrock and Christopher Scholtz, eds., (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 56.

⁶² McGann, *A Precious Fountain*, 98.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 98.

C. Unfolding the Entrance Rites at PLCMC

Liturgical hospitality is about the sharing of space; hence, one must recognize the process of people's bodies engaged in the spaces they inhabit. For all space is dynamic, and particularly liturgical space is flush with the movement of people coming in and going out, offering expressions of greeting to each other and to the host. To understand this better, we must turn to the actual description of this coming in and going out in the Liturgical Service at Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church.

In describing any liturgical or ritual action, two levels of authority can be noted, the first being the intentional scripting of the ritual, literally inscribed in text, derived from liturgical traditions including the United Methodist Hymnal, the United Methodist Book of Worship and other traditions.⁶⁴ The second authority would seem to be open, fluid and unscripted, although from a theoretical point of view, scripted in bodies. Both are important and need to be described to understand what is taking place. Liturgical action or any other ritual that emphasises external ritual authority without taking into consideration the authority inherent in ritualization exposes itself to greater criticism.⁶⁵

Specifically, the description of the entrance, and later the sending, rites will include my own description of the way the entrance is supposed to work, and the observations of worshippers as indicated through interviews.⁶⁶ In particular, I look for how worshippers

⁶⁴ Though in fact, the 1992 Book of Worship allows for significant flexibility within the structure of a four-part ordo. Other factors include the tradition of the worship orders retained in the prior Hokkien Service, which sometimes trumps the ritual authority of that Book of Worship because that is the way it was remembered locally.

⁶⁵ Grimes *Ritual Criticism*, 158.

⁶⁶ In keeping with research protocol, all interview comments below will be attributed anonymously.

experience space as both something to be negotiated and also something that becomes hospitable.

The order of worship in the bulletin, as planned by the pastor, generally follows the prescribed order of the United Methodist Church. This is so, even though The Methodist Church in Singapore has been autonomous from its parent church in America since 1968. However, many English speaking churches in Singapore continue to use resources from the United Methodist Publishing House in America. The first formal action of worship in the Liturgical Service is the prelude, usually played by piano or organ. However, before the musicians are even in place, worshippers are finding their way to the church building.

I asked interviewees what physical challenges they faced coming to worship to get at the structural issues they strain against. While few admitted that they faced any challenges, – after all, no one is threatening their lives – most went on to describe the challenges variously as waiting up to 15 minutes for a bus, riding a bus for up to an hour, sometimes with transfers, or having to park the car at a distance because of lack of space in the church parking,⁶⁷ and then climbing four flights of stairs to arrive at level four when the single elevator is full. Several come with elderly parents, so they must sometimes get a taxi, while several also have babies and young children. Some of the members who bring their elderly parents to the Hokkien Service, seem to take it in stride. “I drop them at the church, then go outside somewhere to park the car, so it takes awhile to get to worship,” one respondent said, adding, “But ok, I manage to get into worship. I can settle down pretty quickly.” Settling down with others in the worshipping community suggests a kind of social equilibrium a sense of right placement and harmony.

⁶⁷ There have been occasions of anger flaring in the car park over lack of space.

Those who walk up the four flights of stairs and enter via the two back doors can be more anonymous by entering the congregational space from the rear, while those who enter via the elevator can be seen as they enter from the front corner, so that entrance is used more by people who are early, or by older members and those with young children. Some are very sensitive about being seen when they enter late or need to exit before the end of service. One elderly woman who normally takes the lift, said, “If I’m late or I have to leave in the middle of the service, then it’s embarrassing, so I go the back way down the steps. But that’s a long stairway.”

As worshippers enter they are greeted by a team of four ushers who offer each person a bulletin, UM hymnal and Bible. There are 16 to 20 ushers who rotate responsibilities on a weekly basis. The expectation of ushers is to be the initial face of hospitality. That expectation with occasional training seems to promote friendly behaviour in those who volunteer to be ushers, as one respondent indicated: “You need to give to the visitor a sense of welcome that’s genuine, but not imposing or intruding.” Another, who was previously an usher demonstrated how the role of ushering continued to influence her. “In LS I was first involved in ushering, so for us to welcome others is not a problem.” However, another respondent offered the criticism that the ushers tend to be more functional, and “are not sufficiently welcoming.” There is also a sense that everyone in the congregation has a responsibility to welcome others. One woman, who also works with a parachurch organization, commented on the importance of the space being organized and prepared for people. “It’s not just about what people do, but also the infrastructure is important,” she said, adding that it’s important to have chairs and spaces ready for people visiting church.

I asked worshippers what catches their attention as they enter worship to discern their sense of the sacramentality of place. Almost everyone interviewed observed the larger physical symbols, the cross, altar, pulpit, ceiling height and arrangement of the chancel area. A single man observed: “What wows me first when I enter is the stained glass cross.” An older woman also remarked on the attractive qualities of the cross. “But I can’t stare too long or the light hurts my eyes.” For that reason she sometimes keeps her sunglasses on during worship.⁶⁸ Comprising random fragments of colored glass, the cross is the only stained glass window in an otherwise minimally colored room, so it is an important visual attraction.

The ceiling height and other spatial dimensions also affect mood. “I like the high ceiling. Low ceilings sometime makes me feel claustrophobic, more closed in,” said a single man. However, the same respondent recalled a value in low ceilings during a three-month period when the worship had to move to the ground floor social hall, which has an eight foot ceiling.⁶⁹ In that case, the closer proximity of people gathered in worship made the low ceiling feel “more cozy.” Remarks about the high ceiling included “a sense of space and grandeur,” “vaulted,” and “a sense of grandeur.” Said one older male member, “We need to experience that majesty. It gives me assurance that I’ve come to a place where I can find rest and comfort.”

Several respondents, all women, observed the live flower arrangements on the stationary, east-facing altar. A network of women volunteers across the congregations is

⁶⁸ The sanctuary walls also have large translucent windows which at mid-day are very bright.

⁶⁹ During a period of about three months while the elevator was being upgraded the ground floor social hall was temporarily converted into a worship space.

in charge of arranging the placing those flowers, which they usually do on a Saturday afternoon. Flowers range from local tropical flowers to roses and chrysanthemums. Worshippers marvelled not only at the colourful beauty of the flower arrangements, but also how they often fit the colors of the Christian seasons, with more blues and purples during Advent and Lent, and greens during the Sundays after Epiphany and Pentecost. Several commented on the importance the flowers play in fostering a meditative mood in worship. The flowers remind them of the beauty of the Lord.

Meditative music begins playing about five minutes before start time and usually half of the congregation has not yet arrived. Those who are present are encouraged to be quiet or soften their conversations. Since there are four volunteer musicians who alternate on piano or organ, the musical styles vary from classical and hymnic to popular. The UMBOW is permissive on the role of the prelude, as “an offering by the musician(s) to God on behalf of the entire congregation, and not a mere prelude to the worship service.”⁷⁰ Congregants are generally appreciative of the music, using words like meditative, prayerful, or peaceful to describe their experience during the opening instrumental music. When asked their preference for worship style (quiet and meditative, energetic, teaching time, interactive or other), the majority preference was to be quiet and meditative. Many take those few minutes of prelude music for personal prayer, recognizing God’s presence in the worship space. “God’s presence is all around me. This is the sanctuary. Of course God is there. I pray at home, but the sanctuary has different

⁷⁰ The United Methodist Book of Worship, 17. As that which comes before the play, the *preludium* captures some element of anticipated drama. As musical offering it is part of the worship itself.

dimensions – serenity, holiness, peace of mind. After I pray at church I usually have peace of mind.”

Several made comparisons with other church worship, including Roman Catholic mass they had attended. One woman observed how she observed worshippers at a Catholic who “take it very seriously, and it feels sacred,” but she seemed to lament that worshippers did not take it so seriously in LS worship. Another respondent commented, “I need my time to experience God, but loudness and activity just disrupts. When you come in to worship there should be quiet music, with time to sit and meditate.” Another offered a mild critique, saying that “daily life is has a lot of distractions. My way of thinking is that it is important to quiet down. Generally worship styles are too eventful, so there is little time for the individual to be quiet.” Even as instrumental music is playing and people are calming themselves, the clergy, liturgist and lector (reader) huddle together wherever it is convenient, and say a pre-service prayer.⁷¹

On most Sundays, the clergy, liturgist and lector proceed immediately after their prayer to take their seats, the former behind the pulpit, while the liturgist and lector take seats behind the lectern. When the prelude is finished the liturgist rises to the lectern, sometimes offering an informal greeting and then inviting the congregation to stand and recite the call to worship, typically a short responsive reading based one or more of the four readings for the day.⁷² It is a reminder that they are welcomed into the divine presence, but as with any social exchange there is a reciprocal sense of obligation, because

⁷¹ It is a far cry from the more elaborate vesting prayers of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions, but the current vestry is used as a storage room, and it is enough to know that we stand and pray within the priestly tradition.

⁷² See the appendix for several of examples from the last six months.

worshippers are not merely passive guests, but potential hosts themselves. While the liturgist is encouraged to dress more formally out of respect for worship, the vocal tone needs to be inviting. Liturgical performance is vital, because it is a verbal enactment of the Lord's welcome. "The first part of worship is preparing you," one respondent commented. "It's putting you in the atmosphere of the house of God, so you can be in communication with God."

After the call to worship, the liturgist invites the congregation to sing the Hymn of Praise or a medley, usually from the UM Hymnal.⁷³ The hymn, likewise, is related to the lectionary texts, to the ecclesiastic season, or simply an appropriate hymn expressing praise to God. Ordinarily, it is drawn from the United Methodist Hymnal, a copy of which everyone is given as they enter worship.⁷⁴ The fact of having a hymnal may have an important value in itself. It seems to offer a tangible reference point in a world of intangibles. "I like having a hymnal," commented one young adult. "It's physical; you can touch it and focus on the lyrics as you sing it. Nowadays it's almost a novelty to have a hymnal."⁷⁵

"For me, singing in worship lays the foundation," said one elderly lady. "I've heard it said that when you sing, you pray twice," said another respondent, referring to

⁷³ A list of the such hymns used during the last six months can be found in the appendix.

⁷⁴ There is no room in the pew racks for the UM Hymnal, because they are already occupied by a resources used by the previous two worship services, Mandarin and Hokkien, so LS Bible and hymnal are passed out and returned at the end of the service. Texts not found in these resources are printed in the bulletin or projected.

⁷⁵ The debate over the use of hymn books versus projected texts has multiple facets related to cost, musical literacy, progressive technology, etc. The history of the hymn books as scored books for everyone is recent in church history. See Karen Westerfield Tucker, *American Methodist Worship* (New York: Oxford, 2001), 156-174, for a discussion of the development of hymn books, with corresponding changes of congregational singing in the history of American Methodism.

something he had heard from the pastor. He added that singing is a way of praising God and witnessing.⁷⁶ Indeed, responses suggest that music, and especially congregational song is not theologically trivial, including the music itself, and not the lyrics alone. As the scholar and hymn writer, Brian Wren, has noted, “Congregational song does important things that speech cannot do, and its distinguishing marks have theological implications.”⁷⁷ Because music is sequenced over time with narrative-like qualities, it has the quality of “time art.”⁷⁸

While respondents may not have been thinking about the theological implications, their reflections on the emotional impact and significance of singing together speaks volumes. “The effect on people is evident,” one respondent said, “We are singing together, not just as individuals, so singing becomes part of our shared experience.” Another, who admitted that he can’t sing, still enjoys singing together. “I just like being part of the singing,” he said.

While those leading music in worship should be prepared to make sure the music is done “properly and in place,” the presence of worshippers who cannot hear the pitch, yet still enjoy singing together speaks to a deeper dynamic of hospitable space. It is most fundamentally about sharing space, including its acoustic qualities. Besides just delivering a doctrinal or theological message, hymns are about atmospherics. “They set the

⁷⁶ I often use the dictum attributed to Augustine of Hippo to focus on praying with the heart and body as well as the mind and spirit.

⁷⁷ Brian Wren, *Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song* (Louisville, KY:Westminster/John Knox, 2000), 54.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 61. In the context of liturgy, participation in music is primary theology. Among the scholarly works on exploring music from ritual, symbolic and theological points of view is Judith Marie Kubicki, *Liturgical music as ritual symbol: A Case Study of Jacques Berthiers’ Taizé Music* (Leuven, Netherlands: Peeters, 1999), which especially applies the J. L. Austin’s theory of performative utterances to music.

atmosphere. Even the traditional choruses, like the Doxology, connects us as a family, because it's what we have always sung." The speed or rhythm of music affects emotions and the ability to reflect theologically, according to one respondent: "I do get affected by how fast or how slow the song is. The super fast, I get too excited, so I can't focus on the message." Though favoring verbal and the cognitive side, another seems to have concurred with Martin Luther, observing that music is "one of God's greatest creations." While most said that they experienced God through the preaching and other verbal content, the hymn singing and music itself was also a point of contact.

Following the hymn, the people remain standing as the liturgist invites them to pray the invocation.⁷⁹ As a collect form of prayer, it models praise, petition and doxology, and often ends with a Trinitarian doxology.⁸⁰ Prayers could be done in an extemporaneous manner, but the preference of the Liturgical Service is to include established forms of printed prayers for several reasons, to provide unity of prayer, to model a pattern of prayer and to inculcate certain theological affirmations.

The liturgist then invites the congregation to silent prayer (sometimes offering a brief litany of intercession), followed by singing the Lord's Prayer, typically using a musical setting written by one of two Singapore musicians, Yusuf Kamajaja or Lim Swee

⁷⁹ A selection of such prayers used during the last six months can be found in the appendix.

⁸⁰ The eighteenth-century Methodist founder, John Wesley, urged members of the Methodist Societies to continue attending their parish worship on Sunday, because the Book of Common Prayer "has the four grand parts of public prayer, deprecation, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving." The Large Minutes, in Thomas Jackson, *The Works of John Wesley*, CD version (Franklin, Tenn: Provident House Publishers, 1995), 322.

Hong.⁸¹ The former has a range and theatrical quality similar to Marlotte's setting, while the latter is of an intentionally limited chant-like range.

On the first Sunday of the month, when Methodist tradition has authorized the use of the Holy Communion,⁸² the initial hymn is the occasion for the choir to process in through the center aisle behind two "acolytes," who are carrying a candle lighter and processional cross. In such case, the clergy will follow behind.⁸³ While the acolytes continue to light a single candle on the altar and place the cross on north side, the choir files into their place in the front two pews on the north side, and the clergy find their seats behind the pulpit.

The process of entering liturgical space is both formal and informal, with explicit and implicit texts; it is rich in symbolic objects and symbolic actions which are given sacred meaning. In all there is expressed an interest in the interpersonal encounter with God and other strangers.

D. Theological Reflections on the Hospitable Nature of Liturgical Space

⁸¹ Jusuf Kam is music director at the largest Methodist church in Singapore, Wesley Methodist, and Lim Swee Hong teaches sacred music at Emmanuel College, Toronto.

⁸² The 1992 Book of Worship encourages more frequent communing; however, various traditions that have conspired to interpret communion as memorial, rather than sacramental and eschatological, have won out in the collective consciousness, so communion remains celebrated monthly only, instead of regularly, as Wesley would have preferred. When communion is observed, this community's practice has been to use a procession and recession with candle lighters and cross bearer.

⁸³ Sometimes there may be two or more clergy involved. I have taught that the use of the procession is partly a ritual remnant of the stational liturgies, as mentioned earlier. However, outdoor religious processions are all but banned in Singapore since 1965, after inter-religious riots. See Vineeta Sinha, "Gods on the Move: Hindu Chariot Races in Singapore" in *South Asian Religions on Display: Religious processions in South Asia and in the Diaspora*, Jacobsen, Knut A., ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 161.

In the first chapter I had discussed the sacramentality of space, that at least in some places one may experience the divine welcome. This sense of sacred space can be experienced even in utilitarian Singapore, though it becomes a challenge, as more and more of the heritage sites, even cemeteries, give way to shopping malls, high rise condos and expressways, and church buildings themselves are largely functional. In this chapter I have explored the similarities between the divine welcome with the attendant rituals of entering worship and the welcome rituals of entering a home. Yet something distinguishes the entrance into Christian worship from the ordinary entrance into a home. My interest is to discern the ways in which the divine welcome is more evident and empowering during worship and particularly during the entrance to worship. Here I want to offer a brief theological reflection on the entrance into liturgical space, particularly with reference to theological categories of transcendence and immanence.

The place of worship, like any three-dimensional space can be described in simple geometric terms: vertical and horizontal, distance and proximity, inside and outside, bounded and unbounded, empty and filled, light and darkness. These and other dimension are symbols of transcendence and immanence in ecclesial culture. Different periods and traditions have emphasized those symbols in different ways.⁸⁴ Since the Reformation, the immanence of God has generally been associated more with Roman Catholics through emphasis of sacramental presence and transcendence more with Protestants, who seem to have evicted God from the garden. However, Benedictine scholar Kevin Seasoltz notes how the distinctions are less distinct now, and calls for both avenues of divine presence to

⁸⁴ James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, Revised Ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990). 88-92.

be recognized for the sake of believers.⁸⁵ Following contemporary artistic and literary observations of human existential isolation, Seasoltz pointed out “the human need for both an experience of transcendence and immanence to overcome humankind's isolation, introversion, and loneliness.”⁸⁶

The Experience of Divine Transcendence

LS members noted various spatial dimensions as they described the objects that attracted their attention and their experience of God in worship, including the high ceiling, stained glass cross, the remote altar and large pulpit. Those dimensions are not insignificant. Information technologies can transmit voices and images far away, but except in space travel and M. C. Escher images it is impossible to walk on the ceiling.⁸⁷ Distances and height can inspire the imagination, but they also limit and place the observer to “here” in contrast to the impossibility of “up there.” Correlated with liturgical texts, their observations point to divine transcendence; that is, to the sacred which is remote and mysterious, yet also uniting and inspiring.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ R. Kevin Seasoltz, "Transcendence and immanence in sacred art and architecture." *Worship* 75, no. 5 (September 1, 2001): 403-431. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed April 12, 2015). See also David Tracy, *Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad 1982).

⁸⁶ Seasoltz. "Transcendence," 403.

⁸⁷ I refer to *Relativity*, a 1953 lithograph by the Dutch artist in which faceless persons walk up and down stairways that defy any sense of up and down.

⁸⁸ Geoffrey Wainwright, in *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (New York: Oxford Press, 1980). 2, accepts the “living experience of worship” as evidence of God. Seasoltz, in “Transcendence,” 413-4, points out how the vertical architecture in Romanesque and Goth periods emphasized a sense of “strong cultural unity in spite of much political unrest and division.”

The transcendence symbolized in this empty space draws worshippers in, even though it is a challenge to access the worship place, whether it means waiting for the bus, parking at a distance, or walking up four floors, or facing the social embarrassment of entering in front of everyone when taking the elevator. Indeed, there is an apophatic quality to this empty space that not only corresponds to the *via negativa* of prayer,⁸⁹ but also to the hospitality of space, an opening left available for the other, as Henri Nouwen has so eloquently observed. “Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place.”⁹⁰ Elements of Chinese traditional thought also recognize the value of emptiness, as evident in this quote from the Tao Te Ching:

Thirty spokes join one hub.
The wheel’s use comes from emptiness.
Clay is fired to make a pot.
The pot’s use comes from emptiness.
Windows and doors are cut to make a room.
The room’s use comes from emptiness.⁹¹

While church growth consultants may advise ease of access to worship space, that may reduce the power of transcendent symbols. Religious adherents have always seen a value in self-sacrifice, such as climbing stairs to attain an audience with the sacred. Ancient

⁸⁹ Philip Sheldrake traces the development of apophatic theology and spirituality from early Greek theologians such as Origen and Evagrius, in *Spirituality: A Brief History*, 2 ed. (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 36.

⁹⁰ Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York:Doubleday, 1975), 71.

⁹¹ Stephen Addiss and Stanley Lombardo, translators, *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-Tzu. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company: 1993. See Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 131, et passim, for discussion on Taoist philosophy.

Hebrew expressions of faith highlighted the distance to the sacred: “I lift my eyes to the hills” (Psalm 121). Other vertical symbols encountered during the entrance to worship include the ceiling height, inspiring a sense of grandeur, the stained glass cross, the elevation of the chancel area and the larger pulpit.

Distances and fencing or kneeling rails may also foster a sense of transcendence. At some point during worship the Word is heard over that distance, though amplified electronically. On some days, the worshipper must get up and walk that distance to arrive at the rail, to kneel and lift humble gaze (or to keep face lowered in “humble access”) as the communion elements are distributed. This involves a subjective diminution in relation to the transcendent.

While the vaulted ceiling of PLCMC and the distances to the chancel cannot be compared to a Notre Dame de Paris or a Maria Laach Abbey, for most Singaporeans who return Sunday after Sunday from compact HDB housing, it is high and lifted up. It is spacious, meaningful and inspiring. There are no images of *Christos Pantocrator* gazing down from above, as in an Orthodox church, but as one person mentioned, the high ceiling inspired a sense of grandeur, a sense of uplift and inspiration, which is another quality of transcendence. It not only reminds worshippers of the distance between a holy God and frail humanity, but also inspires them to be united in faithfulness as they seek the energy of God’s grace to live according to the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed from the large pulpit.

The Immanent Experiences of Divinity

This description of the entrance reveals not only the apprehension of divine transcendence but also the immanence of God. Worshippers have experienced the sacred in and through tangible objects, bodily action and the collective gathering itself. The same pilgrimage-like gathering coalesces into a congregation which operates somewhat collaboratively and so is said for that time to constitute the body of Christ. “Though [Jesus Christ] has been represented in mosaics, frescoes, paintings, and sculptures,” Seasoltz noted, “his presence has been symbolized above all by the Christian community of the church, the assembly of persons initiated into the paschal mystery of Christ through baptism, and who, as a result, are formed into the church as the Body of Christ and the people of God.”⁹² As one respondent commented on the challenge of dropping off his parents and then searching for a place to park the car, once he arrive in worship, it was easy for him to settle down. He had found his place.

Other immanent symbols and symbolic action include informal and formal greetings, the presence of luminosity, the feeling that God is present in the sanctuary, and the attraction to specific objects, such as the cross, altar table, flowers and even the wood of the pews, as one respondent noted. Certainly, though the pews are fixed and facing forward, there is enough horizontal space for people to step out of the pews to greet each during the pre-offertory passing of the peace, to come forward for communion or to take part in occasional processions.⁹³ The illumination of the cross and general illumination

⁹² Seasoltz, “Transcendence,” 407.

⁹³ Ibid., 417. He observes how the longitudinality of Gothic churches made the nave a continuation of town roads and the entry way as a welcoming front porch. This idea of front porch was picked up by Daniel Benedict as the ministry of introducing people to the life of the church in advance of baptismal preparation in *Come to the Waters: Baptism & Our Ministry of Welcoming Seekers & Making Disciples* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2003), 80.

of the sanctuary is also a symbol of divine immanence. “In the Christian tradition, God's presence was symbolized in a special way by light. Gothic transparency brought that light down to earth, and the stained glass transformed it so it became a mysterious medium which communicated the immanent presence of a transcendent God.”⁹⁴ The fact that members felt more confident to pray silently as they entered and sit down suggests the belief, if not a particular sensitivity, in God's immanent presence in that illumined space.

As mentioned, several members were attracted by the flower arrangement, and one woman seemed to be fascinated by the dark wood of the rustic pews. The flowers offer at least two ways of symbolizing divine immanence, the first being that it comes from the natural world, and the wood, though manufactured into a pew, still maintains the grain structure of a natural tree.⁹⁵ The second reason is that the flower arrangers often coordinate with the colors of the church seasons.

The particular social setting which is the focus of this project is sequestered and sacred. Yet most of the objects, movements and spatial arrangements encountered are the stuff of ordinary life – the actions of entering rooms, observing objects, lit or unlit, sitting, standing, greeting people, negotiating vertical and horizontal dimensions. Moreover, each of those ordinary encounters has offered a window or doorway of encounter, however slight, with the God who is also revealed in Word and Sacrament.

The experience of worshippers suggests a continuity of divine revelation, that includes but is not limited to sacred text. While not disaffirming the place of sacred scripture,

⁹⁴ Seasoltz, “Transcendence,” 417.

⁹⁵ Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality*, 147, discusses the sense of delight that such experiences may evoke, and how repetition of such experiences in worship form a pattern of religious affections.

David Brown has argued against a strident attachment to the doctrine of *sola scriptura* that disregards the dynamic flow of tradition. “The deposit of revelation has only superficially remained the same. In practice it has been in constant process of change, as new contexts have thrown up fresh challenges that demanded that the text be read in new ways.”⁹⁶ The New Testament evidences massive re-readings of Hebrew Scriptures in light of Jesus Christ, not the least of which is the decisive welcome granted to non-Jewish Christians in Acts 15 on the witness of the Holy Spirit. Brown argues that Christian theologians have too long ignored the many ways in which people experience the presence of God, while focusing only on the official channels of revelation.⁹⁷

Not only does church history recognize a multitude of sacramentals, but the very affirmation of God as creator must protest against the disenchantment of the world that bears the divine brushstrokes. “If there really is a God who as creator is the ground of all we are, then one would expect some matching between our experience and that greater reality.”⁹⁸ The biblical Psalm 148 reminds us that all levels of the world cry out in praise to the creator, from heavenly beings to monsters of the sea, beasts of the fields and people inhabiting the earth. As Seasoltz notes about the ancient people of Israel: “Their conviction

⁹⁶ David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Space: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 409. See his previous book, *Tradition and Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁹⁷ Brown, *God and Enchantment*, 409. See also C. S. Song’s Asian critique of western assumptions that limit theology and spirituality to the religious sphere. “A truly creative spirituality is one that enables us to realize and experience the divine presence in all that we do, not only in religious worship.” *Third-Eye Theology: A Theology in Formation in Asia Settings* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1980), 3.

⁹⁸ Brown, *God and Enchantment*, 411. John Wesley, as a priest in the Church of England, loved the Book of Common Prayer, and encouraged members of the Methodist societies to attend the Eucharist parish services, but in practice he followed the ancient church in observing a variety of the means of grace, essentially sacramental means of communing with God and receiving God’s grace.

that the Holy Spirit was poured out on all creation enabled the early Christians to find God sacramentally present in their own space and time, although the divine presence was mediated in a particularly intense way in certain places and at certain times.”⁹⁹

Hence as worshipping members gather together they encounter a welcoming presence. This is the divine host of the gathering, and in that welcoming presence they must ethically share that space with all others who enter.

Chapter 3 Sending Rites: Sent into the World as One Body

A shady tree offers hospitality from the tropical noon-day heat. So worship can be a place of refuge. One may certainly expect hospitality when entering or gathering into a place, but is there anything hospitable about the actions of departing and dispersal? Is it conceivable that parting words and gestures may imply ongoing connectivity? In this chapter, I will show how ritual partings enact a kind of extended hospitality,¹ how those ritual partings are actually carried out in the Liturgical Service at Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church and how that hospitality can be extended into other ritual spaces because of the process of ritual mastery. The chapter will conclude with a theological reflection on the connection between this extended hospitality and its implications for the concept and practice mission.

A. Sending Rituals as Enactment of Extended Hospitality

⁹⁹ Seasoltz, “Transcendence,” 408.

¹ Kōsuke Koyama, “‘Extend Hospitality to Strangers’: A Missiology of Theologia Crucis” *International Review Of Mission* 82, no. 327 (July 1993): 283-295. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed June 16, 2015), uses this phrase in discussion of a stranger-centred theology, a theology which has inspired Christian mission, because Christ himself is a stranger.

This chapter continues the discussion of liturgical efficacy, with the assertion that the sending rituals of worship also effect hospitality, similarly to the way in which entrance rituals participate in and effect hospitality. Michael Aune's cautionary note about expecting too much of ritual still applies.² It is not a magic formula for manipulating God or for achieving some goal distinct from the act itself. By comparing the worship dismissal with ordinary partings we will observe how the sending rites establish a framework for hospitality.

We have learned how those participating in the entrance rituals are also taking part in spiritual practices of hospitality by being drawn into a shared liturgical space with God and other strangers. Those engaged in the sending rituals enact a sense of hospitality in the present, which can be continued beyond the immediate gathering. It will be helpful again to observe the ordinary practices of parting company, whether it be the conclusion of a home visit or other kinds of partings. As in the second chapter, the tools of practice theory will offer insights into those ordinary actions, recognizing the physical and social structures and the embodied strategies that oppose or interact with those structures.

Parting and Anticipation of Reunion

Normally in household visitations, courtesy requires a limit by which the guest imposes on the host. Guests will initiate when to leave either by indicating at the beginning of the visit the duration of the visit, or excusing themselves when necessary. To overstay a visit transforms hospitality into an act of intrusion, unless the host requests an extended

² Michael B. Aune, "Ritual Practice: Into the World, Into Each Human Heart," in *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission*, Thomas H. Schattaer, ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 156.

stay. Interviewed respondents noted common parting gestures, sometimes including a handshake, exchanging good-byes. If contact details are not known or haven't been exchanged earlier, parting guests and hosts may share contact information with each other before exiting.

Just as the entrance into a domicile takes place with ritual-like actions, so leave-taking should involve similar actions and words, for it is to some extent a reversal of the sequences of the entrance. The very fact of passing through a doorway underscores both a ritual process and the symbolism which the passage enacts. While it is not strictly a rite of passage, there is a movement from inside to outside which may carry a variety of symbolic meanings. The exit may also evoke memories or feelings of other such departures that either hasten the movement out or causes the person to want to linger.

The ritual of parting extends hospitality in several possible ways: the anticipation of a certain reunion; the hope of a deferred reunion in a more remote or unknown future; or the assurance of a dispersed reunion, whereby even in the parting, some quality of the relationship will persist and may even be expanded to welcome other persons in other places.

The expression, "See you again!" (再见 zàijiàn), expresses routinely, and sometimes specifically, the hope of a reunion. The reunion may occur in the same place as the previous meeting, such as when walking out of the door in the morning for a day of work, one bids farewell to family or friends with the expectation of returning through the same door in the evening, or possibly another designated location, like a restaurant for a special celebration.

Worship gatherings always conclude with partings, whether it be the ordinary conclusion of the worship service or the particular partings of individuals. The anticipated

reunion may be deferred or dispersed to other places, such as the individuals going into national service, a teenager sent off to university in another country, or a church member sent away as a missionary.³ It has been a normal practice that the pastor should offer a blessing prayer for such individuals during worship, that God would keep them safe while away, and bring them back soon. The hope is that hospitality that has been known and experienced in the particular place will be extended to another site. The hoped-for reunion may also be extended to a place that can only be imagined or hoped for, as in the parting of a 16-month-old girl who died after contracting a fever. During the wake services, funeral and cremation, there were frequent, passionate cries of “See you again! See you in heaven!” These are examples of extended hospitality.

Dispersed Hospitality in Wesleyan Eschatology

For Methodist church founders, John and Charles Wesley, the eschatological experience of the church community extended beyond death. Hymns celebrated the connection between the “saints on earth” and “those to glory gone.” The worshipping community is “one family... one church above, beneath, though now divided by the stream... E’en now by faith we join our hands with those that went before, and greet the blood-besprinkled bands on the eternal shore.”⁴ John Wesley published a collection of Eucharistic hymns in England, mostly from the hand of his brother, as *Hymns on the Lord’s*

³ It is not unusual for 18 to 20-year-olds to move away from the worshipping community at least for a period, sometimes for university in another part of the world or mission engagement, but especially for young men, inducted into compulsory national service (NS). Some youth also go overseas for university, most typically to Australia, England, or America if they are English educated, because Singapore university entrance qualifications are very competitive.

⁴ Charles Wesley, “Come, Let Us Join Our Friends Above,” *United Methodist Hymnal*, 709.

Supper.⁵ He sorted the hymns by five doctrinal categories: memorial, means of grace, pledge of heaven, Christ's sacrifice, and the sacrifice of persons in connection with Christian service. Of most significant in this study is the category of the "pledge of heaven," in which poetic verse expresses in worship the experience of a "thin space" between those present and those departed.

Happy the souls to Jesus join'd,
And saved by grace alone;
Walking in all Thy ways we find
Our heaven on earth begun.

The Church triumphant in Thy love,
Their mighty joys we know;
They sing the Lamb in hymns above,
And we in hymns below.⁶

One can only wonder what strength Wesley may have found from his departed father in 1743 when he was rejected from preaching in his father's former church in Epworth. Rather than argue the case, he mounted his father's tomb outside and preached to the gathered crowd.⁷

In these verses, as well as in the ritual-like expressions and gestures mentioned previously we find a quality of hospitality that assures the continued bonds of community and family. The hope is expressed that the departing ones will either return, or that the Holy Spirit will go with them, as the divine presence holds the community together even

⁵ Reprinted in J. Earnest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of Charles Wesley*. OSL Publications, 2006. While Wesley included a standard collection of hymns to the American Methodists in 1784, it remains puzzling that he did not include this collection. The Singaporean worship scholar, Lim Swee Hong, who now teaches in Toronto, has set out to "re-tune" Charles Wesley, including several of these Eucharistic hymns.

⁶ Ibid., 225.

⁷ Richard P. Heitzenater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1995), 154.

in dispersion. Charles Wesley's hymn "Blest Be the Dear Uniting Love," written in 1742, expresses that unity even though parted.

Blest be the dear uniting love
that will not let us part;
our bodies may far off remove,
we still are one in heart.⁸

This sense is also applied in the Methodist itinerant system, whereby ordained preachers submit to be appointed annually by the conference. Influenced by various Catholic monastic movements, especially itinerant orders like the Jesuits, Wesley restrained the Methodists from becoming its own church. Like the Jesuits, he promoted spiritual disciples among the members of the Methodist Societies to assure that they remained open to the Holy Spirit to sustain them as a community, even in dispersion.⁹ Parting always implied a future reunion, ultimately in the eschaton.

B. Unfolding of Sending Rituals in the Liturgical Service

Just as the departure from a domicile may be seen as a reversal of the entrance, so at the conclusion of worship there is movement from inside to outside, from sacred to profane or secular. In the United Methodist rubrics the sending rites are quite brief, described in one line in the United Methodist Book of Worship Basic Pattern outline: "The

⁸ Charles Wesley, "Blest Be the Dear Uniting Love," in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 566.

⁹ Thomas Edward Frank, "From Connection to Corporation: Leadership Trends in United Methodism," *Journal of Religious Leadership*, (Vol. 5, Nos. 1 & 2, Spring and Fall 2006), 111-12. Wesley recorded in his journal on 15 May 1748, that while preaching in Dublin a listener remarked: "Ay, he is a Jesuit; that's plain." Then in the crowd a "popish priest" was heard to cry aloud, "No, he is not; I would to God he was." *Journal of John Wesley*, Percy Livingston Parker, ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1951, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/journal.vi.vii.xii.html> accessed Dec 13, 2012).

people are sent into ministry with the Lord's blessing.”¹⁰ Whether communion is celebrated or not, the worship service concludes with a series of ritual actions.¹¹

Concluding Rites

The sequence following the thanksgiving has two basic variables, with or without communion. If it is the first Sunday or when communion has otherwise been observed, the pastor and communion stewards/servers have re-gathered behind and adjacent to the free-standing Lord's Table as the pastor offers a simple prayer of thanksgiving from the rite in the hymnal.¹² All rise for this prayer, and remain standing for brief announcements, and a benediction, all uttered by the pastor, after which the liturgist, taking up position behind the lectern, invites the congregation to sing the hymn of dedication, which also functions in this case as a recessional hymn. While sometimes short choruses are either printed in the bulletin or projected on the screen, the hymn of dedication, as with most of the hymns, is usually selected from the United Methodist Hymnal. As already indicated in the second chapter, the physical hymnal in hand has some value beyond just the content, because it is something tangible. While there are other values in projecting texts on screen, the physical book in hand seems to allow for more personal reflection on the text and music. Having at least some familiar hymns and choruses helps to foster a sense of family, because it can be sung together from the heart.

¹⁰ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 15.

¹¹ Singapore Methodists have maintained the American practice of monthly communion. See Karen Westerfield Tucker, *American Methodist Worship* (New York: Oxford, 2001), 120, on how the fact of limited authorized clergy and distances in the American frontier established a tradition of infrequent communing.

¹² This thanksgiving prayer can be found in the appendix.

Usually during the first verse of this hymn, the acolytes enter the chancel, light the candle lighter with the altar candle before extinguishing that candle, then proceed down the steps and slowly walk to the rear through the center aisle, turning left and continuing around the back and up again to the lift lobby, which is on the liturgical south side. When the acolytes depart, they are followed by the pastor(s), then by the communion stewards, and choir. The choir remains in the rear of the nave facing forward to keep singing behind the congregation until the end of the hymn, while the pastor(s) and communion stewards continue walking toward the exit of the lift lobby. I usually coordinate the timing of the acolytes with length of the hymn, so that the acolytes enter the lift lobby just at the conclusion of the last verse. Afterwards the organist or pianist plays a postlude for which people remain seated. The liturgist, who has remained at the lectern, gives an informal dismissal: “The service is concluded. Please join us for fellowship.”

If communion has not been observed, the sequence is slightly different. The pastor, standing at the pulpit after the collection of the offering, utters an extemporaneous thanksgiving prayer. The congregation has already been standing, having sung the Doxology after the offering. Then the liturgist, standing at the lectern, invites the congregation to sing the hymn of dedication, usually a text that calls for personal or social commitment set to a rousing or memorable tune.¹³ Following this hymn the pastor gives the benediction (Blessing with dismissal), most typically the Trinitarian blessing from 2 Corinthians 13. Both the hymn and the benediction suggest an extension of the shared space experience of the morning’s worship service.

¹³ I know the hymn selection was well-chosen if I hear someone humming or singing the hymn afterward. A list of such hymns used for this function in the last six months is found in the appendix.

The benediction has a sacramental quality. According to UMC rubric, it is to be uttered by the pastor on behalf of Christ.¹⁴ In local practice the benediction is frequently preceded by an extemporaneous prayer, which also has the quality of a charge, for which reason members may stand with their eyes closed. However, the rubric states that the benediction is addressed to the people, not to God, so that pastor and people should be facing each other. My usual sequence is to offer a brief charge followed by benediction, with my eyes opened, with outstretched arms and palms in semi-raised position toward the congregation, because this is declarative speech. Still most congregation members keep their eyes and heads bowed in reverence. As one older member stated, “This is what we were taught since Sunday school.”

Immediately following the benediction, the liturgist invites the congregation to be seated again for the postlude, after which there may be a final announcement and invitation to the fellowship time. Of the interviewed respondents, over half like to adjourn immediately to coffee fellowship, which is on the first floor, while about a quarter of them stay to talk in the sanctuary, and a small minority depart immediately.

Service After the Service

Theologically, the liturgy does not conclude with the benediction. While a textual reading of the liturgy might say that the service is concluded with the last note of the postlude, from the perspective of hospitality, the postlude is only a transition. Fortunately, the current Book of Worship recognizes that worship continues beyond the formal

¹⁴ *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, 31. A local unspoken policy is that if the assigned pastor is absent, another ordained clergy is requested to speak the benediction.

parameters of the stated order. “Like the Gathering, the Going Forth is an act of corporate worship as long as people are still with other people in the place of worship.”¹⁵ In fact, the sending rites, including the postlude music, should help to transition worshippers from the liturgy of the gathering to the liturgy of the world, the continuity of worship beyond the gathering. Members are encouraged to continue acts of hospitality as they linger to meet and greet one another in the sanctuary or downstairs while sharing coffee and tea.

As pastor I make myself available in the congregational space to talk and pray with members afterward. The bulletin states that anyone wanting prayer with the pastor can come forward after the benediction to do so. While in my first years I would dutifully stand at the exit through the lift lobby, as most people exit that way, I have more taken a more diffused approach, often finding my way to the rear to catch those people who might exit by the rear doors, while encouraging my assistant pastor and any guest preacher to greet people at the main door. Often there are immediate conversations and prayers that take place before I reach any one of those points. Someone wants prayer for a sick parent; another wants to talk about baptism dates; another about an upcoming retreat. I may linger in the worship space.

Most members adjourn to the coffee and tea fellowship. It previously was held one floor down in a large classroom that accommodated mostly standing room. In the last year we moved to the a patio-like area on one side of the ground floor kitchen. It has more table space where now groups gather for more extended conversations. Because it opens up the carpark, it is a better transitional area for the service after the service or the liturgy of the world.

¹⁵ United Methodist Book of Worship, (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992),

C. Ritual Dynamics of the Sending Rites: Embodied Knowing and Ritual Mastery

What difference does a closing hymn, a benediction or any other ritual farewell make? From the standpoint of hospitality and definitely from the standpoint of mission, the end of the Sunday service is not be a *terminus ad quem* with no connection to what follows.¹⁶ I had suggested in a previous section that ordinary departures at least imply an extended hospitality in one of three ways: a certain reunion, a deferred reunion or a dispersed reunion. As Clayton J. Schmit implies by the title of his book, *Sent and Gathered*, the final “sending” is not simply the conclusion of an isolated act, but a transition from one set of activities to another set of related activities in another context¹⁷ It is a movement from the gathered worship to the dispersed worship in the world throughout the week. Even though community members may not see each other during the week, their actions have been patterned by the imprint of being in the community.

Sending Rituals Foster the Embodiment of Hospitality

Recalling Ronald Grimes’ definition of ritualizing, it should be noted that in the process of the founding of ritual space (or emplacement), the ritual participants are also grounded in that ritual environment.¹⁸ It should feel natural. Schmit’s use of the musical metaphor of a 4-beat measure to describe the forward movement of liturgy, also draws

¹⁶ So even Barth understood the nature of the church as “apostolic” can never be “an end in itself” but only as it exists as a “herald.” Church Dogmatics IV.1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936-1975), 725.

¹⁷ Clayton J Schmit, *Sent and Gathered: A Worship Manual for the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2009).

¹⁸ Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*. 3rd ed., (Waterloo, Canada: Ritual Studies International, 2010), 61.

attention to its embodiment. The downbeat begins the measure, and the fourth beat anticipates the next measure. While elements of gathering begin with adoration, the sending, though brief, anticipates the next 4-beat measure, which involves action in the world.¹⁹ Put another way, the liturgical sending involves a tension between an inward centrifugal pull and an outward centripetal push. Schmit goes on to talk about worship in terms of modes of signification. My impulse in this study is to follow the upbeat into the next measure of bodily knowing.

In this section, I draw from the field of ritual theory with support from current thinking in neuropsychology to argue for the capacity of bodies to know and remember. As an example, a TV advertising campaign for the recent SEA (Southeast Asia) Games hosted by Singapore, featured a blindfolded basketball player shooting baskets. The caption reads: “When you practice enough, your muscles develop eyes.”²⁰ Ritual theorists and liturgical scholars also recognize a similar capacity in bodies. They use expressions like ritual mastery, embodied knowing, kinesthetic process or grounding to explain how individuals are shaped in and through ritual environments in ways that can be transferred to other environments. Corresponding to the theory of ritual mastery whereby ritual actors become habituated in a particular way of doing things, recent research in the neurosciences have proposed the theory of neuroplasticity, whereby the brain is able to restructure itself through various practices.²¹ What is important in all of these theoretical positions is to

¹⁹ Clayton J. Schmidt, *Sent and Gathered: A Worship Manual for the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2009), 50 et passim. He uses a four-beat measure, but one could as well talk about a three-beat measure or some other system of

²⁰ <http://mustsharenews.com/sea-games-basketball-ad/> (accessed 16 May 2015).

²¹ John A. Teske, “The genesis of mind and spirit.” *Zygon* 36, no. 1 (March 1, 2001): 93-104. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed April 16, 2015), 95. See also the same author,

know how the body catches the rhythm of hospitality in one ritual context, such as worship, and then embodies it in the next, whether it be the coffee fellowship or the work place.

Catherine Bell builds on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of "practical mastery,"²² a system of schemes acquired in the process of bodies interacting with structured environments. Through regular ritual-like interactions, bodies become ritualized, having acquired a certain bodily disposition, or habitus (deep-rooted attitudes), that can then be reapplied in meaningful ways to the same kind of environment.

"The specific strategies of ritualization come together in the production of a ritualized socialized body, a body with the ability to deploy in the wider social context the schemes internalized in the ritualized environment. The ritualized social body, therefore, is one that comes to possess, to various degrees, a cultural "sense of ritual."²³

This practical mastery, according to Bourdieu is like the difference between a foreigner trying to find her/his way in new territory by reading a map (or more recently with a GPS devise), and a local person who can tell you where to go according to the lived natural landmarks.²⁴ The reading of the map requires a conscious effort of reading, analysis

"Neuromythology: brains and stories," *Zygon* 41, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 169-196. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed April 17, 2015); David Perlmutter, "Making New Connections: The Gift of Neuroplasticity," *Integrative Practitioner*, <https://www.integrativepractitioner.com/article.aspx?id=17481> (access 17 April 2015), who has reviewed the literature in correspondence with his own experience as a physician; Kirk Bingaman, "The Art of Contemplative and Mindfulness Practice: Incorporating the Findings of Neuroscience into Pastoral Care and Counseling." *Pastoral Psychology* 60, no. 3 (June 2011): 477-489. Religion and Philosophy Collection, EBSCOhost (accessed April 16, 2015), who says that a deepening and evolving spiritual practice will further one's development far more than holding steadfastly to a particular set of beliefs and/or doctrines;

²² Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1977), 162-3.

²³ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 107

²⁴ Bourdieu, *Outline*, 2.

and transference to the actual world, while the sense of the local guide developed largely unconsciously over a period of time living in direct relationship with that world.

Practical mastery makes possible “an objectively intelligible practice and also an objectively enchanted experience.”²⁵ Bell prefers the phrase “ritual mastery” over “practical mastery” to express how embodied knowing occurs in the process of ritualization. Like the local resident who naturally comes to know the terrain, so the person regularly participating in ritual activity comes to know implicitly how to behave, not only in the immediate ritual context, but potentially in other contexts as well. Mary McGann has observed the power of ritual mastery in her study of an African American church in San Francisco: “Ritual action... impresses the very strategies a community enacts on those who participate, and in so doing, empowers them to live in the world in particular ways.”²⁶

To privilege the action of bodies counters assumption that Christian worship is only about words and disembodied concepts, with bodies waiting passively for the application of instructions. But hospitality cannot leave the body behind. Our bodies are not only symbolic functions of liturgy, but also tangible organisms in the sharing of space, with the vital senses of “taste, smell and touch as well as sight and hearing.”²⁷

Worshippers are engaged meaningfully in bodily ways, even if they are just sitting in the pews, gazing forward, sometimes upward, sometimes downward, listening to

²⁵ Bourdieu, *Outline*, 2, 4.

²⁶ Mary E. McGann, *A Precious Fountain: Music in the Worship of an African American Catholic Community* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004), 258. See also Louis-Marie Chauvet and Francois Kabasele Lumbala, *Liturgy and the Body* (London: SCM Press, 1995), viii

²⁷ Chauvet and Lumbala. *Liturgy and the Body*, viii. Similarly, Don Saliers has written about how worship should senses toward awe, delight, truth and hope, in *Worship Come to Its Senses* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996). See also Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember: Themes in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 1989, 72.

traditioned words, occasionally standing and engaging the respiratory system to join others in oral prayers and music-making. The body is engaged with other nearby bodies in the mutual shaping of bodily attitudes in the shared space. Though a worship context may assume that bodily action is fostered by a textually mediated “face of receptivity,” such action is not to be ignored in the absence of textual and official warrant.²⁸ Indeed, there are neither attitudes nor values without strategic bodily awareness, posture and movement. Courage is of no value if not embodied in courageous acts, nor can hospitality be a disembodied value, but must necessarily be acted out. As theologian Ted Jennings has observed, “the body minds itself” like the movement of a trained dancer or the fingering technique of an expert pianist.²⁹ In both cases, learning requires mental and bodily engagement, but once the basic skills are learned the practitioner is freed to expand on the basic skills to develop more creative levels of expression that can be presented in larger spheres.

These theories of ritual mastery and embodied knowing apply to religious experience, as articulated by Andrea Bieler. “We ‘know’ through kinesthetic processes and express experience through embodied metaphors.”³⁰ This is to say first that the awareness of the world comes from the integration of our physical senses, not only of sight,

²⁸ Grimes, *Beginnings*, 56. This is born out for Grimes in the bodily actions of sitting for Zen meditation, which though often considered in opposition to mere ritual, “are thoroughly immersed in bodily processes... so that... no sense has an existence separated from any other sense.” Ibid., 90.

²⁹ Theodore Jennings, “On Ritual Knowledge,” *Journal of Religion* (Vol. 62, No. 2, Apr., 1982), 110, 115. As a musician who doesn’t practice as much as he should, I am often amazed at what my fingers remember when called on to play my flute, which I have come to refer to as *meine Zauberflöte*.

³⁰ Andrea Bieler, “Embodied Knowing: Understanding Religious Expression in Ritual,” in *Religion: Immediate Experience and the Mediacy of Research: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Objectives, Concepts and Methodology of Empirical Research in Religion (Research in Contemporary Religion)*, Hans-Gunter Heimbrock and Christopher Scholtz, eds., (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 39.

sound, smell, taste and touch, but also the bodily sensations of movement which are articulated with spatial and sensory language: up, down, standing, sitting, kneeling and bowing, to begin with. This ritual articulation of religious experience is born out through the observations of people engaged in worship in the Liturgical Service, particular as they gaze at the cross or the high ceiling, or walk forward and kneel for communion.

In a similar way, Bell articulates how the process of ritual mastery in specific environments works in “circular” ways between the ritual actors and the environment. The “ritual practices spatially and temporally construct an environment according to schemes of privileged opposition” while at the same time the environment works to “impress these schemes upon the bodies of participants”.³¹ So the patterns of behaviour that have been integrated in the body in one environment become portable in other environments. In a religious ritual, the schemata and metaphors, the actions are correlated to theological categories often mediated by the liturgical texts or pronouncements of the pastor. This relates directly to what can happen as members of a local community gather weekly and define a meaningful place through their ritual activities, aided or inhibited by their cultural conventions while negotiating various physical structures.³²

This behavioural shaping process corresponds with current views in neuropsychology, with specific regard to “neuroplasticity,” or “neurobehavioral plasticity.” Teske, in reviewing the literature, has pointed out how the neurons are able to

³¹ Bell, “Embodied Knowing,” 98-99.

³² I speak of correlation, not causation, recognizing the ambiguity of myth-ritual theories. While ritualization may embody social cohesion, it can be interpreted variously according to the social context and belief systems presented. See Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 183.

adapt and create new pathways throughout any learning process or when there has been damage to one part of the brain.

Cells and their interconnections proliferate, migrate, differentiate, and are pruned directly by experience with the external world, affecting synaptic connections, dendritic growth, neurotransmitter synthesis, and even vascularization. The result is a brain that is constantly being shaped, in structure and function, by its history of developmental interactions with the outside environment.³³

Brain development and related behaviour learning are not limited only by genetics, nor confined to early childhood hardwiring of the brain, but are “epigenetically constructed and dependent on extensive environmental experience for their emergence.” It is a process that can continue over a lifetime of intentional experiences and interactions with the social world, partly because the social world, with its schemata functions like a storage unit. Teske is particularly interested in how this functions in terms of spirituality. “The plasticity of epigenesis and development suggests that the processes needed to replicate human cognitive functions may depend upon the storage devices of culture. The replication of human spirituality, in turn, is likely to depend upon the storage devices of institutional religion.”³⁴

Indeed ritualization, as a habituated, is a way of storing and retrieving religious experience. Bieler has stated that it is through the “framing” of bodily sensations and practical consciousness “that we come to know who God is.”³⁵ Tracing two significant theories of embodiment, she describes how the bodily energy patterns shape our kinesthetic knowing of God by becoming embedded in two imaginative structures, “schemata” and

³³ Teske, “The genesis of mind and spirit.” *Zygon* 36, no. 1 (March 1, 2001): 93-104. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed April 16, 2015), 95.

³⁴ Teske, “The genesis of mind and spirit,” 96.

³⁵ Bieler, “Embodied Knowing,” 52.

“metaphorical projections.”³⁶ From physical experience come metaphorical projections, which also yield conceptual thinking, and are structured through schemata, which constitute a “recurring, dynamic pattern,” such as verticality, with the physical patterns of moving or looking up or down, or horizontal, such as moving around or greeting others. These patterns of acting become “performance scripts” that mould the body into particular ways of thinking and experiencing.³⁷ Such experiences are set apart by ritual frames. Different contexts will of course suggest different frames and scripts, with differences in posture, gesture, dress codes, or moments of heightened attention. Such acts as bowing, kneeling, and looking down, can shape a bodily attitude of humility before a transcendent authority. Thus, the practical mastery of entering or exiting the place of worship fosters the awareness of worshippers in relation to the divine host.

Being Grounded through Spiritual Formation

This brings us back to a simple pair of embodied spatial metaphors, founding and grounding, as articulated by Ronald Grimes. The place of worship is ritually given a foundation, a sense of authority, and the ritual actors, the worshippers, are grounded or rooted in that place. Having established the sense of a hospitable place, through ritually entering a space, with various courtesies, postures, vocalizations and observances, ritual actors are themselves shaped by those patterns of action. Their bodies now feel and move

³⁶ Ibid., 53-54, discusses the metaphor theory of M. Johnson (*The Body in the mind. The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, Chicago: 1987) and the kinesthetic theory of Marcia McFee (*Primal Patterns, Ritual Dynamics, Ritual Resonance, Polyhythmic Strategies and the Formation of Christian Disciples*, unpublished dissertation. Berkeley).

³⁷ Bieler, “Embodied Knowing,” 54-5, referencing Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 100.

with the rhythm of the ritual in that place, and are able to move with the same rhythm in other places as well. Ritual, according to Grimes is

sustained, value-laden attitude practice. In ritualizing, human beings discover, then embody and cultivate their worldviews, attitudes, and ethics. Rites are not only about confirming views that people already hold, but also about divining new ways to behave in changing circumstances.³⁸

Hence as worshippers bid farewell to the sanctuary that has welcomed them, they have been empowered through ritual action to engage in hospitable ways in the world, even if no more than to share a cup of tea with a stranger. The more they have been grounded through the sharing of liturgical space, the more able they are to bear fruit that benefits others. We should be reminded that important movements often rise and fall on the miniscule gestures of hospitality, as much as on the grand schemes of social engineers. This focus on the details of ritual and ritual space may seem like a far cry from the world's great social issues, for which the most obvious and important Christian vocations would seem to be social and political advocacy. Without denying the importance of such vocations, my concern here is to advocate for the processes by which individuals are formed into a community practice, by which those individuals inhabit a biblical narrative of love and hospitality. That is what it means to be in Christ, to bodily inhabit the same spirituality that empowered Christ's self-giving. More will be said about the process of spiritual formation in worship in the last chapter. However, in the next section of this chapter I offer a theological reflection on some of the implications of such a hospitable attitude for Christian mission and outreach.

³⁸ Ronald L. Grimes, *Rite Out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 135.

D. Theological Reflections on Liturgy, Hospitality and Mission

Worship in the Liturgical Service at Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church is framed by an entering into and departing from shared space, a place where hospitality is ritually enacted. That place is sequestered, set aside, left empty and reserved for particular encounters, shared with other like-minded bodies, those who found their way up stairs and lift to take refuge from the utilities of busy schedules. It is also shared with something that is at least symbolically accessible and embodied in the gathered people and in their actions of entering, greeting, touching, gazing and reverberating music. Within the very orientation toward the space and its furnishings, God is perceived immanently in the gathering, but also in transcendence, through the symbols and symbolic actions that point vertically and beyond the immediate reach of tangible space. In correspondence with the regular narrating of the Christian story, these embodied perceptions and kinaesthetic symbols reinforce a Trinitarian theology. To that embodied experience I now turn.

The Liturgy and the Mission of the Trinity

Trinitarian worship allows for the vital paradox of liturgical spirituality that beholds the divine as both transcendent and immanent. It is not centered just on one thing, but on the network of divine action. Whether gazing on flower arrangements and feeling the intimacy of the gathering, or gazing upward to the vertical cross and the “grandeur” of the high ceiling, reverberating with the organ music, the divine is recognized as high and lifted up, far off, and unknowable, as well as nearby and intimately accessible. Both the proximate and distant experiences of divinity constitute the face of receptivity before whom formative gestures are enacted, and which, like the upbeat of the 4/4 measure, leaves

actors anticipating the next step. Like the next beat in the musical bar, this next step is always a step of faith, trusting in both the continuity of the movement and the companionship of others along the way.

Worship in Liturgical Service uses hymns, prayers and other texts that follow the traditional language of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For purposes of baptism and membership classes, I collected a sampling of those texts which can be found in the appendix. The point here is that the symbols and symbolic actions of ritual action are reinforced ideologically by such Trinitarian worship texts:

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning,
is now and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen³⁹

While much of Trinitarian theology seems arcane, I seek to explain the practical nature of the Trinity for illuminating the experiences of both early and modern Christians. “The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for Christian life”⁴⁰ Theologians distinguish between immanent Trinity (the relationships between the persons of the Godhead – who God is in God’s self) and the economic Trinity (pertaining to revelations and action of the persons of the Trinity in relation the salvation of the world). LaCugna has used the latter to focus on the relational nature of God and the

³⁹ When I began pastoring this congregation in 2010, the tradition of singing this Lesser Doxology in the Meineke setting was inherited from the Hokkien Service, though usually after a responsive reading of the psalm. I have slowly changed the pattern, to recite the psalm with contemporary antiphons, and to use a spoken Trinitarian doxology after the invocation collect.

⁴⁰ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 1.

ways in which people are shaped according to that relational nature, while criticizing the history of attention to the former.⁴¹

The actions and observations of LS worshippers recognize both divine transcendence in the mysteries of distance and silence, as well as the divine immanence in the gathering, the shared spaces, the vibrations of song in the body, the touch and eye contact. These embodied signs correspond to verbal reminders of divine immanence in Christ who came in the flesh and of a divine progenitor in creeds and prayers directed toward “Almighty God.” Yet in the midst of this, they are sharing space with each other, and called into acts of ministry and mission.

For Simon Chan, who has occasionally preached at LS, the church is more than just a fellowship of rationalists, but a manifestation of the Trinity. “True worship is the enactment of and participation in the Trinitarian economy of salvation. It is the ‘upward’ movement of the church in response to the ‘downward’ movement of the Trinity.”⁴² Chan’s particular emphasis is on the work of the Holy Spirit, the relational power that engages and draws people together, empowering what the Orthodox call “synergy.”⁴³ Through liturgy, the divine Spirit constitutes the gathered people as the body of Christ in continuity with the mission of God. “Thus the Church is a *leitourgia*, a ministry, a calling to act in this world

⁴¹ This is a contentious subject that I will leave to better scholars. As one example, Singapore systematic theologian, Simon Chan critiques LaCugna and others for neglecting the doctrine of the immanent Trinity in their zeal for the economic Trinity.

⁴² Simon Chan, “The Holy Spirit as the Fulfillment of the Liturgy,” *Liturgy* (30:1, 2015, 33-41, DOI: 10.1080/0458063X.2014.952595, accessed 20 May 2015), 33.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 37.

after the fashion of Christ, to bear testimony” to God’s reign.⁴⁴ While liturgy may appear to have a parochial cultic nature with an inward and heavenly oriented journey, that movement is for the purpose of sharing the life of Christ in order to become life for the world.

Ritual participation in the liturgy shapes the character of the worshippers, even though they may be unconscious of the symbolic nature of the experience. Their attitudes are moulded by the various symbols to envision God as near at hand, and also as the Almighty, who is high and lifted up.

But if this sacramental perspective has lost some of its invitational draw, it may be related to a loss of transcendent perspective, and a corresponding loss of boundary markers between inside and out. Miroslav Volf has suggested that the good and religious people are often the most exclusive, and that those who most promote inclusion often end up fostering the most exclusionary societies.⁴⁵ European and American societies and ethics are often held up as models for developing economies and nation states around the world. But Volf, pointing to a history of European colonial subjugation and exclusion of non-Europeans, beginning with Africans and native Americans, suggests the appropriateness of the Nietzschean phrase, “The harm the good do is the most harmful harm.”⁴⁶

The sending rites should not blind worshippers to the real boundaries they are crossing. As they stand to sing a hymn, and to hear a charge and a Trinitarian blessing,

⁴⁴ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*. 2nd rev. ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973), 25.

⁴⁵ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996, 58, et passim.

⁴⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One is*, Translated by R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1979), 100; cited by Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace*, 61.

they are offered clues to this next step. The benediction, after all, is not a blank check for heavenly perks. It is a summons to participate in worldly engagement, but the people must be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves. At the conclusion of the worship service the faithful are sent forth in terms of God's mission. But what is the nature of that mission? Is it a religiously motivated imperialistic task, just as empires have conquered under the divine names of Assur or Marduk or Caesar or American freedom?

Mission and Colonialism

From an institutional perspective, the connection between hospitality, liturgy and missions may not be obvious. While the many connections with worship and hospitality have already been made, the question remains, what has worship and hospitality to do with missions? In fact, given contemporary charges against the colonizing tendencies of the Christian missionary enterprise, it may be easier to talk about the inhospitality of missions.⁴⁷

After I arrived in Singapore as GBGM mission personnel, along with my wife, Dr Yu Chin Cheak, and son, I was sometimes asked why Singapore still needed western missionaries. The question implied that I was not only an outsider, but also held with suspicion as an intruder, an unwelcome guest, for whom the actions of hospitality must be offered begrudgingly. And since Singapore is no longer a British colony, it is no longer

⁴⁷ In my earlier travels in Bolivia with members of the California-Nevada Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, I learned the Spanish expression, "la Biblia y la espada" (The Bible and the sword) as an indigenous perspective on the Spanish mission movement which came with the Sixteenth century Spanish conquistadors. Methodist Bishop, Mortimer Arias, laments this problem while also reappraising God's reign in *Announcing The Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984). C. S. Song has also written critically of the western mission enterprise in *Theology from the Womb of Asia* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 123-129.

under obligation to accept unwanted guests, even though, in fact, about one quarter of its population are foreign workers. My initial response to such queries was that, though Singaporeans Christians are now probably more efficient at saving souls and planting churches than Americans, I had been asked to come alongside to assist with leadership development and training. The exchange demonstrates a history of assumptions about Christian mission, which in many parts of the world was associated with colonial expansion. Indeed, Christian mission work in Southeast Asia can be traced alongside the various colonial movements, in which the gospel may have been experienced less as an expression of divine hospitality than an ideology of submission.

Protestant attention to Southeast Asia began with the Dutch conquest of the coastlines of Malaysia and Indonesia in early seventeenth century, but Roman Catholic presence had arrived a century earlier with the Jesuit, Francis Xavier, and the Portuguese settlements which became more integrated with local populations in cities like Malacca and Macau.⁴⁸ The initial Protestant mission in Singapore in the early nineteenth century was little more than a support for the British colonial powers whose primary interest in the region was economic and political, to provide raw material for the homeland and a political foothold that was already dominated by the Portuguese and the Dutch.

The Methodist missionary enterprise began in 1885 with the arrival of group of American missionaries who were already working in India, including James Thoburn and

⁴⁸ Recent evidence suggests far earlier Christian presence, if one will allow for non-Chalcedonian Nestorians, who may have come along with Persian traders as early as the Seventh century. See John C. England, "The earliest Christian communities in southeast and northeast Asia: outline of evidence available in seven countries before AD 1500," *Missiology* 19, no. 2 (April 1, 1991): 203-215. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed April 24, 2015). Other colonial religious imports to the region would include Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, which is a discussion completely beyond the scope of this project.

William Oldham. Partly in line with their predecessor, John Wesley, their approach was to couple church planting with social institutions, in this case, schools for the sons of established Chinese families who wanted them to be able to work with the colonial government. In addition, the paying schools were there to help the churches become independent of foreign support.⁴⁹ Although the Methodist mission encouraged indigenous leadership, its establishment followed a largely western institutional framework, from the formal establishment of the first church (Wesley Methodist), to the use of a western organizational structures, the Methodist conference structure.⁵⁰ This was largely controlled by western missionary leaders. Change from a foreign-controlled mission church was sped up after the 1940s when Singapore was occupied by Japanese forces, and many of the foreign leaders were imprisoned.⁵¹ The Methodist Church of Malaya and Singapore became autonomous in 1968, and the same year the first local Bishop was elected, Yap Kim Hao.⁵² Over the next 40 years the foreign missionary influence dwindled while the MCS grew to 40 local congregations.

⁴⁹ Both Thoburn and Oldham were influenced by the Methodist missionary and evangelist, William Taylor (d. 1902) who pioneered self-supporting indigenous churches so that they need not to be dependent on, nor tied to the mother churches in a foreign land. See Earnest Law, *From Mission to Church: The Evolution of The Methodist Church in Singapore and Malaysia: 1885-1976* (Singapore: Armour Publishing, 2008), 2, et passim.

⁵⁰ To his credit, John Wesley promoted a conversational framework, "Christian conference" as the basis of the organizational structure to which all preachers belong. However the reality tends to be very business-like.

⁵¹ While resentment still remains among some older Chinese who experienced severe brutalities under the occupation, the fact of the occupation served as catalyst for several new movements, including the formation of a union college, Trinity Theological College and the push for autonomy of the Methodist church.

⁵² Earnest Law, *From Mission to Church*, 238.

Studies in postcolonial theory have sought to unpack the codification of knowledge that has gone along with a history of western colonialism, and yields wisdom for those who seek to come alongside former colonized people as equals or even helpers. “Postcolonialism calls us to adopt a more holistic interpretative perspective, that is, to interpret biblical and Christian tradition... by exploring how these traditions reinforce social structures of injustice.”⁵³ Letty Russell, who cites the postcolonial work of Chinese American theologian, Kwok Pui Lan, was deeply concerned that churches consider the larger vision of the mission of God, and urged non-western groups to articulate their own categories to counter western dominated theology.⁵⁴ So why, indeed, would Singapore Christians need any more western missionaries?

Mission as Hospitality

In modern pluralistic societies we need models for the church in which the divine hospitality is encountered in worship, and embodied in mission as worshippers practice hospitality. My proposal is that the church’s missionary endeavour be seen as a function of mutual hospitality as it is experienced and practiced by the gathered and sent community. Even as people depart from the weekly gathering they go like seeds on the wind, embodying an extended hospitality. The faith community’s externalizing activity should

⁵³ Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God’s Welcome in a World of Difference* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox, 2009), 36.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 32. Just as western style democratic institutions do not always result in western style governments, so westerners should not assume the emergence of theologies attuned to western academic liberalism in every postcolonial situation. Singaporean scholar, Simon Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Grassroots Up* (Downer Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2014), 28, et passim, has made it a point to explore “grassroots” theology among the common people in Asia. As a Pentecostal theologian in touch with the indigenous Asian spiritual and social movements, he considers himself at odds with western “elitist” theologies which have hijacked the World Council of Churches.

be framed by and emerge through the experience of hospitality in worship, and any mission activity that is not hospitable should be questioned.

Unfortunately, the conventional western mission thrust has been viewed separately from liturgical movement. In 1966, J. G. Davies observed that the academic fields of liturgy and missiology were completely disconnected, the one more inward looking, focused aesthetics and history of worship, while the other more extroverted, eschewing the niceties of formal liturgy as irrelevant in the face of social and “kingdom” imperatives.⁵⁵

My own personal experience resonates with this dissonance between the aesthetics of the gathered community and the rugged image of the pioneer that lured me to go beyond those community boundaries. Nurtured in a small town Methodist church in the 60s to value the music and drama of worship, I also felt a discord in the growing awareness of economic distress and racial violence in America’s inner cities, as well as in the protest movements over a “war” in Vietnam. I was almost simultaneously caught up in movements for reaching out to homeless and hungry people and the vibrancy of the “Jesus People” movement. However, while many of my peers moved into the growing independent churches of the 70s, I was drawn back to my own Methodist roots, but with a difference. What previously was only about aesthetics came to have the dimensions of encounter. I discovered that the Christ I encountered outside of church, on the streets and coffee houses, had always been present in the church, in the sharing of bread and the wine.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ J.G. Davies. *Worship and Mission* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 16-17.

⁵⁶ Actually unfermented grape juice, as American Methodists were supposed to be tea-totalers.

Methodist history also reflects a tension between free church evangelicalism with its emphasis on missions, and also high church sacramentalism.⁵⁷ John Wesley's emphasis on Christian experience and holiness fostered a mission orientation that did not distinguish global mission from parish ministry. "I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation."⁵⁸ In his global extension of parish ministry, holiness was evidenced not simply as inner piety but as "social holiness," lived out in communal ethics.⁵⁹ In the early stages of eighteenth-century Methodism, Wesley encouraged the Methodists to return to their parish churches on Sundays where they would be immersed in the sacramental spirituality of the Sunday prayers and Eucharist. However, the parish priests were often "overwhelmed" by Methodists seeking communion.⁶⁰ While encouraging personal piety, the Methodist movement was also engaged in acts of mercy and justice, establishing schools, clinics, and homeless shelters. Theirs was a sacramental piety, whereby worship recognized the face of receptivity that inspires a sharing of space.

As a priest, Wesley recognized that this holiness was formed in the liturgy:

All the Liturgy of the Church is full of petitions for that holiness without which, the Scripture everywhere declares, no [one] shall see the Lord. And these are all

⁵⁷ See Singapore pastor, Lorna Lock-Nah Khoo's published doctoral dissertation, *Wesleyan Eucharistic Spirituality: Its Nature, Sources and Future* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2005), in which she argues that the Eighteenth century Methodist revival in England was as much a Eucharistic revival as it was an evangelistic revival.

⁵⁸ John Wesley, "Journal" June 11, 1739, Works. Jackson V 1. 202. CD version, Franklin, Tenn: Provident House Publishers, 1995)

⁵⁹ John Wesley, "Preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems" 1739, Works of John Wesley. Jackson V 1, CD version, Franklin, Tenn: Provident House Publishers, 1995) 322.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1.

summed up in those comprehensive words which we are supposed to be so frequently repeating: "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name."⁶¹

Evidence for Wesley's regard for the liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer* is born out by the fact that in 1784 he sent an abridged version of it to America as a guide to those forming the new Methodist Episcopal Church.⁶² By the middle of the next century Methodism was well-rooted not only in America, but also in South Asia and was building steam for movement into other parts of Asia, including Singapore.

For the past 14 years I have participated in that mission legacy that established Methodist schools and churches in Singapore since 1885, but I am also aware of multiple levels of crisis within that legacy. First there is the ongoing challenge of an Asian church that remains part of a small minority among other religions, although that may be viewed as an opportunity as well. The greater crises have to do with a restricted notion of theology and a correspondent preoccupation with utilitarian success. The size of the building and number of occupants, along with the busyness of missions activities seems more important than in the quality of the people's witness and commitment to the way of Jesus. The missiologist, David Bosch, was critical of imperialistic "missions" agendas that are only interested in national and institutional expansion. In contrast he commended "the *missio*

⁶¹ John Wesley, "True Christianity Defended" Sermon 134, *Works*, 455.

⁶² Wesley's abridgement contained the morning and evening prayer, the Lord's Supper, lectionary, collect prayers for each Sunday, and the psalter. He did not include all of the psalms as he considered some too violent for Christian lips, and he also simplified the Christian calendar. The limited reception of Wesley's *Sunday Service* a generation later may speak more to the success of liturgical inculturation in American soil than to the outright rejection of formal liturgy, given Methodism's rapid expansion both in the American frontier and abroad. See Lester Ruth, *A Little Heaven Below: Worship at Early Methodist Quarterly Meetings* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 14.

Dei (God's mission), that is, God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate."⁶³

Indeed, Karl Barth has famously put that mission on the same level ontologically with the church. "Its mission is not additional to its being. It is, as it is sent and active in its mission."⁶⁴ Thus, Davies recognized a mutual relationship between mission and worship, in that worship "enables mission to keep its divine source constantly before it, [and] mission in its turn enables worship to be truly authentic."⁶⁵

As a function of the divine hospitality encountered in worship, mission can never be divorced from worship. A number of recent discussions have explored this connection, including Thomas Schattauer's *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission*. For him, "The liturgical assembly is the visible locus of God's reconciling mission toward the world. The seemingly most internal of activities, the church's worship, is ultimately directed outward to the world."⁶⁶ Schattauer calls his missional worship model "Inside out," in which worship itself, including the aesthetics of worship, is seen and experienced as the locus of God's mission, the *missio Dei*.⁶⁷ This "radical traditional" model contrasts with two other

⁶³ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Maryknoll, 1991), 10. Bosch has elaborated the theological shift toward *missio Dei* since World War II that has enabled a reconnection between worship and mission.

⁶⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936-1975), 725. Barth was critical of the church for be too "churchly" and not "worldly," meaning that it needs to keep its doors and windows open to what God is doing in the world. See Letty Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 90.

⁶⁵ J.G. Davies. *Worship and Mission* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 18. God's mission gets misplaced in progressive as well as evangelical discourse. Letty Russell recognized that in discussion with a doctoral student who based her work on Russell, yet had not mentioned anything about mission, even though Russell's own dissertation was about tradition and God's mission.

⁶⁶ Thomas H. Schattauer, ed., *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 3.

⁶⁷ Schattauer, *Inside Out*, 2-3.

models, “Outside inside” and “Outside in”. The “Outside inside” makes conventional distinction between worship as an internal domestic function which also sends a few brave souls out for foreign missions. “Outside in” refers to a present-day approach in which missions basically take over the worship service. Depending on the political position, worship may range from evangelistic events to a summons for social action and government advocacy.

In his proposal of “Inside out” worship, Schattauer opens up a vitally important way of being missional church with missional worship, where *anamnesis*, the gospel re-enactment, becomes a way of gathering the past and present into the hoped-for reign of God. The gathered community is both local and global, past and present, and inclusive of all creation, and engaging with culture in ways that break through the toxic environment of market-driven consumerism.⁶⁸

Similar proposals from the field of missiology link the experience of hospitality and the doctrine of *missio Dei*. Divine Word Missionaries, Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, recognize a built-in tension in the history of Christian mission between centripetal and centrifugal, inward and outward.⁶⁹ They propose a model of mission as “Prophetic Dialogue,” in consideration of the multiple shifts in Christian populations, both globally and theologically. This position is a synthesis of three strains of mission theology that are invited to dialogue with each other in order to foster the proclamation of good

⁶⁸ Ibid., 11, and passim.

⁶⁹ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P Schroeder, *Constants in Context* (Maryknoll, N.Y.:Orbis Books, 2004), 11.

news, the shaping of faithful communities and the witness to God's reign.⁷⁰

Similar to the notion of dialogue is the emphasis on mutuality in mission.⁷¹ It is a model that looks to a theology of economic Trinitarian mutuality as a guide, recalls the hospitable history of Christian mission and recognizes the diversity of the twenty-first-century church. The model of a missional theology of mutuality is the New Testament figure of Barnabas who was "a team player."⁷² For the sake of God's mission Barnabas encouraged the church to accept Paul, and for the same reason when it became necessary he let Paul go a different way. Mutuality is non-coercive.

These missional models are positive, but they must be rooted in worship, with the recognition of the calling to mission in each person's baptism, in prayer and contemplation, of seeking God's will and reign. As such it offers a commentary on Schattaue's liturgical model, whereby the movements and posture of mission are in continuity with the movements and posture of worship. Following Davies' lead earlier, the movement of mission also needs to feed back into worship, lest it become stagnant. Ruth Meyers, writing in a similar vein, points out that "missional liturgy" is not about techniques, or seeking to pack more into an already packed worship service. Recognizing the broader meaning of liturgy that is both cultic and ethical, she says that missional liturgy is done by missional

⁷⁰ Ibid., 284 and 384. "Prophetic Dialogue" recognizes the values of three other models: Mission as Participation in the Mission of the Triune God (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Conciliar Protestant); 2) Mission as Liberating Service of the Reign of God (Roman Catholic and Conciliar Protestant); and 3) Mission as Proclamation of Jesus Christ as Universal Savior (Roman Catholic and Evangelical Protestant). This mission model also bears similarities to the "Synthetic Dialogue" model of research in Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992).

⁷¹ Gloria E. Dharmaraj and Jacob S. Dharmaraj, *A Theology of Mutuality: A Paradigm for Mission in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: United Methodist Women, 2014).

⁷² Ibid., 81.

congregations that are engaged through all the elements of its life and liturgy – through community, hospitality, its symbols, its proclamation, intercessions, reconciliation, offering and thanksgiving.⁷³

By juxtaposing worship and mission, both are mutually enriched. If the problem of the missionary enterprise has been the inevitable tendency of missionaries to encase the good news of God's reign in their own cultural baggage, with their own exclusionary fabric, the liturgical participation in *missio Dei* offers the capacity for people to distance themselves from their own cultural exclusivity.⁷⁴ This occurs through the actions of sharing space with God and other strangers, as well as through impressions of transcendence, whereby worshippers understand the complete otherness of God. Even more, one must recognize that God's transcendence reaches beyond the doors and walls of our own exclusions, thus judging their inadequacies.

Letty Russell proposed four types of ecclesial structures as part of the World Council of Churches study on the missionary structures of the congregation.⁷⁵ Two are more centripetal, the "Family Type," which would involve a maximum of 100 people of mixed race, gender, age, residing together and focused on nurture and partnership with the local context, and the "Permanent Community Structures," which involves individuals living together under community disciplines and providing spiritual services, such as

⁷³ Ruth A. Meyers, "Missional Church, Missional Liturgy," *Theology Today* 67, no. 1 (April 1, 2010): 36-50. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed January 5, 2015). 36, and *passim*.

⁷⁴ This is similar to the missionary critique of C. S. Song, *Jesus and the Reign of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 47, et *passim*. For Song, Jesus' vision of God's reign is hermeneutical principle, ethical standard, theological foundation and eschatological vantage-point for understanding Jesus and his ministry.

⁷⁵ Letty Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 90.

retreats and spiritual renewal. Two other types are more centrifugal, “Permanent Availability Structures,” focused long term on particular community services, such as counselling, emergency shelter, and care for people with HIV/AIDS, and the other which is simply a limited time task force engaged with specific needs, which terminates once the purpose is accomplished. Each grouping has unique strengths for missional activities, while latter two are offer more concrete service and the first two are more inward oriented. If, within a region, several such diverse groupings can remain connected through network, then it finds resonance with the model of Bevans and Schroeder, which also incorporates Schattauer’s “inside-out” model of missional worship. Some individuals or task groups may be sent out to special projects, but every member is formed into Christ’ body for regularly engagement in God’s hospitable mission, which is the liturgy in both its cultic and ethical aspects.

Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church offers an interesting case along these lines. The English Liturgical Service is one worshipping community among seven. Like the Mandarin and Hokkien services, LS is so-call “traditional” or “liturgical” in its worship, while the other groups are largely contemporary. Each worshipping group also has various small group activities, education programs for children and youth. On top of that the whole church has numerous task groups dedicated to administrative duties, evangelism, education, missions activities and worship. As one chartered church, all the groups are, more or less, networked together through the church’s administrative structure and pastoral conversations, as well as some friendship and family ties that cross congregations. Each has its own identity and strengths, yet shares in the whole “connection.” Given competition for limited worship and classroom space, limited parking facilities, and the complexity of

the ecclesial structure, one may wonder how even the different groups can offer hospitality to each other or to the larger community .

The ecclesial model of Taylor Burton-Edwards suggests a valuable way of looking at such complexities. He compares the early Methodist movement and the emerging missional church, with specific regard to their synergistic networking.⁷⁶ Like emerging movement, the early Methodist occurred as a networking between several religious institutions, the local ecclesial bodies, whether the established Church of England or dissenting Puritan groups, and the various Methodist groupings, such as the society meetings, the class and band meetings, the quarterly meetings, and annual conferences. Society meetings entailed essentially preaching meetings, but with several periodic functions, the love feasts (a recovery of the ancient agape meals) and the watch-night covenant services, usually held at the end of the year. No one of these institutions or functions could have carried the full weight of the movement to spread “Scriptural holiness” through the land. All Methodists were expected to be part of the society meetings and were presumably incorporated into a class meeting and/or a band.⁷⁷ Wesley was also particularly concerned that the Methodists attend the parish church in order to receive communion, to recite the creeds and to avail themselves of the full range of prayers

⁷⁶ Taylor W. Burton-Edwards, “The church as network in early Methodism and the emerging missional church: worship, mission, and institutions in symbiosis” (Proceedings of the North American Academy of Liturgy, 2008), p 136-154. The ecclesial movement variously referred to as emerging or emerging missional church, is constituted not so much by a single institutional framework as by its networks between various large and small groupings and community organizations. The various components offer synergy for each other, not only talking about theology of mission and hospitality, but practicing even in the welcoming of people with different theological positions, so long as they will stay in the “conversation.”

⁷⁷ Class meetings functioned as general accountability groups, while bands had more intensive purposes for leaders, penitents and others who needed spiritual breakthrough.

(intercessions, petitions, confession and thanksgiving). The class meetings were the most missional of all the institutions because there each person was held accountable to their best intentions.

Given the strengths of these interconnections, Burton-Edwards, suggests that Methodism was strongest when it was constituted as a network, because each part had an important social function that contributed to the whole.⁷⁸ If the purpose of the church is for the sake of God's mission, and not simply about preserving its institutionality, then it is better to function as a network of mutual conversations. For Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church, with its complicated structure, the role of LS should be less about preserving its form and more about claiming and strengthening its liturgical and contemplative voice within the network.

The Christian church is by nature missional, as born out by the actions of the sending rite each week in which worshippers embody expressions of extended hospitality. As formed around the gospel narrative, the church is a traditional structure that is partly universal and partly adapted or inculturated in each context. In the concluding chapter I will further articulate this liturgical inculturation as the spiritual formation of hospitable virtues within each cultural context.

⁷⁸ Burton-Edwards, "The church as network," 140.

Chapter 4 The Hospitality of Worship and Liturgical Spirituality

The motif of enchantment that runs through landscapes, art, entrance rites and eschatological hymns is like a magic seed. In the fairy tale, Jack sold his mother's cow for a magic bean. Jesus in the gospels entrusted the mysterious growth of God's hospitable reign to a mustard seed. Worship is the regular practice of reenchanted ordinary space and turning it into a place of hospitality instead of hostility.

The reality seems to be that hostility reigns. Nations fight over land, and marginalized groups are rendered homeless, seeding next generation with more hostility. But homelessness is not just about those who have been physically displaced, but also for the privileged who may have a house, but have lost a sense of place.¹ With the disenchantment of place, the stranger who was treated with hospitality becomes the enemy hostile. Even houses of faith can become houses of horror and violence when people lose the capacity to see the divine in the stranger. Inclusivity may be advocated, adjudicated and even legislated, but such actions cannot erase the character of hostility.

Communities need to draw from their spiritual depths, like the tree tapping into deep ground waters, in order to find resources to spread hospitable branches over the deserts of hostility. This is the language of spiritual formation, the goal of which is to form virtues in persons and communities, not simply for personal well-being, but principally to establish enduring communities of shalom.

I have discussed a practice which ritually establishes the foundation of liturgical

¹ See Elizabeth Newman, *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 35-39.

space and grounds participants in that enchanted space. Such a practice fosters both a sense of identity in the worshipping community, and also makes permeable otherwise exclusive boundaries, so that others are welcome. The purpose of this chapter is to gather up the discussions on entrance and sending rites into such a practice of liturgical spirituality that bears within itself the geography of hospitality.

Liturgical spirituality as a branch of Christian spirituality, corresponds to liturgical theology, or what Don Saliers has termed “liturgy as theology,” an approach which is communally and ethically formative.² Following Aidan Kavanagh, he has asserted that worship is primary theology. “I argue that the continuing worship of God in the assembly is a form of theology. In fact, it is ‘primary theology,’ worship in all its social-cultural idiom is a theological act.”³

Set in the understanding of the divine as hospitable, liturgical spirituality is a dialectical theological movement, in which the primary experience of hospitality in worship engages with ongoing reflection on Christian tradition. This is not far from Wesleyan theological praxis, in which the primary experience of assurance holds the *sola scriptura* use of the Bible to account:

² Don Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 172. For further exploration of differing views of the connection between liturgy and theology see David W. Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima: What is Liturgical Theology*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2004).

³ Don Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 15. Catherine Mowry LaCugna has stated similarly in *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), p 257. This is a point of view that I bring to baptism and membership classes, inviting candidates not only to wrestle with the very rational method that has become known as the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral”, but also through the “fully conscious, and active participation” in the Sunday worship. See Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1984), 3. Kavanagh’s reading of the “law of prayer,” Prosper of Aquitaine’s expression, “*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*” (or *lex orandi lex credendi*) leads him to affirm that “worship conceived broadly is what gives rise to theological reflection, rather than the other way around.”

... the great practical truths of religion, the mysteries of the inward kingdom of God, cannot be fully discerned, but by those readers who have read the same things in their own souls. These cannot be clearly known, but by those who derive their knowledge, not from commentaries, but experience.⁴

The integrated hermeneutic role of tradition, reason and experience with scripture, sometimes called the “Wesley Quadrilateral,” has been hotly debated ever since the phrase was coined by Albert E. Outler.⁵ Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the eighteenth-century Methodist revival was part of the theological turn toward religious experience. The experience of assurance provided empirical evidence of scriptural truth and the work of the Holy Spirit.⁶

In this chapter I will first articulate the nature of liturgical spirituality in which hospitality is formed and takes up residence, and then make recommendations for cultivating that spirituality in faith communities like the Liturgical Service of Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church.

A. Worship as Spirit Formation: Embodying the Virtues of Hospitality

⁴ John Wesley, *The Christian Pattern; or Treatise of the Imitation of Christ of Thomas á Kempis*, an extract, *The Works of John Wesley*, XIV, Thomas Jackson, ed., 3rd ed., (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872, Reprint. Peabody: Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 208. As theological praxis, the idea of primary theology is not far from the critique of theologians like C. S. Song, *The Believing Heart: An Invitation to Story Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 13, who laments the captivity of doctrine to ecclesiology. My position is that that theological experience occurs within ordinary encounters, but, as people live in communities, theological reflection follows the shape of traditions.

⁵ For one review of this debate see Scott J. Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1995), 62, et passim. Wesley called himself a man of one book, but he read widely in current histories, science, theologies, spiritual writings, including Roman Catholic. He made such books required reading for his schools, and compiled a library of abridged works for his preachers.

⁶ Ibid., 94.

Theological reflection on liturgical spirituality needs to keep in focus the facts of embodiment, speech and symbol that are experienced in worship, and how they are integrated for the gathered community and the world. More than just a nice experience from which participants get charged for the week, worship is a school for shaping and forming persons according to the patterns of interpersonal encounters in worship. This formational process has been described as the synergistic relationship between the objective and subjective poles of the liturgy.⁷ As with any traditional ritual, there is a certain givenness to Christian liturgy, though it has a history of development. It corresponds to and serves as a retelling of the story of Jesus, which is a message of transformation based on interpersonal encounter.⁸ For worship to be formative, persons must respond to the story (objective pole) and participate (subjective pole) in its enactment.

Liturgical Spirituality as Encounter

As a sharing of space, worship is inherently about interpersonal encounters, between ordinary people and before the receptive face of God. Practiced regularly these encounters establish schema that comprise the interior life of liturgical spirituality. As such, liturgical spirituality is “that distinctive interior life of the spirit that is formed and nurtured by the church’s liturgy.”⁹ Such an interior or devotional life need not equate to a privatized faith and experience, for the goal of liturgical spirituality is about development or

⁷ Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology* (Downer’s Grove: IVP, 2006), 149.

⁸ Robert Webber sees worship as the gospel enacted. See *Worship: Old and New*. rev ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 73.

⁹ Philip Pfatteicher, H. *Liturgical Spirituality* (Valley Forge, Penn: Trinity Press International, 1997), ix.

formation of those persons into a hospitable community, the body of Christ, or the living temple of the Holy Spirit. According to Susan White, “In the liturgy, then, we are invited into a deep union with one another, which is achieved through a deep union with the God who is the ultimate source of our unity.”¹⁰

Worship songs offer clues to people’s experiences of God. Some extol divine virtues and invite the singer to participate in those virtues, like “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” which paints a musical and verbal icon whereby worshippers may enter and find rest in the divine shelter.¹¹ Others are prayers or praise which directly address God with either “I” or “We” language, such as “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” by Charles Wesley, or “Sanctuary” by John Thompson and Randy Scruggs. Unlike Martin Luther’s text, these two songs are invitations for the divine to take up residence in the worshipper. The voice in Wesley’s hymn is first person, plural, indicating that the divine residence is the gathered community, while the latter contemporary chorus is in first person singular, which may relate more to an evangelical strategy for personal conversion and sanctification.¹² Personal experience is important, especially with regard to the sharing of space. Even as

¹⁰ Susan J. White, *The Spirit of Worship: The Liturgical Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 61.

¹¹ Robert J. Goeser discusses Luther’s understanding of verbal icons in response to the Reformist iconoclasts, in “Luther : word of God, language, and art.” *Currents in Theology And Mission* 18, no. 1 (February 1, 1991): 6-11. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed May 10, 2015). See Brian Wren on hymn as metaphor in *Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2000), 377.

¹² See Brian Wren’s discussion of “I,” in *Praying Twice*, 184-185. James L. Brauer, “The Role of Music in Seeker Services.” *Concordia Journal* 24, no. 1 (January 1, 1998): 7-20. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed May 10, 2015). According to Brauer, music in seeker services is not about spiritual formation or content, but attraction, getting and keeping the attention of the seeker or pre-believer. Brian Wren, who emphasizes the importance of “beat” in contemporary music, also uses the language of inculturation to highlight how churches do need to reach out to current culture forms, but without “losing their identity” in *Praying Twice*, 153.

individuals gather for worship they are also discerning the presence of others, even the divine other.

The subjective or primary experience of worship is given structure by the traditional meanings of the objective pole. Both the verbal proclamation and the sacramental mystery are prominently placed in the ecumenical ordo, “Word and Table,” as the public manifestation of the divine subject. In the entrance, participants have encountered one another and engaged with numinous symbols of the divine, but at this point they are most confronted by the sacred Thou, the ultimate stranger who cannot be domesticated.¹³ To perceive another as “Thou” is to recognize the other subject gazing back at us, presenting an impenetrable density that can only be known through interpersonal revelation.¹⁴ I may know about some famous persons, but never personally know them from the crowd. Personal knowing can only occur through interpersonal participation, in the same way that one might engage mutually with personal friends or family. In worship this divine stranger engages people sacramentally as they encounter others in shared space through the elements of the liturgy. A fully participative liturgical spirituality, including the ritual sharing of space with God and other strangers is an antidote to the violent objectification that so often characterises a world in which human relations are reduced to instrumental “I-It” relationships.

¹³ Elizabeth Newman, *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 57.

¹⁴ The interpersonal language of “I-Thou” and “I-it” is drawn from Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans., Walter Kaufmann (New York: Scribner’s, 1970), 53 et passim.

This mutual relationality is often expressed in spatial metaphors in the Christian tradition as it has emerged from the New Testament.¹⁵ I highlight two important types of spatial metaphors: in the first believers are invited into the divine refuge; and in the second believers are host to the divine. Those in Christ, according to the New Testament letters, are those who once were far off, but have been brought near, who have now put on Christ and gained access to the household of faith. Those who are “baptized into Christ have clothed [them]selves with Christ,” thus breaking down divisions that previously separated so that they are now “one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:27-28). Thus, the entrance into worship is a gathering “in Christ,” an entrance into “the house of God,” or a procession into “the dimension of the kingdom.”¹⁶

A second type of metaphor depicts the divine presence seeking shelter within the midst of the believers, “Christ in you (or “among you”), the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).¹⁷ It is an insistent request: “I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me” (Revelations 3:20). The host into whose house people take refuge also takes up residence in the community. “But it is God who establishes us with you *in Christ* and has anointed us, by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit *in our hearts* as a first instalment” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22, italics mine). The Christian story and doctrine of the Trinity

¹⁵ See John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 57.

¹⁶ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*. 2nd rev. ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 26. Schmemmann's language alludes to Jesus' prayer that God's reign would be fulfilled on earth as in heaven.

¹⁷ For variant readings on ἐν ὑμῖν, see Andrew T. Lincoln, “The Letter to the Colossians,” in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. XI (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 615.

corresponds to that which is already intuited, that there is a divine presence, a transcendent other who is sacred host. There is also a divine presence which takes shelter in bodies and draws them toward each other into the gathering of other bodies. This enacts the story of the One who fully embodied the divine presence in history, even though rejected. The God who is proclaimed also corresponds to the experience of a divine host who welcomes and a divine stranger who is seeking refuge in the people.

As people gather for worship their primary experiences of numinous symbols may be correlated to traditional theological reflections on the Trinity.¹⁸ The one God is Creator, Progenitor, distant, transcendent, and largely unknowable except through divine revelation. Yet they still struggle against systems to encounter this God. They make a break in busy family schedules, rush through traffic in hot and humid weather, and even climb stairs if necessary to catch a distant glimpse, or hear an inspiring phrase attributed to God.¹⁹ The open space of the sanctuary where they seek the divine is also the place of hospitality where other people are also welcomed. Within the Trinitarian creeds, doxologies and prayers, this awareness of transcendent divinity has been called God the Father, or Creator or Almighty. Further reflection on this numinous experience, which implies a “wholly other,” both attracts and repels, like “the holy” of Rudolf Otto, the *mysterium tremendum* that fosters a sense of dread, yet is also “fascinating and attractive.”²⁰ The very apprehending

¹⁸ This correspondence between traditional theology and the symbolic experience may seem inauthentic, yet from the perspective of primary theology, very authentic. However, more field work needs to test these suggestions.

¹⁹ I do sometimes shake at the thought when I stand up to read scripture or to preach.

²⁰ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, John W. Harvey, trans. 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 12, 25, 31, et passim.

of this otherness, and the depth with which one can still truly connect, shapes how one endures and takes risks.

God is also found in the sharing of stories and interpersonal encounters that recall the particularity of Jesus' self-giving, to the extent of dying unjustly under the foreign oppressors. If transcendence is complete otherness, then this human form expresses another strangeness of God, who is rejected and despised, and yet invites all kinds of people, even tax collectors and sinners, to come and share a meal. The Trinitarian creeds, doxologies and prayers identify this person as the Christ, the Anointed One of God, especially present in a particular carpenter's son named Jesus. Through identifying with and welcoming this stranger who is also one of us, worshippers are shaped for readiness to welcome other strangers.

The God who is completely other and also strangely rejected in flesh and blood, is also experienced in the community whenever it gathers to re-enact the gospel. And in that re-enactment, the church itself becomes, through the power of the Holy Spirit, an ongoing sacrament of God's hospitality. The Trinitarian creeds, doxologies and prayers identify this experience as the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, who has come to draw all participants into the divine primordial dance.²¹

Liturgical Spirituality as Spiritual Formation

²¹ More will be said about the doctrine of *perichoresis* later in this chapter. For an imaginative use of dance as a cosmic Christian metaphor see C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

Christian worship engages subjects in personal experience, but it also establishes objective qualities like a school or training course. It is by nature formative. In the New Testament, the Pauline letters distinguish between being “conformed to the world” and being “transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Romans 12:2), and encourage a process of “walking” (περιπατεῖτε) by the Spirit which yields spiritual fruit, or virtues (Galatians 5). Spiritual formation involves elements of biological development and expanding capacities for interpersonal relationship. In James Fowler’s faith development theory everyone begins with faith as “the most fundamental category of the human quest for relation to transcendence,” which grows from undifferentiated through various stages, according to certain structural frameworks over a lifetime, yielding generative faith in maturity in old age.²²

Spiritual formation also involves a shaping process, as with a potter and a piece of clay or a sculptor and a rock. Marjorie Thompson’s definition speaks to a relational, shaping process that is emergent and spatial. “In Christ we are reshaped according to the pattern we were created to bear.”²³ The sculpting process takes place in the context of both an objective, external pattern, which is the community of Christ, as well as a subjective, internal potential, which is just as important because it derives from the divine image. The artist needs both a reference point for the sculpture, whether it be intuitive hunch or an actual model, as well as certain skills, habits and technologies characteristic of their craft. Similarly, spiritual formation needs a model as well as certain practices characteristic of

²² James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, new ed. (New York: HarperOne, 1995), 14.

²³ Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1995, 2005), 7.

the craft of forming and shaping the spiritual life. But what is it in worship that models spiritual formation? A text-based approach to liturgical spirituality offers three ways in which the regular engagement in the liturgy functions as school: first through hearing the scriptures read and preached; second through participation in the seasonal aspects of worship; and third, through hearing and participating in the Eucharist.²⁴ To these textual teachers I would add the process of ritual mastery, by which worshippers are not only hearing formative texts, but are also regularly embodying the non-verbal texts of the gathering in worship space.

Those who plan worship must not be limited to the subjective experience, as though worship were primarily about catering to certain fashions of musical expression or attraction, judged in terms of marketability. Indeed, worship is sometimes viewed as a set of songs before the sermon, the “preliminaries” which prepare audience for the main argument.²⁵ Without a clear understanding of the objective nature of worship, it can easily be reduced to a mode of expression instrumental to the sermon.

Byron Anderson criticizes this assumption of worship as merely subjective expression and seeks to reclaim the normative, objective function of liturgy.

I have been particularly concerned to explore the ways in which the church today tends to limit our understanding of the role of Christian liturgy to that of a means for a community’s ritual expression and, in doing so, obscures the normative and constitutive claims of the

²⁴ Philip H. Pfatteicher, *The School of the Church: Worship and Christian Formation* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1995), 90-3.

²⁵ After presenting a lecture on “The Dynamics of Worship Space” at a worship symposium, I was surprised by a contemporary worship team leader who approached me to say that he was confused because he thought that “worship space” referred to the time when the band plays. With the loss of sacramentality since the Reformation and Enlightenment, revivalists like Charles G. Finney could offer the view of Christian worship as no more than a series of “new measures” that have occurred over the centuries, but which are auxiliary to the preaching. See Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revival* (Albany, OR: Books For The Ages, AGES Software, Version 1.0 © 1997), 240.

liturgy for that community. Once this limitation is firmly in place, an understanding of the formative power of liturgy becomes more difficult for the community to retrieve.²⁶

If the gathering, with the songs and prayers only amount a time of effervescence, a warm up before the sermon, then the worshippers may never discover what that time has to teach them about sharing space and hospitality. Anderson argues that as a “constitutive and normative” catechesis that “unites past, present, and future in a pattern of meaningful action” for Christian faith communities, Christian worship is neither merely instruction for liturgical participation nor critical reflection on that participation, but is actually “a formative practice in its own right.”²⁷ As I have sought to demonstrate, the very actions of coming together physically in one place and engaging in socially bonding activities both constitutes and forms people in hospitality.

Formation According to Trinitarian Mutuality

The place and style of aesthetics in worship has often been contentious. Should the central visual point of the congregational space be an ornate pipe organ or the band? Or should all such musical accessories be carted out with the rest of the icons and idols? Such actions have occurred down through the centuries. Or could it be said that the very building blocks of worship as spiritual practice are in the aesthetics?

One school of thought, represented by Don Saliers, links aesthetics not only to worship as theology, but also to worship as ethics, by connecting the legacy of both John Wesley on the means of grace and Jonathan Edwards’ understanding of the religious

²⁶ E. Byron Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity: Practicing Ourselves* (Minneapolis, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 59.

²⁷ Anderson, *Worship*, 113-4.

affections.²⁸ It has already been observed in my context that worshippers gain awareness of the divine presence through participation in the space and aesthetics of worship, and that in that awareness they are also forming patterns of behavior.

Anderson further developed these connections, linking ritual and practice theories with the thought of George Lindbeck, the work on the economic Trinitarian theology that has followed Karl Rahner, and several social theories.²⁹ Anderson links the dialectical process of social construction of the self as a relational moral agent to the Trinitarian doctrine of perichoresis, by which the Godhead is mutually self-related, as a “schema” that affirms the “unity-in-diversity and diversity-in-unity” as a potential for all relationships.³⁰

This social understanding of the Trinity has in recent years been considered a practical doctrine, because the focus is less speculative and more on God’s dealings with humanity, captured in Rahner’s assertion that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity.³¹ The distinction between economic and immanent doctrines comes from scholastic theology that

²⁸ Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 171, et passim. Beside Anderson, others who have continued the connection include Gregory S. Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology*. Scarecrow, 1989, who more closely traces the theological resources of this connection, and Kendra G. Hotz and Matthew T. Mathews, *Shaping the Christian Life: Worship and the Religious Affections* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), who make more explicit the formation of the affections through the order of the liturgy.

²⁹ Anderson, *Worship*, 123-34. The theorists: social psychologist, George Herbert Mead, for whom the self is socially constructed especially through the sharing of conversation and gestures; the Scottish philosopher John MacMurray who identifies the self not as subject, the isolated individual of modern philosophy, but as agent acting and being formed in relation to others; and the developmental psychologist Robert Kegan who focuses on the process of meaning-making as a constant dialectical process of reconstructing the self in relation to the larger social environment.

³⁰ Ibid., 134.

³¹ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 2004), 22. See also Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, Trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1988); Catherine LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); and Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, trans. Margaert Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

emphasized the internal, psychological relations of the Trinity separate from the Trinitarian plan of salvation. God made known the mystery of salvation as a “plan (οἰκονομία) for the fullness of time” to reconcile all things in God (Ephesians 1:10). The economic Trinity refers to the history of God working the salvation of the world – God sending the Word, the Christ, incarnate in particular humanity and the Spirit gathering up and empowering the community of faith to be body of Christ.³² The inter-mutuality, or perichoresis, of the Trinity expresses that plan of salvation in relational language, “that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21).

The interpersonal nature of the divine is established in the ongoing process of communion, as “God in us, we in God, all of us in each other.”³³ Catherine LaCugna, in line with her understanding of Trinity as a “practical” doctrine, sees the practicality of perichoresis in terms of human relationships. “A relational ontology understands both God and the creature to exist and meet as persons in communion... God’s to-be is to-be-in-relationship, and God being-in-relationship-to-us is what God is.”³⁴ God is the pattern for human communion in both God’s inter-related self and also in God’s self-giving. Articulated or not, this has been a significant pattern in the aesthetics of worship, in songs

³² LaCugna, *God for Us*, 21. She has laid out the history of the Trinitarian thought from the Cappadocians to Aquinas in the west and Gregory of Palamas in Eastern Orthodoxy.

³³ Ibid., 229.

³⁴ Ibid., 250.

and other art forms, in ritual action that sometimes seems irrelevant and a “royal waste of time.”³⁵

The implications for corporate worship is that it is sacramental, or a means of grace, and not simply an attraction for drawing more crowds. It is essentially the way in which the people of God corporately participate in the life of God. We hear Jesus say, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20). The gathering itself communicates divine presence. “This understanding of sacramental practice permits an understanding of the Christian life as a pattern or complex of patterns ever forming, transforming, and emerging through regular participation in the ‘means of grace’.”³⁶ Worship involves “sacramental permeability,” whereby “physical matters and actions such as eating and drinking can become vehicles that make transparent the Holy One.”³⁷ Especially as people gather together with the expectation of “meeting Jesus” they will be alert not only to the windows into eternity, but also the influence of the divine communion in their own relationships.

But how does this really make a difference? How is participating in worship difference from going to a nice concert or musical, or nowadays it is common to attending a worship concert put on by a travelling music minister? The concert may be inspiring, but it requires little mutual participation. If worship is indeed normative and constitutive of life, then through the regular gathering for worship something is being formed. Christians

³⁵ According to Marva Dawn, *A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), society would be better off wasting time in worship.

³⁶ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 8.

³⁷ See Andrea Bieler, *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread and Resurrection* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 5, for an articulation of this expression for worship.

are being formed corporately into Christ, meaning the practicing body of Christ in each location, and also the identity of Christ is being formed in them. While it may be contended that what is being formed is simply one of many possible cultural identities, an underlying hope is that what is taking place is universally viable.³⁸

The identity that is being socially constructed, according to Anderson, is the theonomous self, an idea taken partly from LaCugna, about “the Christian person in relation to other persons-in-relation and to a relational God.”³⁹ It is the self as defined in terms of inter-mutuality of the economic Trinity, “a self that is neither self-determinative (autonomous) nor completely other-determined (heteronomous), but defined by the character of one’s relationship with God.”⁴⁰ For Anderson, this relational identity is formed according to the particular relational grammar in worship.⁴¹

Part of the value of this approach is to compensate for the tendency of modern worship theology and practice to over-emphasize a subjective, consumerist approach to worship. Rather there is an objective element in the formation of the self, which is the

³⁸ For the contention, see Gordon Mathews, especially his observation that we can’t go home anymore, because there are not longer any universal identities, in *Global Culture/Individual Identity: Searching for a Home in the Cultural Marketplace* (London: Routledge, 2000), 170.

³⁹ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 114. See LaCugna, *God for Us*, 290, 316.

⁴⁰ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 290, 316.

⁴¹ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 118-19, referencing George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 16. Lindbeck’s “postliberal” approach observes three ways religious doctrine might function: “Cognitive,” propositional, seeking objective truth claims, which can also be related to Enlightenment rationalism; second, “Experiential-expressive,” prioritizing the aesthetic, non-discursive, symbolic, and romantic notions of individual rights and feelings; third, “Cultural-linguistic” (Lindbeck’s approach) which more closely relates to the current state of postmodernity, which he also uses to critique modern individualism. Lindbeck’s position is not without serious criticism for promoting inflexible indoctrination, and attempting to keep religious communities forever trapped in a time-warped. See for example Mark Corner, “The nature of doctrine: religion and theology in a postliberal age.” *Modern Theology* 3, no. 1 (October 1, 1986): 110-113. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed May 27, 2015).

integrity of the Christian faith itself, and its symbols which are enacted in worship. Because worship is a set of ritual practices with a particular narrative, by which individuals develop ritual mastery for those and related contexts, the singing, listening, and other ritualizing constitute a linguistic or grammatical formula by which those individuals are formed according to the identity of the particular worshipping community. Traditions and doctrinal statements have value in those communities because they have become “communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action.”⁴²

Indeed the “flow” of worship begins to form persons spiritually, through a developmental “sequence” from seeing religion as external to a subsequent internalization of the religious content and framework. “Initially, a religious culture surrounds and holds us. As we practice this culture (and other cultures in which we are embedded), we internalize it in body, mind, and spirit. As we do so, the religion is no longer “other” but part of our very life and breath.”⁴³ The end of the process is the formation of identities with those religious schema.

In worship, while primary experience enacts hospitality, the ongoing secondary reflection on that experience is based on the Christian tradition. However, this Christian tradition itself has sometimes felt like a stranger, even riding along with the colonial oppressors, so that the good news proclaimed by mission movements has been received with the sword of the colonizers, or for that matter, with the top-down authority of ecclesial hierarchies. What does the spiritual practice of hospitality say about this problem? How can the valuable message of God’s hospitality be received and even take root graciously in

⁴² Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 119, quoting Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 18.

⁴³ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 120-21.

local cultural practices? Is there a way in which the Christian tradition and local experience can become mutual hospitality partners? I want to consider the liturgical missional model of inculturation as a window into an ongoing practice of hospitality.

B. Toward an Articulation of Worship as a Spiritual Practice of Hospitality

Inculturation: Mutuality of Tradition and Primary Theology

Liturgy as ritual is the act of transpiring, to use Grimes' language. It is more than text or a formula to be preserved. Rather it is always living, with a dynamic relationship between local culture and Christian traditions. Unfortunately, the relationship of Christian faith and local culture has not always been hospitable. The practices of colonialism throughout history have reduced and supplanted local culture with foreign culture. The Bible itself is a record of multiple layers of colonizing, including the record of an Israelite conquest and colonization of Canaan in the book of Joshua. One can also see in the same scriptures Israel's resistance to subsequent colonizing by various Mesopotamian nations, and later by the Greek and Roman empires. As has been noted earlier, modern western colonial efforts since the fifteenth century also imposed the colonialism on subject peoples. As Christian missionaries moved with the colonial enterprise, they needed to negotiate with the various cultures encountered. The history of Christian missions shows that local culture did not always fair well in this negotiation, such that the foreign view of the gospel was often taken *in toto*, essentially transcending any possibility of more culturally appropriate versions.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ See David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Maryknoll, 1991), 298 ff, for a tracing of the connections between Protestant mission and Western ideals, such as manifest destiny.

Missiologists have discerned multiple levels at which worship interacts with local culture, sometimes fusing with and sometimes transcending or even opposing local culture.⁴⁵ No matter what, it is impossible to engage in either mission or liturgy without rubbing shoulders with cultural contexts. From the perspective of hospitality, worship traditions should take those local cultural contexts seriously.

In recent decades a number of movements have converged to explore ways that Christianity can be appropriated more authentically in local culture. In the current of the Vatican II Council, Dominican scholar Anscar Chupungco articulated the process of liturgical inculturation that allows for maintaining the integrity of Christian tradition even while taking root in pre-Christian cultural forms, and avoiding the cultural acquiescence or loss of meaning involved in accommodation or acculturation.⁴⁶ The history of Christian faith has always adapted older traditions, from the integration of Jewish worship practices, to the changes that occurred within the Hellenistic encounters and the influx of new forms after the Edict of Milan. As the earliest mission movements were bound to hospitality, so the Christian message continued to find home in new cultures.

⁴⁵ For example, the Nairobi Statement, published by the Lutheran World Federation articulates four ways in which worship relates to local culture: Worship as Transcultural, Worship as Contextual, Worship as Counter-cultural, and Worship as Cross-cultural. "Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture, Lift Up Your Hearts, (<http://www.worship.ca/> accessed 15 August 2015).

⁴⁶ Anscar J. Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis* (Collegeville, Minneapolis: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 25. He observes that the Jesuits borrowed the term "inculturation" Protestant missionaries in Southeast Asia, in particular G. L. Barney, who had worked as a linguistic missionary with the Hmong people in Laos. http://www.moob.org/founders/dr_linwood_barney.htm (accessed November 4, 2009). As distinct from "enculturation," the process of being socialized, inculturation in this literature is a mutual process of being "grafting" and adaptation of foreign cultural forms to each other. Regarding inculturation, David Bosch highlights that "Christian faith never exists except as 'translated' into a culture," in *Transforming Mission*, 447.

Chupungco's approach includes three assertions, that cultural adaptation is an "ongoing process that is relevant to every country or region;" that Christian faith "cannot exist except in a cultural form;" and that "interaction and reciprocal assimilation" should be the norm between Christian faith and culture.⁴⁷

There are multiple examples of the need for inculturation, including the tension between liturgical symbols developed in the northern hemisphere and differing natural symbols at the equator and in the southern hemisphere. Liturgical practices and symbols that emerged in the northern seasons may feel out of place in the tropics and the southern hemisphere.⁴⁸

Another issue relates to traditional practices regarding death and ancestors, including the use of joss sticks, burning incense, observing Qing Ming (grave sweeping) or other rites for honouring the ancestors. For Southeast Asian Protestants, the issue of ancestral veneration, with the underlying cosmologies, remains an issue, evidenced by rituals for removing the family altar when someone converts to Christianity.⁴⁹ Lim Swee Hong observed how the nineteenth-century missionaries, seeing local practices as

⁴⁷ Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation*, 28-29, 37. Here is also makes a distinction between "inculturation" and "enculturation," which is another way of talking about socialization. Don Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 154, also talks about the liturgy being clothed in cultural language. Chupungco articulated at least three methods of inculturation, dynamic equivalence, creative assimilation, and organic progression, which will not be elaborated here.

⁴⁸ Australian worship scholars have recently raised such issues. See, for example, Clare V. Johnson, "Inculturating the Easter feast in southeast Australia," *Worship*, 78 no 2 (Mr 2004): 98-117, which points out how liturgical symbols of fire, light and water have different meanings when the natural seasons are reversed; and Carmel Pilcher, "Poinsettia: Christmas or Pentecost -- celebrating liturgy in the great South land that is Australia." *Worship*, 81 no 6 (Nov 2007): 508-520, which argues that liturgy that connects to its context will have positive ethical implications, including care for the earth.

⁴⁹ For a controversial recommendation to include such festivals within Christian festivals, see Greer Anne Wenh-in Ng, "The place of Asian resources in festivals and liturgies in Christian churches. (Symposium : Asian and Asian North American spirituality)." *Spiritus: a Journal of Christian Spirituality* 6 no. 2 (Fall 2006): 249-254.

incompatible with Christian teaching, sought to “transcend traditional cultural ties” which led to “the abandonment of traditional ties of family and existing community.”⁵⁰ The Chinese Rites controversy following the death of the Jesuit missionary Mateo Ricci disallowed the traditional practices of ancestral veneration among Chinese Christians.⁵¹ This influenced subsequent Protestant mission efforts, so that even now some LS members whose families of origin continue traditional ancestral veneration, are faced with difficult decisions when it comes to being baptized.⁵²

Unfortunately, many ecumenical rites which might have been bridges to local cultural practices, such as All Saints or Holy Saturday are largely ignored to allow for the steamroller of American pragmatic worship. During such observances the names of deceased are often lifted up reverently as part of “that great cloud of witnesses.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Lim Swee Hong, “Chinese, Tamil and English Congregations: Sunday worship of The Methodist Church in Singapore,” in *The Sunday Service of the Methodists*, Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, ed. (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1996), 219. C. S. Song, encouraging Asians to affirm their own cultural expresses, points out that “[c]ulture as a whole is none other than the manifestation of God’s creative power translated into actual forms and events,” in *Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Analysis* (New York: Orbis Books, 1975), 25.

⁵¹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 449. Bosch articulates this in terms of the “kernel-husk” idea that core gospel message. Voices from around the world have expressed similar concerns about the cross-cultural tension between local culture and Christian missionary influences. Batairwa Kubuya Paulin reflects on the ongoing debate among Taiwan Protestant churches, while proposing a constructive model of negotiation in “Conversion as Negotiation: Chinese Protestant Responses to Ancestor Related Practices,” *Asia Journal Of Theology* 28, no. 1 (April 2014): 119-136. Religion and Philosophy Collection, EBSCOhost (accessed September 3, 2015). Others have lamented the loss of local culture, from Korea, see Seung-Joong Joo, “A Traditional Thanksgiving Festival” in Charles E. Farhadian, *Christian worship worldwide* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 2007), 96-106; and from Africa, see Patrick Chukwudezie Chibuko, “Liturgical Inculturation: Proposed Pattern.” *AFER*, 40 no 4 (Ag 1998), 216-43; and Alexander Jebadu, “Ancestral veneration and the possibility of its incorporation into the Christian faith” *Exchange*, 36 no 3 (2007), 246-80.

⁵² This is an urgent pastoral reason for further research and articulation of Christian modes of ancestral veneration and familial loyalty.

⁵³ Others have already been reflecting on this problem. For example, the President of the Chinese Annual Conference of The Methodist Church in Singapore, Chong Chin Chung wrote his D.Th. dissertation, *Funeral rite for the Chinese Methodist Church in Singapore: The Task and Challenge of Contextualisation in*

Several years ago I was invited to help lead a general memorial service for families whose loved ones were inurned at a Methodist columbarium. It was to be on the Saturday before Easter. After consulting with several liturgically-minded colleagues, we decided to borrow from an Eastern Orthodox tradition which involves lighting candles. As we prepared for the memorial service, we felt some anxieties about appearing to be syncretistic with Buddhism or Taoism, which is background to many Singapore Christians. Current Singapore Methodist guidebooks advise against using candles in funerals for that reason. However, during the service we asked the participants to picture the loved ones gathered around the crucified Christ in the tomb, while he rests from the labors of the new creation, anticipating the day of resurrection. As we entered a time of prayer, everyone came forward to light candles. It may be the case that ancient liturgical practices are better able to bridge contemporary gaps.

Music is also an issue of inculturation. The Liturgical Congregation regularly uses the mostly western hymns of The United Methodist Hymnal, whereas the Contemporary Service uses music from Australia's Hillsong, or America's Maranatha or Integrity labels, all of which use western tonal patterns and musical rhetoric. A growing number of musicians are fostering musical inculturation, including Taiwanese ethnomusicologist, I-toh Loh, C. Michael Hawn and Lim Swee Hong, to name only a few.⁵⁴ In every continent,

the Chinese Society. The question to be raised in other settings is what similarities in spiritual cosmologies between Protestant Christian and non-Christian ritual can be used to continue honoring the ancestors.

⁵⁴ C Michael Hawn, *Gather into One: Praying and Singing Globally*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 72, and passim. Hawn provides a chapter on I-toh Loh, the general editor for the Christian Conference of Asia's hymnal resources, such as *Sound the Bamboo*, celebrates indigenous Asian Christian music.

indigenous Christians are writing their own music to their own rhythms and modal patterns.

55

The challenge is to reintroduce local culture to Christian communities steeped in transcendent or international liturgical forms that exclude local flavour. It is important to start by recognizing the essential hospitality in the liturgical actions of entering and leaving sacred space. We must pay attention to the symbols and symbolic action engaged by bodies in worship. In a dialectical approach to inculturation proposed by Philip Tovey, the divine encounter in worship is the antithesis to the thesis of the assembly entering worship with its assumptions.⁵⁶ The ensuing dissonance emerges in the synthesis, which is the assembly's resultant faith correction. When I did the Holy Saturday candle-lighting service, informal conversation afterward showed that prior fears of behaving in an unchristian way or of being syncretistic faded. Indeed they sensed the presence of Christ in a new way that strengthened their sense of comfort and hope in the resurrection.

Christian tradition, as transplanted from other cultures, does not have to remain hostile toward the local culture, but with careful inculturation, Singapore Christians may find God speaking to them from the thin places of their own culture.

Liturgical Formation for the Depth of Communities of Shalom

⁵⁵ A new resource was just published by the Methodist School of Music and the Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia at Trinity Theological College. *Let the Asian Church Rejoice* contains 135 choruses and hymns in English and Asian languages. Styles and musical modes vary from western contemporary to pentatonic and Javanese or Balinese Pelog (hexatonic).

⁵⁶ Philip Tovey, *Inculturation of Christian Worship : Exploring the Eucharist*. (Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 151. This dialectic derives from the work of Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1984) and Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Asheleigh E. Moorhouse, trans. Portland, Maine: The Faith Press, 1966).

Worship naturally evokes various emotions, especially when using local culture or natural symbols, which are pregnant with primordial meaning, like the intimate gatherings and lighting of candles to fend off an otherwise depressing long winter solstice night. But in Singapore, at the equator, every night is practically as long as the next, with almost equal periods of night and day. If worship, as primary theology, means encountering God in relation to lived contexts that evoke emotional responses, it also constitutes a school for training those emotions. Worship constitutes and forms a unique cultural framework with its own integrity and its own forms of development, which influences, shapes and transforms worshippers.

Just as the entrance into a household involves interpersonal encounters and transactions between a host and a guest, in which they recognize each other at some dynamic level as “I and Thou,” so also as people enter into worship there is a sense of being hosted. Worshippers have sometimes sensed this host, high and lifted up, filling the height and depth of the sanctuary, and at other times in the presence of others gathered or through the official representations of leaders. The point is that regular participation in the whole of worship establishes influential practices that shape the way participants think and feel. I have referred to this process as grounding or ritual mastery.

The depth of human feelings have sometimes relates to the psychological formation of disposition or affections.⁵⁷ The liturgical participation in religious symbols evokes feelings of reverence or awe when gazing on the cross, reciting the kyrie, or singing hymns

⁵⁷ The Eighteenth century American pastor, Jonathan Edwards, who studied the psychology of conversion also developed an understanding of the religious affections. See *Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. III: Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961). John Wesley wrote similarly using the language of holy tempers.

of praise, feelings of delight when gazing on the colors of the flowers, singing lighter tunes, or exchanging the peace. While these feelings are important, Don Saliers distinguishes between them and the “depth of emotion” that becomes evident only over time through repeated participation in the same symbols. “Only when connections are made in human existence and in our struggles to live the Christian life alone and together, can we begin to discern the way that the symbols form and express the Christian pattern of affections.”⁵⁸

There is a logic or grammar to the formation of those religious affections which can be correlated to the liturgical ordo, beginning with a sense of awe, which is a natural response of someone standing before an immense natural object, like the Pacific Ocean or a giant Sequoia tree in the mountains of California. In the presence of such an object that dwarfs the subject, “awe is disorienting,” in the sense of being both attractive and fearful, and it suspends one’s normal or preferred way of being in the world, especially on first encounter.⁵⁹

Religious affections as shaped in worship may foster the capacity for people to see particular objects as windows into the divine and objects of grace. As worshippers enter worship and report a feeling of grandeur the whole place becomes a kind of icon, a sacramental window into another dimension. Religious affections are such “when the ordinary objects and events of creation mediate the presence, power, and grace of God to us.”⁶⁰ The liturgical use of icons is more common in Orthodox and Catholic traditions, but

⁵⁸ Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 147. The condition of such repetition needs to be further studied in this context.

⁵⁹ Kendra G. Hotz and Matthew T. Mathews, *Shaping the Christian Life: Worship and the Religious Affections* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 14-15. Rudolf Otto’s observed how deep feelings evoked by numinous experience cannot be captured by rational explanation, in *The Idea of the Holy*, 31.

⁶⁰ Hotz and Matthew, *Shaping the Christian Life*, 18.

Protestants must also acknowledge that Christ “is the image (εἰκὼν) of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), and verbal images of God are endemic in protestant worship.

Religious affections relate to human nature as social beings. In contrast to modernist thought that asserts the primacy of the individual subject, the primordial experiences of being in family and community require the priority of focusing on social existence. “Because we are social selves, and not autonomous individuals, our identities are generated and shaped within a variety of communities,” hence, the church as an identity-forming community is counterpoised to the competing social forces of “nationalism, consumerism and the culture of amusement.”⁶¹ Throughout the centuries intentional religious communities have sought to foster distance between such competing forces that create a false sense of the self, by encouraging spiritual practices, such as contemplation.

The Franciscan Richard Rohr, described such distancing by using Archimedes observations about the fulcrum and a lever.⁶² The fulcrum is the contemplative, holding steady the practice of active contemplation, waiting on God, whether in in the cloister, in the kitchen or in the board room. The lever illustrates the action to be done. In relation to a contemplative life, and placed at an appropriate distance between the object and the force, the fulcrum magnifies the force exerted through lever onto the object. Rohr and other contemplatives recognize the necessity of stepping back from the object of one’s efforts. So the fixed point of contemplation also distances one from the prevailing diversionary nature of culture. As Thomas Merton has indicated, self-denial is not world-denying, but

⁶¹ Ibid., 24.

⁶² Richard Rohr, *A Lever and a Place to Stand: The Contemplative Stance, the Active Prayer* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2011).

a distancing for the purpose of “self-transcendence” and “transformation in Christ.”⁶³ Spiritual formation often requires distancing from particular problems or social engagement in order to give room for the depth of spirit that can move mountains.

Members of the Liturgical Service are not known for exuberance or emotional outbursts. Yet, in all the complexity of observations, ritual movements and speech associated with the worship gathering, human emotions run deep. Corporate worship can draw out many different affections, shaping and sustaining them.⁶⁴ This implies a certain logic or grammar to the worship order, not unlike the narrative flow of a good story or of musical theatre. This logic of songs, prayers, scripture readings, related bodily postures and gestures, mirrors the ordering of religious affections.

The gathering or entering into worship usually fosters such affections as reverence and awe, as well as humility and contrition depending on the nature of the opening prayers and whether or not a prayer of confession is used. The sending fosters a sense of gratitude, obligation, direction and hope.⁶⁵ Undergirding those affections, the first and last expressions must also inspire a sense of confidence in the integrity of the whole worship service.

It has already been noted that the gathering for worship includes activities that happen before the worship proper, as well as the actions of that establish worship itself. The beginning act is that of moving into the sanctuary, usually via a narthex or other

⁶³ Thomas Merton. *Contemplation in a World of Action*, 2nd Edition, Restored and Corrected (Gethsemane Studies in Psychological and Religious Anthropology) (University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 101.

⁶⁴ Hotz and Matthews, *Shaping the Christian Life*, 73.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

transitional gathering space. “The narthex is the transitional space where we focus on the process of purification,” including stripping away false images of self and God, as well as focusing on the act of gathering in God’s presence.⁶⁶ The place of worship used by the Liturgical Service does not have much of a narthex, that transitional spaces being the first floor social hall, the stairway or the lift that leads to the fourth floor. That means that the order of worship itself, with moments of silence and transitional music, must compensate for the lack of physical transition space.

Entering into the sanctuary/congregational/worship space further focuses the attention. A musical prelude or simply silence should help to focus the attention and religious affections theocentrically. Even this theocentric focus in shared liturgical space is not simply other-worldly. Ethical values are being formed, because “the meaning and value of our fellow creatures is not determined by our needs and wants, but rather by their belonging to God.”⁶⁷ Silence is valuable as a virtual space of encountering the transforming divine presence. It is fairly common practice for members of LS after entering to find time for silent prayer, which itself continues to shape people toward a theocentric reorientation of religious affections.

The intention of the opening hymn and call to worship, with songs and expressions that evoke feelings of joy, is to foster deeper affections. “The service begins with the affections of awe, delight, and gratitude because it is indeed good to be in the house of the Lord. It is delightful to stand before the presence of God, because the God of who makes

⁶⁶ Ibid., 84.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 84.

us quake with awe is always also the God who brings us good news in Jesus Christ.”⁶⁸ The effusiveness of gratitude depends on the right balance and sequencing of the liturgical elements that foster awe and humility with delight.

The usual sequence is a Call to Worship, a Hymn of Praise (or Praise Medley) and an Invocation or unison prayer. The liturgist invites the people to stand and read the Call to Worship responsively, usually a portion of the psalm for the day. Hotz and Matthews suggest two reasons for the collective call to worship, first to reinforce identity collectively with the immediate corporate body, the “covenant community called into existence at God’s gracious initiative,” and second, to reinforce identity with all who have gone before who constitute the great cloud of witnesses.⁶⁹ Participants are no longer isolated individuals dropping by for fellowship, but members of the body of Christ, bound to their head by the religious affection of awe, which “disorients us in order to reorient us.”⁷⁰ It may be this disorientation of the “false self” which needs to make room for “self-transcendence.”⁷¹ This false sense of the individualized self, can so easily deteriorate, even in the process of self-preservation, into the inhospitable objectification of other people and nature. My personal hope is that such disorientation can also reorient the worshippers to their co-affinity with all creation as kin, before the ultimate “Thou” of God. That is the reason to begin worship with practices that

⁶⁸ Ibid., 87.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 88.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 89. Walter Brueggemann traces a similar dialectic in writing about psalms that orient, those that express disorientation through crises and those that reorient the community in new ways, in *The Message of the Psalms* (Augsburg, 1984).

⁷¹ Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, 2nd Edition, Restored and Corrected (Gethsemani Studies in Psychological and Religious Anthropology). (University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 101.

instil a sense of awe and wonder, including silence, a call to worship and hymns that paint a picture of transcendent mystery.

It has not been the practice of this community to include a prayer of confession, although the Invocation is usually written as a collect prayer patterned after the opening collect of Eucharistic service in the Book of Common Prayer, which itself implies a disorientation and reorientation according to the divine character.⁷² This also relates to traditional Chinese and Confucian perspectives. Certain feelings of guilt, shame or discomfort are not sought after, but when they occur it is not to be ignored because such discomfort points to the need for resolution.⁷³ Some sort of reckoning must take place on a regular basis, lest communities fail to recognize their individual and communal complicity with sin, and thus miss opportunities for repentance, reconciliation and transformation.

The sending rites point the worshippers more toward the ethics of Christian worship. While Hotz and Matthews offer warning from a Reformed theology that liturgy should not be simply subordinated to the moral life,⁷⁴ attention to the ritualizing itself

⁷² As a Church of England priest, John Wesley, valued the Book of Common Prayer, and extolled the virtue of this collect, containing the words, "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name." In a sermon dated 1741, three years after he wrote about an experience of the assurance of faith, he talked about both the negative and positive parts of holiness. See John Wesley's Sermon 134 "True Christianity," Wesley Center Online <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-134-true-christianity/> (accessed 29 May 2015).

⁷³ Simon Chan, *Grass Roots Asian Theologies: Thinking the Faith from the Grassroots Up* (Downer Grove, IV Press, 2014), 82, et passim.

⁷⁴ Hotz and Matthews, *Shaping the Christian Life*, 95. This has often been the case in modernity. Marva Dawn lamented this in *A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999) and Thomas Schattauer refers to both conservative or liberal versions of usurping worship for particular moral ends as "outside in," such that liturgy is rendered as evangelism or social protest. See *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999). I have also noted previously Michael Aune's warning about expecting too much from worship.

reveals an imbedded ethical practice—hospitality, which can be seen as a moral category. We have discovered already that the liturgical sending is no mere departure, but includes within itself the sense of an extended hospitality. Even the final departures of funeral services, for Christians include the hope of reunion and continued hospitality in another space. As worshippers depart from worship there is also a sense of being sent on a mission, which is itself an extension of hospitality. In the process of worship, participants are social constructed as moral agents, “because it shapes, sustains, and directs the religious affections that underlie our capacity for moral action.”⁷⁵

Four affections associate the sending rites with the moral life: the sense of obligation, self-sacrificial love, hope, and the sense of direction.⁷⁶ Having experienced hospitality in liturgical space, worshippers are sent out with a sense of obligation. As observed in the first chapter, hospitality is a moral category, not a polite option. Even those members interviewed who expressed themselves as shy, felt a sense of obligation to connect to others, because of the message of the cross and Christ’s self-giving love. The sending rites also heighten a sense of hope and direction. In particular, the charge influences the sense of direction, but of most significance is the affection of hope, in particular the eschatological perspective. “We hope for the day when the fainthearted are strengthened, when all people honor one another, when all things exist to ‘love and serve the Lord,’ and when all the world exists in peace.”⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Hotz and Matthews, *Shaping the Christian Life*, 96.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 96.

⁷⁷ Hotz and Matthews, *Shaping the Christian Life*, 97.

This Christian hope is established in the midst of suffering and uncertainty, whether it be the marginalization of minority communities due to race, class or gender, or the ordinary pains and sickness that everyone endures. The sending rites connect liturgy and eschatology, the hope of glory. Don Saliers has done much to articulate the relationship between liturgy and eschatology. Observing late nineteenth and twentieth-century shifts in the study of Christian eschatology, he noted the emergence of a more existential understanding “as of a radical openness toward the future.”⁷⁸ As already articulated the ritual departure of persons from worship and more specifically from funeral services, involves expressions of hope for a future reunion. That hope may not be static, but invites participants to further engagement in meaningful ministry practices. “Worship grants us a ‘foretaste of glory divine.’ It invites us to anticipate and to participate in the new creation.”

79

This hope felt and expressed within the community at worship also reorients individual worshippers, offering a sense of direction, without which faith communities will lose not only their legitimacy in public life, but also fail to be a place of hospitality for the weary traveller. Only as faith communities embody that new creation, can they be like the tree of life offering hospitality, healing and strength for the journey.

This study has from the start focused on the actions of ordinary people entering worship, just as they also enter a private home. What makes the difference for those entering worship is the founding and ground of liturgical space in the view of divine receptivity.

⁷⁸ Don Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 51. Saliers further elaborates on the move toward proleptic eschatology after C.H. Dodd and Ernst Kaseman, as well as the recovery of eschatology by Vatican II as the expression of hope in worship and prayer.

⁷⁹ Hotz and Matthews, *Shaping the Christian Life*, 98.

Regular encounters with symbols of the divine presence, near or far, have fostered enduring emotional responses, tied to particular traditions of the divine nature. Through the weekly ritualization of coming and going, individuals have been formed into a group identity, with shared religious affections that bind saints and strangers together in hospitable space.

Hostility often erupts in the world, in the nation, or in the neighbourhood, when strangers are treated with hostility rather than hospitality. As those strangers gather again for worship, will the ideologies of hostility prevail, or will the gathered bodies follow the rhythm of the gathering itself and collaborate with the divine host to welcome even the enemy?

Liturgical hospitality does not mean that everyone agrees with each other, nor that everyone will rush to welcome each other, or even want to. Indeed different opinions and different theological traditions will have different ways of following up on hospitality. Nor does the biblical practice of hospitality mean that practitioners are safe from harm, any more than Jesus was safe by dining with outcasts. But the power of the circle and the gathering into shared space with God and other strangers surpasses the risks of violence. As individuals enter and turn toward the face of receptivity, they should experience unity, not necessarily the unity of agreement, but a unity at the depths. With the recognition of Christ at the center, then no one who is truly called by Christ can be turned away, but is welcome to share the space, to dialogue and to pray together for that day in which all persons are recognized around the table, because it is Christ, the divine stranger who is the host.

Conclusion

I began these pages by recognizing the need for places of refuge in a world of hostility, and I asserted that Christian worship itself involves a spiritual practice of hospitality. In effect, I claimed that the practices of liturgy have the capacity for shaping individuals into communities of shalom into which the stranger is welcomed. This claim may seem dubious, given a history of Christian inhospitality, from the European religious wars, to centuries of support for slavery, to the mission movements that often supported colonialism. While religious communities come with political ideologies and prejudices that can lead to indifference, exclusion or even violence, there are also embodied practices in worship that lead to hospitality. To bring this out, I turned to ritual and practice to highlight such a baseline of hospitality, especially in the practices of gathering and departing. These actions highlight common qualities of sheltering, of seeking and giving refuge, and of anticipating reunion. Indeed as a community engages in routine worship gatherings, participants are schooled in a practical grammar that establishes a common identity. It remains whether the community will be shaped more by divisive ideologies or the hospitality embodied in the gathering.

By comparing the actions of worshippers entering and leaving worship to the ordinary activities of entering and leaving a house, I isolated those interactions between host and guest. In both cases, domestic and sacred space, there are recognized practices of hospitality, including gift exchanges, gestures and verbal cues between host and guest. In both cases ritualizing takes place before the “face of receptivity.” The worship setting will have similar patterns, although the role of host, the receptive face, may be a sacred symbol associated with God. Hence, the practices of the Christian gathering embody hospitality.

In the Liturgical Service members entering the worship space sensed divine receptivity in various ways, in the physical elements of the cross, the flowers, the high ceiling, in the practices of praying and singing, and in the encounters with other worshippers. The place was experienced as enchanted. Similarly, hospitality was embodied in the concluding or sending. As people departed the space they exchange routinized words and gestures that reaffirmed their relationship and expressed hope for a reunion. I connected this to Christian eschatology, the hope of reunion in an undisclosed future, and to Christian mission, the extension of that hope for reunion to include other places and other people. Indeed, such a logic rightly frames mission within the context of the divine hospitality that is encountered in worship, rather than the framework of international conquest and colonization.

As worshippers regularly participate in these practices they would be ritually grounded in the particular worship space, such that every time they gather those actions and associations become second nature. Participants know what is supposed to happen deep in their bones. This grounding becomes especially evident when the location or a significant ritual is changed, leading possibly to novelty but also to disorientation.

I based this project in the particular Singapore context, an island city-state which over five million people call home. It is a great place to explore and test out multi-cultural theories because of the political and economic history that drew so many different ethnicities to live and work in proximity, Europeans, Chinese, South Asians and Malay. An important insight garnered from social theorists is that geography, the way we look at physical space, has its roots in social relationships. Hence physical space is always connected to those who occupy it, build it up, or

organize it. To say that there is “no place in the inn” may say more about social conditions than limitations of physical space.

Christian communities have historically established places of refuge and hospitality, partly because Christ is symbolically multivalent with regard to hospitality. The one who welcomes believers to the feast is also knocking at the door, waiting for the householder to open up and share a meal. Christ is both host at the worship and the stranger outside the door. It is thus theologically incongruous to adore Christ as divine but not attend to Christ’s sisters and brothers going hungry and homeless on the streets and seas of the world.

Hospitality is a moral category and a sacramental practice. To welcome the stranger is to welcome Christ. This sacramentality of hospitality holds together several paradoxes of worship, inward and outward movements, exclusive and inclusive, vertical adoration and horizontal human relationships.

As a spiritual practice of hospitality, I have sought to make clear that worship is not simply about telling people how to act, but embodying or enacting those qualities. Applying the theory of performative speech, worship gatherings have the capacity to effect hospitality, to make it happen, not unlike someone causing people to stand by using the words, “please stand.” In the act of gathering and greeting each other, hospitality is enacted, which doesn’t simply mean people are acting out a prior religious story or myth, but that they are embodying hospitality.

Many implications can be drawn from a work such as this. I highlight five areas, with some practical applications and points for further research.

First, the claim that believers participating in worship are engaged in primary theology undergirds my thesis. Rather than simply applying the ideas of the preacher or academic,

worshippers are already encountering the divine in the actions, prayer and song. Worship as a spiritual practice of hospitality gives weight to the experiences of bodies negotiating with other bodies in shared spaces before the receptivity of sacred symbols. It is critically important that pastors and others who facilitate worship assure opportunities for full participation and not just passive consumption of ideological messages. Further research can help to unpack the ways in which different individuals and groups actually experience worship, accounting especially for age and gender, as well as ethnicity and dialect group.

Second, as hospitality is particularly embodied during the acts of gathering, it is important to design an inviting worship order, to choose songs and texts each week that engage senses and imagination. Currently LS worship is planned by the pastor according to the lectionary. There are many rich resources for such a framework, but those resources need to be fashioned and arranged for the cultural context to create a balance between contemplating God's presence and welcoming the presence of others. One model being explored is a worship planning team including the pastor, choir director and worship personnel coordinator. The process of planning and implementation needs to take into consideration the performative nature of worship ritual. As such periodic training needs to help worship leaders see themselves as actors and prompters in the divine drama, learning skills that bring traditions and rubrics to life.

Third, that the worship functions as a school or grammar of spiritual formation has implications for the worship order itself, and naturally raises questions. If a grammar indicates that meaning is dependent upon a certain syntax or logic, does that mean that the order of worship should stay the same in order to effect the intended meanings, virtues and identity? It is challenging to make claims of one original prototype worship service that

all churches should follow. However, we may recognize an *ordo*, a deep structure whereby a fairly universal order of ritualization effects certain emotional dispositions, and that *ordo* may roughly consist of a gathering, meeting God in word and sacrament, and a dispersal. This needs to be further researched in the Singapore context to determine an effective inculturation model.

Fourth, the sending rites establish the transition from formal service to the liturgy of the world. Will worshippers leave immediately and forget what happened, or will hospitality be continued and extended to other spheres? For LS, the coffee fellowship after worship can reinforce that transition by extending hospitality for open fellowship, discussions about worship and the missional activities of engaging visitors and seekers. Attention needs to be given to make sure it is a place that encourages such engagement. As a ministry of the congregation, it should be fully supported both by funding and volunteers. Further research needs to be done to gauge how the ritual sending affects mission-mindedness in congregation members.

Sixth, consideration needs to be given for future worship design. Currently there is a 15-year plan to consider either rebuilding or remodelling the existing four-level structure. The design of the current fourth-floor sanctuary functions well for preaching and singing, but it could be improved to facilitate hospitality. I suggest three modifications. First, a new gathering area (narthex or lobby) should be placed adjacent to the worship space, to create a buffer from the outdoor to the sacred space. The current main entrance, via elevator spews late-comers into the front corner of the nave for all to see. Second, the current linear arrangement of seating that faced the chancel on the short end of the rectangular space should be changed so the chancel and communion table are on the long side, with seating lengthwise, allowing for greater interaction.

Another CAC church, Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church, has done this successfully. If this is done, then the current main door will be in the rear corner. Third, sacramental space needs to be given more focus. The communion table should be moved closer to the nave, with less fencing. The baptismal font, which is currently non-existent, can be made as a free-standing fixture to one side of the chancel and/or an immersion pool should be placed in the first floor social hall. The presence either can serve on a regular basis as a reminder of the importance of baptism.

As a community of shalom, the church gathers and shapes people for participation in radical hospitality, because Christ, who is the host at the center, is also outside begging them to stand in solidarity with the stranger.

Appendix

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

I am George Martzen (Rev George), a Doctor of Ministry candidate at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California (USA), and I am inviting you to participate in my project on worship and hospitality. In particular, the project considers how worship is an expression of hospitality and how worshippers may be enabled to act in hospitable ways in and beyond the worship service.

You can help by allowing me to interview you on this subject. There are prepared questions, but you may also offer other comments on the subject. The interviews will last between one and two hours, and it can take place in a mutually agreeable location. I will take notes, and may also make an audio recording of the interview, but only if you agree. Your responses will be kept confidential by assigning a number to your name, so that when I write my dissertation your name will not be associated with your responses, and no one will be able to identify you by what you say to me.

If you so request, I will prepare a write up of our interview(s) and/or a copy of the audio recording for you to approve before I use the material in my research. In any case you are free not to answer any specific question, and you can back out of the study any time with no personal obligation.

While retaining all intellectual and commercial rights to the interview materials (copyright), I freely consent to give you access to materials pertaining to your interview to cite or quote for personal use.

I can be reached at the PLCMC office (6286-7243), or by calling my handphone (9025-4958) or by writing me at george@methodist.org.sg.

Thank you for your participation!

I _____ voluntarily and with understanding consent to be
(please print name)

interviewed by George Martzen as a participant in his doctoral project research on worship and hospitality. I understand that I am free to not answer any specific question(s), and may terminate the interview and/or withdraw from the research project at any time. I understand that the reporting of my participation in this study will be entirely anonymous and confidential.

_____ I consent to the audio recording of my interview.

Please sign and date _____ Date _____

Tabulation of fill-in responses from interviews of Liturgical Service members

1. Age range	
a. 19-35	5
b. 36-54	8
c. 55 and older	6
2. Marital status	
a. Married	12
b. Single	7
3. Gender	
a. Male	9
b. Female	10
4. Chinese dialect group(s) that you identify with:	
a. Hokkien	11
b. Teochew	6
c. Cantonese;	2
d. Foochow	2
e. Peranakan	3
f. Hainanese	1
5. I live in a	
a. HDB flat	11
b. Landed dwelling	6
c. Condominium	2
6. What is your relationship to PLCMC?	
a. Member	19
7. How often do you attend worship?	
a. Weekly	18
b. At least once a month	1
8. I usually attend worship with	
a. my spouse	4
b. my spouse and children	4
c. my parent(s)	2
d. come by myself	10
9. Not applicable	
10. Have you been involved in any of the following in the previous year?	
a. Short term mission trips	6
b. Visitation teams	4
c. Evangelism or outreach activities	4
d. Small groups	13
11. I like worship to be more	
a. Quiet and meditative	12
b. Energetic	1
c. Teaching time	6
d. Interactive	1
e. Other (natural, artistic, communal)	1

12. How do you arrive at PLCMC?	
a. Drive	11
b. Ride with friend or relative	0
c. MRT/Bus/shuttle	6
d. Taxi	1
e. Walk	4
13. After the benediction at the end of the service, what do you usually do?	
a. Stay around to talk in the sanctuary	5
b. Adjourn to the coffee fellowship	13
c. Depart as soon as possible	2

Singapore Declaration of Religious Harmony*

We, the people in Singapore, declare that religious harmony is vital for peace, progress and prosperity in our multi-racial and multi-religious Nation.

We resolve to strengthen religious harmony through mutual tolerance, confidence, respect, and understanding.

We shall always

Recognise the secular nature of our State,
Promote cohesion within our society,
Respect each other's freedom of religion,
Grow our common space while respecting our diversity,
Foster inter-religious communications,

and thereby ensure that religion will not be abused to create conflict and disharmony in Singapore.

* Ministry of Social and Family Development, <http://app.msf.gov.sg/Policies/Archived-Topics/Caring-and-Active-Community/Promoting-Community-Involvement/Community-Relations-Social-Harmony/Declaration-on-Religious-Harmony> (accessed 15 July 2015)

Hymns of Praise or Medleys (Entrance) used in the last six months

"Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun"	(UMH 157)
"Angels from the Realms of Glory"	(UMH 220)
"O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing"	(UMH 57)
"This Is My Father's World"	(UMH 144)
"Crown Him with Many Crowns"	(UMH 327)
"How Great Thou Art"	(UMH 77)
"To God Be the Glory"	(UMH 98)
"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"	(UMH 140)
"Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise"	(UMH 103)
"Jesus Shall Reign"	(UMH 157)
"Shout To The Lord"	(Darlene Zschech, Hillsong)
"I Stand Amazed In The Presence"	(UMH 371)
"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"	(UMH 155)
"And Can It Be that I Should Gain"	(UMH 363)
"For the Beauty of the Earth"	(UMH 92)
"Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty"	(UMH 643)
"No Other Name But the Names of Jesus"	(Robert Gay, Integrity's Hosanna! Music)
"Surely, the Presence of the Lord"	(UMH 328)
"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"	(UMH 110)
"Come, Thou Almighty King"	(UMH 61)
"O For a Heart to Praise My God"	(UMH 417)
"Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"	(UMH 89)
"The King of Love My Shepherd"	(UMH 138)
"Hosanna, Loud Hosanna"	(UMH 278)
"O Worship the King, All-Glorious Above"	(UMH 73)
"Lift High the Cross"	(UMH 159)
"Christ for the World We Sing"	(UMH 568)
"Christ the Lord is Risen Today"	(UMH 302)
"All Creatures of Our God and King"	(UMH 62 vss 1-5)
"Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above"	(UMH 126)
"Holy Ground" (We Are Standing on Holy Ground)	(Christopher Beatty, Birdwing Music)
"More Like You"	(Scott Wesley Brown, Maranatha! Praise)

Hymns of Dedication (Sending) used in the last six months

"God of the Sparrow"	(UMH 122)
"Go, Tell It on the Mountain"	(UMH 251)
"O Jesus, I Have Promised"	(UMH 396)
"Blest Be the Tie That Binds"	(UMH 557)
"O Young and Fearless Prophet"	(UMH 444)
"Spirit of Faith, Come Down"	(UMH 332)
"Amazing Grace"	(UMH 378)
"O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee"	(UMH 430)
"Spirit of Faith, Come Down"	(UMH 332)
"Breathe on Me, Breath of God"	(UMH 420)
"Rejoice the Lord is King"	(UMH 715)
"I Am Thine, O Lord"	(UMH 419)
"And Can It Be that I Should Gain"	(UMH 363)
"Guide Me, O, Thou Great Jehovah"	(UMH 127)

"Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus"	(UMH 514)
"Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days"	(UMH 269)
"Take Up Thy Cross, the Savior Said"	(UMH 415)
"Forth in Thy Name, O Lord, I Go"	(UMH 438)
"Am I a Soldier of the Cross"	(UMH 511)
"In Christ There is No East or West"	(UMH 548)
"What Wondrous Love Is This"	(UMH 292)
"Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine"	(UMH 369)
"God of Grace and God of Glory"	(UMH 577)
"Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone"	(UMH 424)
"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"	(UMH 384)
"Christ the Lord is Risen Today"	(UMH 302)
"Soldiers of Christ, Arise"	(UMH 513)
"Forth in Thy Name, O Lord"	(UMH 438)

Invocations (collects) used within the last six months

As modified from historic liturgical texts

Almighty God, whose glory covers the earth as the water covers the seas, fill this place with the glory that you planned from the beginning would fill the universe. As Christ was revealed to the nations through heavenly signs, so reveal yourself in our hearts today by the touch of your Spirit. Grant this through Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

O God, whose Son cleansed the Temple from the stain of sin: In your mercy behold your Church, that we may be neither stained by our own sins nor held in bondage by the sins of others, that being freed and cleansed from both, we might pay our service to you; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Almighty God, who is ever faithful toward your children: shine the light of your countenance upon us that we may live, speak your Word to us that we may prosper; send your Spirit among us that we may be healed; for we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit through ages of ages. Amen.

O Lord, who knows all things both in this world and the next, search out our hearts today by your Divine Word and Spirit; correct our errors, reveal your direction and grant us the assurance that we are in your holy path; for we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Most merciful God, whose blessed Son continually intercedes for us sinners: Grant that we, who are constantly afflicted by our own transgressions may be fully saved by the sacrifice which he offered once-for-all and for ever; this we pray through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Call to Worship used within the last six months

*** Call to Worship**

L: The glory of the Lord is set above the heavens.
P: God, our sovereign reigns in majesty.
L: The glory of the Lord has come among humans to dwell.
P: God, our sovereign has come to make covenant with us.
L: Let us freely offer up all things for the glory of the Lord.
P: We will come and worship Christ the newly revealed King.

*** Call to Worship**

L: Praise the Lord!
P: It is good to sing praises to our God.
L: The Lord builds up Jerusalem.
P: And gathers the outcasts of the people.
L: The Lord heals the broken hearted,
P: And binds up their wounds.
L: Therefore, Let us praise the Lord!
P: Let us sing praises to our God!

*** Call to Worship**

L: The heavens are telling the glory of God;
P: The earth proclaims God's handiwork.
L: Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts
P: be acceptable in the sight of the Lord.

*** Call to Worship**

L: Come, let us sing praises to the Lord, who has called us together.
P: Tell among the peoples God's deeds!
L: Be gracious to us, O Lord!
P: We rejoice in your deliverance.

*** Call to Worship**

L: All the earth belongs to God.
P: Let us lift up our heads and praise the Lord.
L: Who shall ascend God's holy hill?
P: Those with clean hands and pure hearts.
L: They will receive blessing from the Lord
P: and vindication from God their Savior.
L: Lift up your heads, you gates, open the doors,
P That the King of Glory may enter.
L: Who is the King of Glory?
P: The Lord Almighty—He is the King of glory.

Trinitarian worship texts

“Apostles’ Creed” – Baptismal setting (as found in The United Methodist Hymnal)

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Baptismal Formula

Christian Name(s), I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Gloria Patri”

(Glory to the Father – the Lesser Doxology, as typically sung to 19th century tunes of Greateorex or Meineke. The text comes from the English Book of Common Prayer. See also Ephesians 3:20-21)

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning,
is now and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen

“Gloria Patri”

(Adapted by Judy Loehr - Upper Room)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Spirit, three in one;
As it was in the beginning and shall forever be,
our world without end. Amen

“Doxology”

*Thomas Ken (16th century); Tunes by Louis Bourgeois, Thomas Tallis, Jim Owens, etc.
This formula was often*

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him all creatures here below,
Praise him above, ye heavenly hosts,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Trinitarian Music

Many classical church musicians, such as Johann Sebastian Bach, sometimes wrote a 3-beat musical settings for Trinitarian texts.

UMH hymns and choruses with Trinitarian texts

Many other Trinitarian texts can be found in the last stanza of hymns, such as (UMH) – 675, 559, 188, 651, 61, 315, 680, 711, 79, 88, 102, 296, 267

“Sanctus” – Threefold Holy from the Communion Great Thanksgiving

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Thanksgiving after Communion

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery
in which you have given yourself to us.

Grant that we may go into the world
in the strength of your Spirit,
to give ourselves for others,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

“A Service of Word and Table I” *United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 11.

Recent Popular Christian Music with Trinitarian themes

“Father, I adore you”	Terrye Coelho	Maranatha! Music
“Holy Holy”	Jimmy Owens	Communique Music
“How Great Is Our God”	Chris Tomlin, et. al.	sixsteps/Sparrow
“Our God Saves”	Paul Baloche	Integrity Media
“This I Believe” (The Creed)	Ben Fielding and Matt Crocker	Hillsong
“Shine, Jesus Shine”	Graham Kendrick	Make Way Music
“The Risen Christ”	Keith Getty	Thankyou Music

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