Deliberate Worship: Creating Safe Spaces to
Encounter the Numinous and Divine Through Rituals of Music and Lyrics

By

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Introduction:

> "*After silence that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music".*
>
> Aldous Huxley
> *The Rest Is Silence*
> 1931

How does one describe the indescribable? How does one articulate the intimate and numinous wonder of an encounter with a presence, an Alterity - a spirit outside of one's self, another being who no one can see? How can one convince others of transcendence, of that crossing over the liminal boundaries of time and space, when one exists, temporally, in another dimension? Words can help…words like numinous - supernatural, filled with a sense of divinity, holy, and spiritual.

But to a three year old, with a limited vocabulary for higher order thinking, sitting in a Sunday School classroom, in an old army barracks on the Ft. Benning reservation in 1960, to express what I had encountered was difficult. While listening and watching to the teacher tell the story of Joseph and His Coat of Many Colors, I became aware of a presence coming from inside the light streaming through the window in the back corner of the dusty little classroom. And while no one was there, I knew who it was that was speaking to me out of the light. I knew and understood that I was loved…that I was known…that I was seen.

It was a transformative moment that was seared into my psyche, tattooed on my heart, and engraved in my very being, and which remains fresh to this day. It was possible, though, because I was in a safe space, with a loving adult, a wonderful felt board where felt cutout characters were used each week to tell the Bible story, and where each week, class started out with joyful songs and movement, revealing Bible scriptures which iterated that

> *'Jesus loves me, this I know,*
> *for the Bible tells me so.*
> *Little ones to Him belong,*
> *they are weak, but He is Strong"*, by Anna Bartlett Warner/William Batchelder Bradbury

And,

> *Jesus loves the little children,*
> *All the children of the world,*
> *Red and Yellow, Black and White,*
> *They are precious in His sight,*
> *Jesus loves the little children of the world.* by C. Herbert Woolston

Love expressed in music created a safe place for me to be able to experience the voice of God. My parents and an older sibling teased me about "seeing Jesus", to whom, heretofore we had always prayed at the dinner table each evening and again, on our knees before bed. But now, I knew who Jesus was. Now I knew THAT Jesus was, and more importantly, that he knew who I was, and had taken the time to speak to me, to call my name. My insistence to my family, raising the issue from time to time about how I had talked to Jesus in the light, brought mocking at - best - and accusations of lying at worst.

About this time, I also began to hum and to sing - all the time and almost everywhere - in the bathroom, outside playing, inside playing, sitting in the grocery cart at the commissary, it did not matter. And, I was always being told to shush, or to shut up, or to quiet down. But in the songs, many which I made up, I experienced that love and acceptance, that safety and that joy, that intimacy with the being which had called to me from the light. Music became my conduit to engaging with the presence I had felt that Sunday morning, and whom I always called Jesus, or God, or Holy Spirit. This alterity, in Latin, this "other" of two, and personally, this "other" than me, became my delight. It is the "Mysterium Tremendum" which Rudolph Otto speaks about, where one's consciousness is aware of a "wholly other" being, or Derrida's "absolute invisible" who sees in secret - a dyssymetrical relationship which produces a sense of wonder and numinosity.

I was smitten.

As I grew, I learned to read and my vocabulary blossomed, along with my confidence, and I began to talk to others about what I now understood as faith. Teachers and aunts and uncles listened to me without derision or judgment. By the fifth grade, I found friendship and community among others of like faith. Music, specifically singing, was also a constant in my life, and when I was alone, hiking through woods around our neighborhood at Ft. Benning, building a fort for my Barbie Dolls and Trolls amongst the tree roots in my back yard, on Rainbow Avenue - I would often just vocalize, with no real words, being overcome with a powerful need to express intense joy, or even sorrow, through vocalization on a few vowel-type sounds. Other times, I sang with actual words, but not words from the English language. Unfamiliar words, fashioned together with structure and meaning to the phrases, but a meaning just beyond my grasp or understanding…an elusive truth which I had to trust would be revealed.And often, this sort of singing allowed me to approach and to cross over the liminal boundaries of time and space.

When I saw the light that Sunday morning years before, something happened inside of me. I was transformed, and I knew God as my alterity, my "totally other" wanting to engage with me in a very personal and intimate way. I recognized an absolute other which was and remains for me a fascinating and radical alterity whose infinite, unknowable and absolutely invisible nature creates a sense of boundless awe. This sense of awe - not awfulness, is necessary for me to keep coming back for more, and it is through musical praise and worship where I most easily experience this.

"For Otto, the numinous can be understood to be the experience of a mysterious terror and awe (Mysterium tremendum et fascinans) and majesty (Majestas) in the presence of that which is "entirely other" (das ganz Andere) and thus incapable of being expressed directly through human language and other media. (Sarbacker, S. *Rudolph Otto and the Concept of Numinous,* 2016: 1).

In fact, it is the knowledge that this "other", which sees in secret, and therefore knows all of my secrets, and which still engages with me despite my "sorry flesh" to paraphrase Thomas Merton, is what my self, my "me" requires to thrive. Why else believe in a hyper or radical alterity, if not to engage and learn and grow, and to be filled with wonder, even when circumstances in life are going off the rails. And how can one grow in relationship without that "other" knowing one fully and completely? Therefore, before religion, a hyper-alterity must present itself as more than

human. It must present as numinous and holy, in its absolute, invisible, holy otherness to those with whom it wishes to interact, in order to catch their attention - in a way which elicits a sense of wonder. And so, mysterium tremendum is necessary and foundational to the formation of religion, or else what's the point, and music and glossolalia - what many call speaking in unknown tongues, has been a conduit for myself, and others, who desire to engage in their worship with their alterity.

As one can imagine, it was with great joy and relief that I discovered the scripture in *Romans 8:26* "*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit herself intercedes for us through wordless groans"*. Indeed, *Psalm 22:3* from the Old Testament, Bible, reads, "*God inhabits the praises of his peopl*e", or, materially engaging with and inhabiting a believer, drawing the believer across the liminal boundaries of time and space, to occupy same space/time, where the two "others" become one - Material Engagement, the theory of which University of Oxford's School of Philosophy of Archealogy's Professor Antonis Iliopoulos writes so much about.
For most of my life, from teen hood into adulthood, through schooling, through being kicked out of my mother's home on my sixteenth birthday, in the middle of a surprise birthday party my friends and their parents had arranged for me with my mother…through marriages, miscarriages, babies, divorce and so many other major life changes, I have been sustained by my very private, "prayer closet"[1] worship and singing. Then, in my early forties, I began to formally study music at Shorter University, where I learned that other cultures, indigenous peoples of the North American Plains, for instance, worshiped their spirit god with the long, sonorous cries and chants similar to what I myself had been chanting since childhood. It was then that I knew I wanted to study anthropology, with an emphasis on music from all cultures and religious traditions, to observe how others engage with their gods… how they worship and encounter the numinous, the divine, the spiritual…to learn how others approach transcendence, and to share this with the world.

And it only took another twenty years to begin that journey.

It is to this end, therefore, that I present this paper on a subject with which I am intimately acquainted, and which I believe is critical in this age of divisive rhetoric and alienation. As Jeffers Englehardt and Phillip Bohlman write in the acknowledgements to their book, *'Resounding Transcendence: Transitions in Music, Religion and Ritual'*, "The burden of acknowledgment is particularly great at the moment when transition becomes the necessary response to crisis and transcendence becomes the goal of a journey that many choose in hopes of mere survival". (2016:1)

Because I believe that God inhabits praise, of which music is a key component - Christian, Hebrew, Muslim and more, and that such worship can therefore bring about transcendence and transformation, I want to highlight this work within my own denomination, the Episcopal

[1] In the Book of Matthew, Chapter 6, in the New Testament of the Bible, Jesus warned believers not to make a show of giving alms or of praying. "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Church. Particularly so within my church, the Episcoapl Church of North America, under the leadership of one of the new breed of music directors who believes that lyrics can be used and altered to be used to create safe spaces of inclusion where supplicants, (worshipers seeking God's favor), can be free to encounter the Divine. Why? When one encounters the Divine, it is difficult to engage in unjust causes and habits which feed an addiction to commodity fetishism and a lust for power resulting in the destruction of lives, cultures and eco systems around the world.

Field Site: Most of my observations and ethnographies have been conducted on the premises of a church in a village close to the Hudson River, New York, (hereafter the Village), with express permission from the Music Director, (hereafter MD), the presiding priest, (hereafter Padre), the church administrator, who is also an ordained deacon within the Episcoal Church, (hereafter, Deacon), of those I have interviewed. Interviews have been conducted in the church library, the sanctuary, the church's chapel and choir loft, in a pub the New York, which like so many pubs across the nation, have trivia contests on a regular basis. I conducted two phone interviews, the first with Musical Director for Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in Manhattan, Kent Tritel, as well as with a female Cantor for a Jewish temple, (hereafter Cantor), which is also Located in New York.

Methods: I am writing this as a participant observer, utilizing a reflexive ethnography technique, including autoethnography and ethnographies of persons intimately involved with planning and implementation of the music program at the Episcopal Church, as well as others from within Epscopal churches found within the State of New York, to align with the liturgical calendar of the Epsicopal Church.

Chapter 1: The Young Music Director

> **"***There's so much talk of "kingdom" and "dominion" and all this stuff that just screams Christo-fascism to me"* - MD

As I began to search for a church home in the small, leafy green, idyllic New York village I had moved to during the COVID lockdown, as the world began to blossom and unfold from its deep pandemic winter, and the Episcopal churches of New York allowed in-person (masked) church services to begin again, I visited a quaint little church near my village - San Marcos, I had been impressed that they actively fronted a food pantry, four times per week, had a clothing closet for struggling populations, and that they supported and celebrated the LGBTQ community, the immigrants community, refugees - everyone and anyone...The Stranger.

Imagine that - a church which proclaims Christ - actually loves, accepts and celebrates the poor, the outcast and the average Joe, too, just as Jesus the Christ had taught through example approximately two thousand years ago.

It was June 2021, and since the sanctuary was not air conditioned, services were being held outside in the court yard, affectionately referred to as The Labyrinth. Episcopal churches have operated on a much relaxed, revised schedule in the summer, for decades, and so there were only a few choir members leading worship in the Labyrinth, with a very tall, thin, fair skinned young man playing the piano and directing from inside the fellowship hall, where he could watch and lead via the open windows looking out onto the courtyard. I was amused to notice that this young man looked to be the same age as my oldest grandson, and wondered what joining a choir with with my southern accent and tendencies for diphthongs would be like sitting under a a New York music director, but my misgivings were quickly dispelled upon introducing myself after services, when I heard his Southern accent. A young man my grandson's age, from the South, like me.

As I explained that I was anxious to begin singing again, MD invited me to have coffee with him that next week, and so I already felt at home and welcomed. We met up at local coffee shop on Main Street in the little village, ordered coffee and eats, and then took a seat outside on one of the couple of cafe tables. Because I have a seizure disorder, I try to avoid direct sun in my face, and young MD offered to sit facing east, with no sun glasses and no hat. Did I mention that it was summer? During our conversation, he shared with me his empathy for persons with disabilities, as he himself suffers with a rare type of Albinism, which causes severe vision problems, among other things, and which cannot be corrected with surgery or medicine. Only corrective, prismatic glasses help, and his vision will only decline as he ages. As a result, he, too, cannot drive, and must catch public transportation or be driven everywhere, as I must do. But we both agreed that we were each so very blessed.

MD and I began hitting highlights of our various musical experiences and how we had both ended up in the village. Turns out, MD, had attended Florida State University on a musical scholarship, and then attended a State University of New York, (SUNY), on scholarship, where he had received his Masters of Music a few years ago. His partner, with whom he lives in the Bronx, was completing her Doctor of Music degree there, but he had needed a job to supplement his "gig" lifestyle in the city. He had interviewed for this position, and, despite having a current

church gig, as well as offers from other churches, he had known this was the place for him, because he was asked what was most important about his belief in Christ, and he said he almost blurted it out - that he thought Christians should live as Christ lived. Period. He explains it again. during our formal interview, recounting his interview in this way:

> *"something about it felt really good, sitting right here at this very end of the table it is so cool… a lot more at the table. Okay, I think there were a lot more people crowded around it. And then the priest at the time was on the other end of the table. Yeah. Yeah, we had a great chat. But I - at that point, honestly, I was - my faith was still, you know, it was mushy? Oh, yeah, it was definitely still mushy. And I mean, we all go through phases, but ~at that very point, I remember her asking me, you know,"What does the church mean to you"? Or something like that? 'What is, what is the role of what is the example of Jesus mean to you in the work of the church", or something like that? And I was like, that I can answer. All right, here we go. So, you know, I told you the honest truth about how I feel about my faith, per se, and we all go through struggles, but I told her how inspiring I was inspired it was by the work of Jesus…by the life of Jesus. And I want music to be able to do to inspire others to get there.*

Indeed, I, and most long term Christians have found their faith waiver and/or falter, to become "mushy", where cognitive dissonance screams from the pages of scriptures when juxtaposed against income and health inequality resulting from capitalism on steroids, and fertilized by some western religions' "prosperity theology" where wealth and financial stability are seen as favor from God…where if one is poor or must depend on the precarious "gig" economy, which offers no benefits of health care, retirement savings or stability that one will even be employed tomorrow, it must be their fault. Or perhaps cognitive dissonance ricocheting off the walls of Christo-fascism, where, contrary to scripture, the stranger, the person of color, the person of other religious tradition, or the person with alternate ways of thinking…or of alternate ways of identifying themselves….different gender identity, are all seen as an enemy, basing ideology on a few misinterpreted scripture from ancient Hebrew texts.

Mushy faith - been there, done that.

Several Vestry (Church Board), members who are also choir members, are fond of telling the story about MD's interview. As they tell it, after interviewing many applicants, when MD left his interview, after blurting out that Christians should live as Christ did, the former Rector, (Priest) turned to the Vestry and said, "You can hire anyone you want, as long as it's MD".

And, the rest, as they say, is history. I joined the choir that week, after my first conversation with MD, and quickly learned that MD was easy going, and would allow anyone, regardless of musical ability, to sing in the choir. This is very unusual for Episcopal churches, as most require not only audition, but also often pay soloists members. Turns out MD is not only an accomplished French Horn musician, he is also an accomplished pianist, organist and plays multiple other instruments, and plays comfortably in chamber orchestras and Blue Grass ensembles alike, as well as in Jazz settings and Big Band Swing - any genre. But MD, is also a bit of a tech genius, too, which is not always the case with musicians, who are more comfortable with allowing the sound engineers to tinker with the nitty-gritty of sound and broadcast issues.

MD took this position as Music Director, (which includes both organist and Choir director jobs), in the fall of 2019.

Six months later, the world shut down, because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But MD was not to be deterred. He managed to scrounge together enough Mac Books for the entire choir, and hand delivered each, setting them up for the members in their homes, so that choir rehearsals could continue over a software program called Jamulus, since music coordination over ZOOM is next to impossible. Choir practice and worship music was then coordinated for remote church services, in part because of MD's creativity and technological savvy. But mostly it was because he was/is passionate about how music can set the tone for worship in a myriad of ways, not only from the sound of the music but from the actual lyrics…the textual, scriptural setting of the music.

Indeed, it was one of the first things I noticed when I started practicing with the choir on Summer Sunday mornings, in the fellowship hall, which had air conditioning. MD would often instruct us to change a word or often an entire phrase, or delete an entire verse in a hymn, because the meaning was too imperialistic, colonialistic…too militaristic. Words and phrases which heaped harsh condemnation on lifestyles which Western culture deemed sinful, words which spoke down to groups or spoke of servants obeying their masters, any lyric which demeaned or stripped dignity from a human being was removed and/or altered.

Adherence to Scripture and Application to Lyric

MD and I both are intense readers and explorers of scripture. One has to be, to understand why lyrics are written the way they are, and why particular music is chosen for lyrical setting, or why particular corporate prayer is prayed on particular days. As MD puts it:

> *Everybody, everybody experiences it differently. Some people just come in. And only one thing speaks to them in a service. But I'm one of those people that I like things to line up. I'm reading every single verse of a hymn even when I'm, you know, just singing it…. And that's why it's great going to separate service sometimes on Sundays, because the same readings, yeah, but then oftentimes, Grace (a Church in Manhattan), will pick a totally different sort of hymns. I'm like, Why do you pick these? Why didn't I think of these? And I think through them and I see, Okay, there's a verse in this one, and sometimes, you know, like the first out of six, and that's the one on top.*

I so much appreciated this aspect of worship, with attention to scriptural lyric in appropriate setting!

In a later chapter, (Chapter 7), this paper details the intricacies of the Episcopal Calendar, the corresponding lectionary(scripture), readings set for particular seasons and Holy Days of the Christian year. Coordinating musical lyrics to each particular Sunday or Feast Day is a passion of MD's, and as a member of the Chancel Choir for about a year and a half, I have come to trust and value his commitment to this effort. In fact, it was in part due to his leadership in this arena of creating safe spaces for worshippers, that I decided my Senior Project would focus on this

type of effort within the Episcopal Church, as young musicians, like MD, begin to take on the mantle of leadership in our churches.

It is 5:00 PM on a Wednesday afternoon, and we are sitting in the old library/study at the church, which forms the southwest corner of the principal structure where both the sanctuary and the chapel can be seen out the heavy, connecting oak door. Before coming, I have stopped in to pick up a few of MD's favorite dishes from the Japanese restaurant on Main Street, after popping in to the wine shop, across the street, to snag some .375's of Saki, to accompany our repast. After all, we are Episcopalians, not Puritans!

MD tells me of how he grew up in "the band downstairs", joking about the Methodist Church's relationship to the Episcopal church. He tells me that the music he heard growing up down South, always has stayed with him despite his going through periods where he was not sure about his faith - "I *went through periods of my life where I didn't consider myself religious or even Christian. But the music has stayed with me. And I think its role in the church now, or at least my perspective, its role is to inspire.* Of course, to MD, who hails from a southern state, inspiration means for Christian's to get into a little "Good Trouble" as the late Georgia Congressman John Lewis called actions for Social Justice. In fact, MD wrote a piece of music, meant to inspire just such, in preparation for a Sunday when the New Testament reading was book of of James, and specifically James 3:18: 'The Harvest of Justice is is sown in peace - by those who cultivate peace".

MD is also an active social justice protester, especially when it comes to matters of healthcare justice.

> *"I almost went to one (a protest), two days ago". Health care and health justice - talk about something inspired by the life of Christ. His campaign for healing - (health care) should not just be afforded to the rich and powerful, but not everybody has to go and jump through hoops at the temple. They get healed here. On the Sabbath? How dare you?*

MD is referring to the multiple scriptures when Jesus would heal on the Sabbath, where traditional Hebraic law required no work on the Sabbath, and healing could only be performed by the sanctioned elite Hebraic priest class. So the elite temple leaders and lawyers - whose authority was second only to the Roman government at the time - were threatened by Jesus' rising popularity. In the New Testament book of Mark, Chapter 2, we find them accusing Jesus' disciples of violating laws which had been codified into Hebraic custom and practice, beyond God's original intent of resting on the Sabbath. The disciples had walked into a corn filled and picked corn to eat, so they had violated tedious Hebraic custom, which itself violated common sense. Jesus responded to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" . Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28). And, when Jesus healed on the Sabbath, (John 5:1-18), the Pharisees and Sadducees, (Temple leaders), attacked the immediately previously crippled man, for "carry his mat" on the Sabbath, and demanding to know who had instructed him to do so…they knew, but wanted a witness against Jesus, so, they went after the little fish.

I strongly believe that. Not everyone should have to jump through hoops to have health care - not anyone. Um, I think our society is only as strong as our sickest person and our weakest person. And so, healthcare is a big one. I mean, it's affected my life in different ways here and there just for family members. I mean, I've had family members that have rationed health care, and it's led to severe illness and death. It doesn't have to be this way. Just look at almost any other country that's invested in health care. It doesn't have to be this way here.

MD refers, of course, to the block refusal by Southern states to accept expanded federal Medicaid funds, made available decades ago under an enemy regime, (Democratic). This left many of us without healthcare or with barely-there health care, such that persons lost everything - savings, home equity, even credit standing as they would have to file for bankruptcy to pay for outrageous health care expenses and untenable co-pays to the massive corporate medical complexes like HCA and its affiliates. I am living proof of this perverted Georgia legacy, as is MD.

Which calls to mind a piece of music which MD has chosen for us to sing, several times in these last 18 months, the lyrics of which speak to income disparities, all which became starker during the ravages of the COVID pandemic. This almost century old piece, written by Walter Russell Bowie with music composed by Herbert Howells, was included in the 1982 Episcopal Hymnal, in current use today. "*Oh Holy City Seen of John'*, chastises Christians for waiting only for some heavenly city of justice and peace, and stirs us to create systems of justice now - to live in peace now. The first verse deals with the heavenly vision of John, in the book of Revelations, which much of Christendom looks to the afterlife for. But in the second and third verses, the questions is asked about why this has to wait:

Oh shame to us who rest content, while lust and greed for gain,
In street and shop and tenement wring gold from human pain
And bitter lips in blind despair, cry "Christ hath died in vain!"

Give us, oh God, the strength to build, the city that hath stood
too long a dream, whose law is love, whose ways are brotherhood.
And when the sun that shineth in God's grace for human good.

MD has seen this disparity, up close and personal, since moving to New York City. As he puts it:

...you can walk down 57th Street and see all the new high rises that they call 'Billionaires Row'. And you can have, you can have people ask you for help right there on the footsteps of - on the steps of those buildings…What would the world look like if we showed the same grace to everyone around us that God wanted us to, that Christ pointed us to? If We enacted - our selves - on the new commandment? I think it's as simple as that. You know, I mean, I don't want to dismiss all the intricacies of every every issue. But you can - you can break it down to loving one another as Jesus Christ would love and sacrifice… you can break it down to that. I don't want to oversimplify because there's so much more to it.

I am reminded of Gloria Jean Watkins's writing about social justice under the nom de'plume "bell hooks". She saw the western, capitalist consumer fetishism as not only a blight on society, but as the root of evil - all social injustice, racism, misogyny, etc, the cure for which Watkins saw in drawing down into Simplicity…Simple Living. Growing one's own food, reusing and recycling to create new life out of old, discarded things. To engage with family and community, and to disengage from a world running after every little fad. This is reminiscent of the scripture found in I Timothy 1:6-10:

> "5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

We continue to talk and share our perspectives on the role of music in creating safe spaces in church, and discuss when we are most able to encounter the divine during worship. For MD, this ability to encounter the divine rarely comes during "execution" of his musical ministry, and usually happens when he is a "parishioner" in an environment other than where he is employed to play an instrument or conduct a choir. MD is very aware that his obligation is to set the tone so that others can worship, which requires accuracy and artistry. But when he is a parishioner sitting under someone else's execution, he can engage with the Divine.

> *It's very poignant…you lose time, right? Yeah. You enter into another space where you're, you're singing congregationally - congregational singing It's just like such a gift to be able to share music with a bunch of people at the same time. It's like it just moves you in a way and the right leadership can - can foster that, engages that thru-line during a service and brings everybody together in a way that they sure weren't the hour before, you know, the hour before when we were on our way here or whatnot, but it's yeah, it can really can accomplish a lot can and set the tone for the work of the church.*
> *But I - the first time I heard, actually the first…the very first time I heard really good Anglican chant. I was like "Whoa" it was I think what song was it? I think it was 'I Lift Up My Eyes Unto the Hills", you know? It was unaccompanied, just very conducted and then the focus was on the text, right? It was in the Depot of St. John's the Divine in New York City. It was just such a magnificent place, a magnificent choir…and really other worldly. But I should say it was a very earthly experience, I felt very connected to the people around me. Yeah. So it was just really beautiful. So that's one of them. And another one would be the Gregorian chant, chanting the Psalms at Compline at Holy Cross Monastery up the river.*

There it is, a gift of congregational chanting, indeed, in the traditional Marcel Mauss sense, which builds relationship between people. Only, in this case, the materiality of the gift is the music shared and given back, and which then builds a bridge to cross the liminal boundaries of time and space allowing the corporate worshipers to gift their worship to an alterity, who then

gifts back to them by drawing them into that numinous moment of wonder where one can "lose time" and "enter into another space"…material engagement. All of this is possible because the music and the lyrics specifically create that cocoon, that safe space - prayer closet to engage with God. MD was so moved by these experiences, that he began using the chanting regularly in our Sunday morning services, leading us in acapella chanting of the Psalms during the scripture reading of the Anglican service.

So how did MD arrive at this place and time with our church, and wisdom beyond his years? Well, like many peoples of faith, MD took a rather circuitous path to where he has settled, now, even doubting whether he was a Christian, when his search both for a place to explore his faith and an unrelated job search brought him to the Episcopal Church…during his Mushy-Time.

> *So, I must have gone to the cathedral, (Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, in Manhattan).. This was before I worked in the Episcopal Church. And what drew me here, (to theVillage), I was just looking for another job at the point… but this one - something about it felt really good, sitting right here at this very end of the table it is so cool… a lot more at the table. Okay, I think there were a lot more people crowded around it. And then the priest at the time was on the other end of the table. Yeah. Yeah, we had a great chat. But I - at that point, honestly, I was,- my faith was still, you know, it was mushy? Oh, yeah, it was definitely still mushy. And I mean, we all go through phases, but at that very point, I remember her asking me, "What does the church mean to you"? Or something like that? 'What is the role or what is the example of Jesus mean to you in the work of the church", or something like that? And I was like, that I can answer. All right, here we go. So, you know, I told you the honest truth about how I feel about my faith, per se, and we all go through struggles, but I told her how inspired I by the work of Jesus…by the life of Jesus. And I want music to be able to do to inspire others to get there.*

It took another several years of working in the Episcopal worship community while also attending Episcopal services as a congregant in Manhattan, before MD was ready to make the commitment to become confirmed in the Episcopal Church. As he tells it:

> *So, I go pretty regularly as a parishioner to a service at a church in lower Manhattan, downtown in the Broadway Grace Church in New York, a very storied place. Broadway and 10Th. Because at the 6pm service, they have a couple of priests that I really liked and the music is so good. They don't do anything out of the ordinary music wise, it's not that creative. It's just right out of the hymnal. But the preaching of the community, it's…I've been going…it's a beautiful, beautiful little chapel. It's nice. So I've been going to that for a while and have done a lot of reading. And a lot of talking to other people that share the same political inclinations as I do, and religious inclinations that I do. And there are a lot of really radical theologians and thinkers in the church that are more widely progressive. Yeah, there are a lot of really great folks. And I just value the liturgy so much. I love the thoughtfulness, the traditions, the beauty of the music and the book, and the beauty of the space, the beauty of the language. So I found myself weighing do I want to try another religious tradition? Or do I want to acknowledge that the Episcopal Church is a big tent, and there's room for some radical thinking about the way we can live our lives and the way that we're gonna interpret the works of Christ. So I went with that.*

“Radical theologians”, “liturgy”, “traditions”, “beauty of the music and the book”, “beauty of the language”. MD is talking about the safe space created for worshipers, by the clergy and musicians in charge, through sacramental ritual, to allow for engagement with the numinous and divine. It is a heavy burden of those in charge, because whole trajectories of faith in peoples’ lives can depend on it, as we see in MD’s choices. Safe spaces to encounter the numinous and divine, which can heal and inspire. As Carl Jung wrote, *“It always seemed to me as if the real milestones were certain symbolic events characterized by a strong emotional tone. You are quite right, the main interest of my work is not concerned with the treatment of neuroses but rather with the approach to the numinous. But the fact is that the approach to the numinous is the real therapy and inasmuch as you attain to the numinous experiences you are released from the curse of pathology. Even the very disease takes on a numinous character”* (Jung 1973: 377).

On Tweaking Lyric to Eliminate Prosperity Theology and Christo-fascism -

This is a path which MD and I, both, have come to follow, both of us growing up in the Deep South Bible Belt, where poor and lower middle class peoples were lured into prosperity theology by wolves seeking to get rich on the backs of those hard working, desperate people. Not to beat a dead horse, but it is that same old cognitive dissonance.

> *Yeah, I heard a lot of prosperity gospel, even in the United Methodist Church, you know, liturgical church, but the interpretations of when Jesus says, you know, “it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to get him to heaven”. Yeah, I've definitely heard a lot of talking around that one, that that is not what he really means. So yeah, I heard a lot of a lot of preaching to the gospel of prosperity. Yeah. And now when I read those same passages of scripture, with new eyes and new experiences, I think the South is really, you know, ripe for organizing people to turn around here. Because, you know, if once you actually read this stuff for yourself, and are told that it means something else, it's some really powerful, powerful messages. But living in New York, living out, experiencing my faith, day to day I see poor people that are not cared for. I see hungry people that are not fed, I feel I see people that are homeless, that have nowhere to sleep. And, you know, I strive to see God and to see their humanity and their dignity and to work for their fight for their dignity when I have the opportunity to.*

MD’s observations are reminiscent of Benjamin’s pre-apocalyptic construct of “Messianic Times”, which seem almost theological. In his analysis of Benjamin for the online forum, Medium, Jakob Lejbowicz writes:

> *“It is firmly rooted in the theory that historical transformations are driven by the “fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist,” spurred on by the ruling classes and the oppressed people whom they exploit, dominate and dispossess struggling to assert their contradictory interests. As a political concept, Messianic time is animated by and cannot exist in the world without class war” “[E]ven the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious,” writes Benjamin. “While the enemy has not ceased to be victorious, he cannot in truth declare victory. There cannot be an idle class whose wealth*

is derived from ownership of all the land, equipment and means of fulfilling our material needs without another class whose dispossession can be exploited to provide labor for a fraction of the value we produce, to whom everything we create can be sold back at inflated cost, and from whom rents can be extracted for a place to live or for access to medical care. There cannot be a class constituted by endless assault on another's ability to feed and clothe itself, to care for its health, to find shelter, to live and work in safety and dignity — without producing in the parasitized class an intense desire to overcome the alienating conditions imposed upon it." (*On Messianc Time, Medium, 03/06/2019:1).*

Still, MD admits he struggles with changing lyrics, as opposed to completely leaving off a hymn.

There's so much talk of "kingdom" and "dominion" and all this stuff that just screams Christo-fascism to me. It just screams that and I realized that the editors of the hymnal 1982… are upholding long standing traditions and texts of hymns, and hymnody. But a lot of it screams Christo- fascism. There's a line in the hymn that we're gonna sing in two months, *from the main 'Crown Him with Many Crowns", you know that one, pretty well. There's this line about letting "no music be heard, but that of his own", "but that of God's own", "drown out all the music, but his own". And I've changed the text of, I think what I said. 'All Music* ***With*** *His Own". But yeah, it's just little things that you just have to change*.

Which begs the question, what about the environment? Well, young MD found a beautiful hymn for Sunday services near Earth Day or whenever scripture includes the requirement to care for animals and environment. The anthem, (a song sung only by the choir), *We Are Not Our Own*, by David Hurd, is replete with sumptuous imagery about our connectedness to all of creation, woven with threads of scriptural, metaphorical names for Jesus the Christ. Phrases like "We are not our own, earth forms us. Human leaves on nature's growing vine", and "fruit of many generations, seeds of life divine". And then there are the lyrics found in the 1982 Episcopal hymn, for the whole congregation to sing, # 456, *Oh Love of God, How Strong and True, "Oh wide embracing, wondrous song love, we read thee in the sky above. We read thee in the earth below, in seas that swell and steams that flow".*

My favorite for awareness of the environment, though, is another sumptuously lyriced anthem, *Each Breath Is Borrowed Air,* words by Thomas Troeger, music by Sally Ann Morris.:

Each Breath is borrowed air, Not ours to keep and own,
and all our breaths declare what wisdom has long known…
The sea flows in our veins, the dust of stars is spun
to form the coiled encoded skeins, by which our cells are run

It is getting late, now, as we sit and finish eating and sipping our Sake out of coffee mugs. Choir members are gathering for 7:00 PM choir practice, and MD is relaxed, giving off no hint about the difficult news he will be sharing with us, later. To be continued…

Chapter 2 - Kent Tritle, Musical Director, Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, Manhattan

> *"God is not a Christian, God is not a Jew, or a Muslim, or a Hindu, or a Buddhist. All of those are human systems which human beings have created to try to help us walk into the mystery of God. I honor my tradition, I walk through my tradition, but I don't think my tradition defines God, I think it only points me to God."*
>
> *John Shelby Spong*

According to the New York Times, Kent Tritle is "the brightest star in New York's choral music world". He is, in fact, Director of Cathedral Music and Organist at the Episcopal Diocese Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, Music Director of Musica Sacra, the longest continuously performing professional chorus in New York, Music Director of the Oratorio Society of New York, the acclaimed 200-voice volunteer chorus, and as if these were not enough, Kent is a member of the graduate faculty of The Juilliard School, and the organist of the New York Philharmonic.

So, it was with great trepidation that I e-mailed him to ask for an interview for this Senior Project. Surely a man of his repute and jam-packed schedule would not be able, (willing?), to fit in time for a lowly, senior citizen student and her undergraduate research paper, right? So, I was shocked and delighted to receive a quick response from Kent that he would be delighted to engage with me on my paper. It took several more communications to set the date, time and method, and so it was that on Tuesday afternoon, November 29, 2022, I conducted a phone interview with a gentle and humble, grace-filled servant of God, and not an ego which could certainly have lay hidden under an artist, scholar and educator of his caliber.

Kent grew up in the Methodist church, in Spirit Lake, Iowa, learning to play the piano at home, when he was young. He picked up the organ when his family bought a small home-size organ, and when he was in the 8th grade, Kent's church replaced their worn out Hammond organ with an electric one. A guest organist came in to perform a concert, and in Ken's own words, " I was smitten".

During our 57 minute conversation, we discussed how during other interviews, I learned that, as Wil had experienced it, choir directors and priests both feel constrained by the responsibility of providing the safe space to worship, and do not always experience numinous encounters while they are leading and directing worship for others. So, Kent shared how he approached every performance, whether sacred or secular:

> *I give thanks to God for all things, and all the things I have been given. I'll come at it another way, which is to say that when I'm gearing for performance, like the day of or before, you know, 45 minutes before I go on, and whatever, I always have some meditation time, and I go through kind of my litanies of thanks, and gratitude, and pray that I will just be a conduit for the musical expressions that are about to happen. And so that's very definitely - that's a way that I incorporate that into my prayer or my kind of devotional life. But that said, you know, daily, daily, I believe that talent in whatever forms people have it, and I believe everybody has talent, you know, is a gift from God and it is your obligation to develop your talent or use it. And so I am in many, I guess, in*

many ways. Of course, there's daily practice, but it's not as direct as it is when I'm, you know, doing my devotions before performance.

In Christianity, and indeed, in the Hebrew and Muslim traditions, we are taught that "God inhabits the praises of his people". (Psalm 22:3). And, in the Christian tradition, specifically, we are taught that our physical bodies are the temple of God's spirit, (I Corinthians 6:9). This is the promise of the Holy Spirit, who would come once Jesus was crucified, dead, buried, raised to life and then ascended into heaven. Indeed, Jesus taught that "*when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me*" (John 15:26). Sharing that Holy Spirit, God's spirit, requires that we connect intimately with that spirit…that alterity. In almost all instances, this requires prayer…meditation, material engagement via praise, worship, thanksgiving...gratitude, acknowledging that we are not our own, and that all of our gifts - music, intellect, breath itself, flows from God. So it is no wonder that Kent's desire and prayer is that he "just be a conduit for the musical expression" as he recognizes that this talent "is a gift from God". Kent is a conduit of the Holy Spirit to others during performance.

However, Kent does have those numinous and divine experiences from time to time when he is operating as a conduit of the Holy Spirit through the music he is conducting.

I give it over to God before I go on. Yeah. And then when I go on, it is mostly about doing the thing, being the chief or being the channel, so particularly when, when I'm conducting, you know, there is that. You know what you have to do once you're on is to really be focused on the music. Now, once in a while, there's also - there'll be a lightning bolt of something that, you know, kind of comes through. For example, I was conducting Handel's ***Israel, in Egypt, in Egypt****, at Carnegie Hall, in February of 2011. And this is a sacred piece that I was doing with Musica Sacra. And at about the three quarters point, in the piece, there was this kind of like, it was just an electric shock of some kind, you know, went through my, my system. And in fact, that was, that was the moment that a friend had passed away. You know, but I, I bring it up in the context of God, because I believe that all of that, of course, is is very God related, you know?*

Material engagement. Numinous and divine relationship. Mysterium Tremendum.

Because Kent's schedule involves significant commitments both within the secular world as well as the sacred, I wondered if he acts differently, or if he was guarded about over emphasizing the spiritual aspect of music. We discussed this in the context of John Shelby Spong's quote which begins this chapter.

Okay, so let me go back to how do I, you know, how do I live my faith in a secular world, okay…So I'm, I'm a member of United Methodist Church, which is, of course having its own problems right now. But, you know, growing up, a lot of the thinking in the Methodist Church had to do with the method, the methodical, the doing what you do, which, and it's, you know, in John Wesley's force was, you know, assisting people who are really - who were really impoverished during the revolution, you know, yes, and broken... So, what I'm getting at here is that one part of what I tried to do, you know, or that I pray that I can do

or be is to simply, by example, make a difference in the lives of others, by, you know, by example…I mean, specifically, when I'm getting choral rehearsals, particularly of larger groups, you know, things like that. So, for me, while I'm aware that there's a kind of a gray line in our society, and particularly, here in New York City, and then certain ways that we don't, you know, we all know, we don't want to proselytize. And there's, there's a way of being… a way of talking to me, to some evangelicals, they might think it is a weaker way of being, but to others, they might see that it's a way of being present - Without speaking so much.

Without speaking so much…wise words which find their counterpart in the Old Testament Bible Book of Ecclesiastes, verse 7b - "*a time to keep silence, and a time to speak*". Simple truths.

So, one way that, that we, you know, that I do work with this in the secular world. However, there are times when I am able to tell a story, or a personal vignette about family or about church, you know, in a way that, of course, is just sharing a window, a lens on, on how, how I might relate to something that I'm trying to share, you know? Some meaningful piece of music, something that is, you know, some kind of expression.

So, I don't shy away from discussion of that element, or of God, necessarily. A really clear example, is the Oratorio Society of New York has done Handel's Messiah ever year since 1874. And it's a wonderful chorus. I've been with them 16 years now, maybe 17. Now, anyway, I'm doing Handel's Messiah. And this is in a New York chorus, which pre pandemic was, you know, upwards of 200 people. Those people are not all practicing Christians. In fact, those people are a representative John Spock's list, you know?And a lot of atheists as well. Now, I'm grateful that they, they as a group love singing this music, and that there's this incredible tradition. I also know that on whatever level they're experiencing this music of Handel, it is reaching for them, what is a spiritual place. And, I let the music do the talking, you know? So, so that, that is I think one of the magical things about sacred music is that it can be as deeply devotional or completely the other end of the spectrum, it can be what it needs to be, for whomever is participating in it. But it does invite on whatever, you know, whatever their level is, of, or whatever their particular strategy of faith association is, that will bring people to a transcendent place. And that to me, is, of course, an act of God. They have, you know, this person, or that person may not see it, it's such, or, you know, may not, you know, what your frame it as such, but in from my point of view, there's a lot of God going on.

But that's, you know, in the secular world, you know, you musicians, and particularly freelancers, and I still do quite a bit of freelancing. Sometimes you need to be wise about how the they where certainl elements on the sleeve, as it were, you know, or wise about people's safe space. You know, people need their safe space in order to give over and work together and be together. And, and so I think there is there's an element that's always true for, I think, for anyone about not invading people's space, but on the other hand, being of you know, of a nature that will invite the spaces to intersect, you know?

"There's a lot of God going on". Indeed. And this, too, reminds me of Ecclesiastes *3M- "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 2 A time to be born,*

and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted". Kent Tritle is planting seeds of truth through lyrics, through music performed, and creating and fostering safe spaces for those seeds to germinate, grow and one day produce fruit. He may never know or see when those seeds have born fruit, but it is apparent that he trusts God to be doing that work through him.

Changing Lyrics, the 1982 Hymn Book and Recognizing New Composers -

> *You know, gender reference, yes, the thing that hits me usually first, whether it's a hymn or a piece of choral music, you know, is is the gender element. And so for example, and Mendelssohn…there's a chorus called "Blessed are the Men who fear him". So I changed that. "Blessed are the Ones who fear him". And so there are cases where I've made simple, and I've done that in other other pieces as well, from time to time to try to change gender, when I find the militaristic element is, is difficult. And, uh, you know, I do know that when I am going through hymn selection process - I'm acutely aware of the language. I think, frankly, that the 1982 did a pretty good job for that point in time of sorting out a lot of the you know, what, my might be concerning, violent references, you know? Of course, you still run into them knowing that. Yeah, I tend not to use, (if) there's a point which…honors the wrong word, but honor it for what it is. Understand it from a different time. But it's not necessarily something that's going to say the right thing here.*
>
> *Now. There's always this tension between, you know, hey, what I when I changed the word …with Mendelssohn, I'm adulterating Mendelssohn, you know, or I'm doing something different. On the other hand, would he mind it? You know, so there are times when it can be done really well and easily. And then there are other times where it's just no, no, no, let's just step away from this. Let it rest. Let's see what we can do.*

I shared with Kent a couple of "hypothetical" instances of cultural appropriation from church choirs I have been in, to learn how he handles such. My first example was the struggle of an all white choir to sing spirituals in the vernaculars they were written. My example is that of the song written by H.T Burleigh, during his tenure as the first person of color to be the music director of any Episcopla church in North America. This happened to be at Saint George's Episcopal church in Manhattan, where as Senior Warden , (church C.E.O), J.P.Morgan cast the deciding vote to hire Burleigh, a gifted composer, musician and baritone vocalist, born in Pennsylvania shortly after the end of the Civil War. Harry Burleigh loved to compose and sing in the vernacular from his childhood, despite graduating from the New York Conservatory of Music, and garnering the attention of Dvorak.

One of the songs, sung in many Protestant churches during the lead up to Advent, *'My Lawd, What a Mornin",* was written in his cherished childhood vernacular. I wondered what Kent would do if an all white choir was supposed to sing. Stay true to the vernacular as written, to honor Burleigh, or change it to avoid cultural appropriation of the pain and suffering of generations of former slaves and their progeny?

Kent answered with an example of his own:

Well, that's very interesting. Well, we were all so much more on the edge about looking to ask the question about cultural appropriation, which means it's a completely different time than it was, you know, not so long ago even. So, whereas growing up, seeing spirituals with or without the vernacular of the time, was what we thought and I was in a completely white environment, Northwest Iowa, you know? Anyway, we didn't think it was appropriate, we thought it was a way we had of relating to a culture that we didn't even really know, you know? There's a William Dawson song, "Soon Ah Will Be Done", which we just did here. And it's written "Ah will be done soon, ah, will be done with the troubles". And so what we do is just, you know, "We'll be done with the troubles of the world". You know, so the thought and, and I've questioned, you know, I've had it go both ways with singers of color, whom I've seen. Do we want to be accurate, or "No, we're not going to do the next one"…There's so many sides to that diamond, you know, so many cuts on that gem, yeah, it's ongoing. It's ongoing.

My second example was one which I detail in Chapter 5. He listened with grave attention and sorrow, and asked if everyone was informed of the background of the music, to which I replied in the affirmative, but did not share the whole devastating, (to me) repercussions. He answered, again, with a similar story of his own.

He relates how the Cathedral has a Poet's Corner after Evensong on Sunday evenings. On a particular Induction service, Lorraine Hansberry, who wrote *Raisin in the Sun,* was the featured poet. Kent had recently learned that their was a musical based on the story, and since Kent usually chooses/plans music for these events, he researched and purchased the music, and asked his friend, Meredith Monk, an artist who sang with the Cathedral, if she would sing it. After looking at the music, she realized that she did not have the right to sing this song, that it would be cultural appropriation - of the pain and suffering of a mother, whose son is experiencing the ravages of "being Black" in America.

Kent had not been aware of the cultural implications of the lyrics, and made an about turn on his plans. And, because Kent prays about all of his endeavors, he learned, through his collaboration on an unrelated event with a literary critic at Columbia University, about a singer of color who would be singing a gospel song at the Columbia event. Kent asked her to also sing the mother's song from the musical *Raisin,* she did, and all was well.

> *You have to always, always, always ask ask, ask. I know that as a white, you know, as a privileged white person. I really need to look deeper, always deep, more deeply even than I did there. So, yeah, yeah, it's a concern. And it's always on our minds. Now, for example, here at the Cathedral, where we have, you know, our congregation is beautifully mixed. And we are very aware of spiritual arrangements, being a part of our diet throughout the year, not something that we pull out for. So we this is something that is simply a part of our regular music making. Because otherwise, if we only did it on Martin Luther King, if we only did them on Martin Luther King Day, and Pentecost, maybe because of speaking in tongues, we want something exciting, and, you know, Black History Month. That would be appropriation, you know? But for us, we can absolutely do spirituals, I'm just trying to say, I think we have more conversation about it, when we are in*

the programming phase. What we do is we program for the full year, right? In the summer before now, we always have flexibility to change things up. But we do that… so there are times when it comes up more than other times, but it's, it's certainly a, you know, an awareness that we have that we share. So, yeah, the staff. It's cathedral wide,

Other Projects and Their Implications for Social Justice:

While doing my due diligence on Kent Tritle, I see references to several upcoming projects tied to his name, *'Nation of Others'* and *'5 Female Composers'*, both of which relate to issues of social justice or at least telling a true history of this nation's immigrant past. I ask, and Kent becomes very animated.

Well, it's taking place here. You know, and so that goes back to this, you know, how do you do what you do in a secular world? And the answer is when you can, you know, have these moments with Oratorio (Society of New York). You know, it has to balance with Handel's Messiah and Bach's Mass in bMinor. But first there was 'A Nation of Others', and follows the previous work we did called 'Sanctuary Road'... There isn't a tutorial about the Underground Railroad. So when we did that, I was thinking that earlier, we were talking about, you know, what's appropriation? Or what's casting? Because of the cost of the content of that, you know, we had, we had six African American sources, great. 12345- 5… there was just no question that this needed not to be sung by white people. That was gonna be appropriation, even though the piece was created by a couple of white guys. But it was a powerful experience…We did get a Grammy nomination. But most importantly, it was a really powerful, powerful, powerful, powerful work about the topic and what people did to get into the free land and what that was about. So, having had that…then we commissioned this piece, which takes you know, a day on Ellis Island, it's about making America great. The immigrants. Immigrants, you know, save (except) our First Nations. So this was, yeah, the premise for a 'Nation of Others' was a day on Ellis Island in 1921. And it was personal stories of people who came through what they went through - the inspection process, think that, you know, the demeaning parts of it, but then the beautiful, very, very beautiful elements as well. And it's a powerful piece to do. So, we've recorded it, and we'll probably be publishing it on, on one or, you know, on a label, the last one went out on Naxos, and I don't know where this will go. But, yes, there you go. And that, you know, that programming was very expensive to do, because doing a new work is expensive doing a new work for a chorus.

And our hope is that it'll take off like 'Sanctuary Road' has begun. 'Sanctuary Road' has now been turned into an opera. And it's been, you know, kind of all over America, and continues to be, and this has the potential to go that direction as well. So, you know, for us, that's a thrilling thing to be able to put something really relevant into the choral cannon.

Without meaning to, I interject, "*And that takes such vision. And that's got to come from God. I mean, I know you're wonderful. But that's, that comes from God". Kent doesn't miss a beat, again, because there just seems to be such humility in this man*.

Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. You know, and the factors of how things come together and how it all works. It's pretty amazing. So, yeah, "Nation of Others". And then on the other hand, you know, that, of course, "Five Female Composers" - Oh, I found, this is really interesting to me.

Kent has become as excited as a child opening presents on Christmas morning.

I mean, in terms of what, where I, where I see change, I was sent these three volumes of a new edition of works that are being published in London, called "Multitude of Voices" and these are works by women composers living in debt. And so I had looked at them, and then the pandemic happened. Yeah, so I hadn't had a chance to necessarily get into very much…as we were trying to program for virtual services, you know, hard to do things…for what we were trying to achieve. For the most part, you know, we were doing the stuff from the repertoire, that we, for example, I have done with the choir, you know, in a previous year or season. So then doing and setting it up so that it could be successfully done was a deal.

So it's not like I was plumbing new elements for programming, but going through that and going through the George Floyd experience, all of that certainly changed me. And I came back and we started programming. I pulled these off the shelf and said, Oh, my God. BINGO! So it's a thing that's happened for me post pandemic is this realization that all this "male"stuff is just like all this "male" stuff. So I looked at these books. I'm like, Oh, this is a treasure trove. I want to promote this edition. That's what we're doing. And you know, I just think this music should get out there curated beautifully. We've done other things you know - Earth songs is a publisher that puts out things and there's a particular piece called Adinu. Now, Adinu - this is a piece in I want to say Arabic and that's going to be wrong, it's not Farsi…

I look it up later and find it is Sufi.

So anyway, it's been it's definitely going to transliteration. And it's definitely what's happened to the editors who put this together are of the Muslim tradition. And so they put together music from the Muslim world. Here's the case where you can say, back to the appropriation conversation. Here's a case where this music is published and put out there so that people will have exposure to it. Yeah, if they didn't put this out there to Muslim choirs only. So it's, it's put out there and the cathedral - you know, we say that the cathedral is a house of peripheral people. And we try to honor that - back to your Shelby Spong quote, and so in that spirit, we've done works that take us way out on a limb stylistically. But that is something we tried to hone and refine - the ability to go out on a limb stylistically… We will sing things from the Bach Sacred Services (Hebrew) or Octavos, or Hinei Ma Tov, but, yeah, definitely. And, you know, back to Adinu. What was fascinating to me about that is that one of the verses has "Kadosh Kadosh Kadosh", which is Hebrew. "Holy, Holy, Holy". There we were with a moment of unification, and in that tripartite iteration.

Worship music with lyrics from three different traditions, bringing peoples together to worship and to be inhabited by their God.

I cannot think of a more fitting segue into my next, third chapter.

Chapter 3: Beyond Christendom - The Cantor:

> *Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.* Psalm 150:1-6

"So yeah, the answer is yes. Excuse me, but I incorporate song into everything that I do".

It is late on a Sunday evening, and both women on this phone call have had long days, mine being a full day of church services and then a Sunday shift at the public where I am a part time Library Clerk. I ask Cantor if she minds me getting right to the questions I have been asking my other informants, and she jumps right in, because she has to prepare a meal for her family.

I first met the Camtor at a Friday night Shabbat service, when I was attending with friends from my church, C&M, one of whom is a Christian and one who is Jewish. I had mentioned to C what my Senior Project subject matter was, and that MD had encouraged me to contact Cantor for an interview, but time had never permitted. C and M invited me to service, and it was one of the most joyful worship services I have engaged in in ages. Primarily singing, praising and worshiping, led by Cantor and the Rabbi, there was a brief homily by a member of the congregation, and a short recitation by a young man who was chanting his Bar Mitzvah the next morning. Like our Sunday morning services at my Church, this was followed by a coffee/refreshment hour.

The fall was jam-packed with work and music planning, and opportunities to engage were missed, until I learned that Cantor and some members of her choir would be joining our choir for the 2022 Thanksgiving Ecumenical service, and that we would be singing *Hineih Mah Tov,* by Becky Mann.

> *So I do incorporate song into my personal prayers to God. And they're fairly spontaneous. And they can be songs of any kind. So songs of pretty much any tradition that I happen to know. Because it is when I am expressing my feelings, that music comes to my mouth, my mind and my mouth. And that's both feelings of joy and feelings of sadness. To have my own personal conversation with God. When I'm trying to help the folks who have joined us for worship for services have their own personal conversation with God. And yet at the same time, I find often and this is probably in times of real sadness, that because I am involved in worship because I'm involved in for music, because I am concentrating so hard on others, that my emotions often spill out. But that's not my conversations with God as much as my emotions in the moment. If that makes any sense, I find that the services where I feel that I am most successful is when I have already had time to set myself up for prayer. And in doing that, although it may not look like any kind of organized anything as far as prayer is concerned. It has to do with beginning my own conversation with God. And that can be my drive home around (the lakes) that can be beginning to cook Friday Night Dinner. Which I love to do because I love to cook. I'd be sitting with my family while dinner cooks and just checking in with each other as sort of a meditation that gets me ready for worship. And sometimes that*

means that I stop and take a moment to worship on my own in order to be ready to assist the worship of others.

I am not sure if this is because we are both women, or because we have both just always sung and always talked to God, but her experience is so much like mine. In fact, in the Christian tradition, we have a scripture, In 1st Thessalonians 5, which instructs us to "Pray without ceasing" because prayer is not asking God for something. Prayer is an intimate conversation with a lover…an intimate partner in a relationship, so it naturally includes praise and joy and gratitude. And sometimes that conversation is discussing concerns and challenges, failures and disappointments, and sometimes it even includes anger or sorrow. Sometimes it is singing and sometimes, in those most intimate moments, it is silence and knowing, as one "drives around the lakes, or "beginning to cook Friday night dinner". But prayer - conversation with the one you love - should never cease.

Cantor and I are talking about how she became a cantor. She tells me she grew up in the 9th, (this woman from Georgia has no idea to what she is referring, and does not want to interrupt).

I think so, you know, I often refer to myself as an accidental cantor. I grew up in a fairly secular home, where we were members of a synagogue. We went to synagogue for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur… revolving door Jews. We stayed a little longer in that my mother loved Sukkot, and Simchat Torah. So we stayed for all the fall festivals. And we didn't have - my sister and I - didn't have a choice about religious school. Up until Bat Mitzvah and then we had a choice and I stayed, and my sister ran away as fast as she could. And I stayed because I have always felt a connection with God. And I have always loved the order in calendar and time and space that Judaism affords me, offers me so I have always felt a connection with God. And probably have always been in conversation with God and I would call that prayer. But they don't know that it is prayer. In the organized fashion. Whenever I sing, I find myself having that conversation with God, whether it's my daily warmup, during which I'm often doing 12 Other things or setting my notebooks up and my competence notebooks up for services for the weekend. I'm involved in a lot of the technology, and although I hate being involved in all the technology, when I have finished doing all of that, there's sort of a calm that comes that allows me to do the next step that will allow me to get to being in the right mood to assist others. So I'm not exactly sure that that answers your question.

Cantor's comment about the calm reminds me of another scripture from the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible, found in I Kings 19:11-13, when the Prophet Elijah was talking to God about his fear and how he was the only Holy man left, so God told Elijah: *"Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave".*

I ask Cantor if it is the “still small voice” (in some translations), or the “gentle whisper”, (in other translations).

> *I know it goes back to the order, right? I know that when I am prepared to do my job, which is to lead others in worship, and hopefully, find a moment to worship myself that I've done all the things I need to do. So I have given everybody the cue sheet to put the notebooks in order. I've set up all the technology. I've tested everything. I've done my warm up. Had a good dinner. I've spent time with my family. You know that's particularly on Friday evenings, Saturday mornings are very different. Because it's morning you know, part of the day, please because it's morning, um and so, for me, I think it's the order of things that things are in order that gives me that quietness. There are other moments where I feel that still small voice of God, and that is typically in nature. That's typically by body of water in the woods, on the mountain. Watching the seasons change, something like that. So again, I'm not exactly sure I've answered all your questions.*

“Can you go back and remember a moment and at a certain age where you became aware that you were communicating with God?”, I ask.

> *No, no, I think I've just always felt it. Yeah…Yeah, because I think I have always been in conversation with God. I've always known that there was this higher power. And I've always relied on that higher power and looked for and to that higher power, but I don't think I knew that that's what was happening until someone taught me that I could do that. And I sort of thought, oh, oh, yeah, I already do that. But now you're telling me that there's a particularly Jewish way to do that, that there was a prayer book full of stuff that could help me with that, that there's a Torah full of stuff, a Bible full of stuff that could help me with that. Let's explore that. And I went to cantorial School, which is graduate school. Yeah, I went graduate school, not really ever having studied music. I don't read music now. And not ever having studied Judaica or Jewish history. And not speaking or reading any Hebrew.*

We discuss some things which Cantor has asked that I leave out of my paper, but as we find our way back to what can be discussed, I have shared with her that in my interview with Kent Tritle, he referred the the song *Hineih Mah Tov* as a song he uses at Cathedral of Saint John the Divine - the same song Cantor herself led us to sing in the Thanksgiving Ecumenical service on November 22, 2022.

> *So you probably didn't sing a version that he knows but that's okay. The version at least this is very new. So, the Hebrew is Hineih Mah Tov, Hinei like “here we are”, Ma, which means “what or how”, Tov which means “good”. So - here we are, how good is it - shevet oskeim. Shevit is the word for “sit” or to stand, but not to physically stand because that’s an entirely different word, but “to be together”. So how wonderful is it - how good is it that ,we're right here “sitting”achim gam yachad. So, gam yachad means together. Achim is a problem, because it means brothers.*

Cantor then explains that some services still separate men and women, in the traditional synagogues and in traditional services. She also explains that in the Hebrew language, when

addressing a group, even if there is only one male in the group, the entire group is addressed in male terms…as brothers.

> *And they didn't mean literal brothers, they meant humans. Except that that's not how the word translates. So some of the newer composers have changed that word, to be a more inclusive word and some of the composers like the one resetting that piece is really fairly new. I mean, like, several years old, not several centuries old. She (Becky Mann), did not change that word. I don't know her. I haven't spoken to her and asked her why. So the question is, do we go back and change it all? Do we leave it to the way it is?Do we not do it?*
>
> *So the next thing that comes to mind is is that unfortunately there are several composers within the lexicon of music that I sang who are known to have been pedophiles. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Or who are known to have been inappropriate with women. And do we continue to sing your music?*

At this point, we discuss this whole "throwing out the baby with the bath water" conundrum. I share my struggles with ever listening to or supporting any Wagnerian music, since learning from researching my Music History final paper, that Wagner was such an anti-Semite nationalist that his entire *Ring Trilogy* is based on exterminating/annihilating the Jews, represented as dwarves who mined and worked with gold. The character Alberich, the Nibelung, is a dwarf whose love of gold causes him to forsake all love and humanity. Cantor responds:

> "*And what's interesting in part of the conversation that I have with my colleagues, for example, is, is if our congregants don't know that the piece they're singing, which has been a part of them since childhood, was written by someone who they wouldn't want to be with and who would want them dead?*

This discussion is a natural segue into the topic of cultural appropriation, and when and when not to use music in a sacred setting. I share the story which is laid out in Chapter 5. This reminds her of music she struggles with -

> *This is something that's so part of the fabric of their lives, this piece of music, and yet the composer is now known to have been abusive. What do we do that? And I think that that's what you're asking. You're just asking it about the cultural appropriation piece of it, and the Black Lives Matter piece of it. And there, there are so many pieces to it that all lead to inclusion, and all these safe spaces. And they're all difficult to know what to do with … So I'm not exactly sure it would really depend on the music of it depends on the service. It would depend on, on what was happening, but I do want to speak a little bit to the action or your description because I wasn't there. And I think one of the most difficult things about synagogue life - and I can imagine it's true about church life - is the balance of the organization. And the business. Yes. And it's, and it can't be one of those examples. You're really stuck between what's the word mission of the place of worship, and the idea that if you're not careful, you won't have a place of worship? Right? It's also a business…*

Chapter 4: Padre and the Deacon

> *15 If ye love me, keep my commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. 18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*
>
> John 14:15-18

Padre:

My friend, Padre, is the organizer of a trivia team formed from a group of friends of ours based in and around our little village in New York, who gather on Tuesday nights at a local pub on Broadway. With much cursing and camaraderie, and a healthy dose of competitiveness for the right to claim the WWE-looking winner's belt, Padre has led us to frequent victory in claiming not only the belt but the $25.00 Gift Certificate towards adult beverages of the team's choosing. When we do not win? 2nd Place still gets us a $15.00 Gift Certificate.

But who, really, is this foul-mouthed, highly competitive, cat wrangling friend of mine who keeps an eye on multiple television screens mounted into the historic brick walls of the pub, watching football, soccer, baseball, (oh, please the Yankees of course), and any other sports also playing in the background?

Padre is my priest, and one of the most genuine and loving persons I know. He loves God, he loves his two adult children, and Padre has always known he wanted to be a priest, since childhood. The trouble was that as a Catholic, Padre knew he would not be allowed to join the priesthood, and be true to himself, because Padre is a gay man.

As he explains it:

> *"An interesting story which not very many people have ever heard , I haven't even thought about this in awhile, but twice during my junior and senior year, I tried to go and visit Conception Catholic Seminary, which was in Missouri. The first time that we were gonna go, there was a snowstorm so big like for, you know , (Amy state), two feet of snow. Yeah, and the next time I was supposed to go in my friend's car and the engine blew up. Like it literally started on fire. And now I'm getting in my senior year. And I've only sent my test scores to that one seminary. I've never visited, I thought, maybe God doesn't want me to go to seminary. I knew I was gay. So I talked to my uncle who was getting ready to go to an Episcopal Seminary in New York, and he said, come and work for this church that has a big soup kitchen, Holy Apostles Church..So let me tell you, it was such an odd experience for me to go into a church that looked so much like the Catholic Church. In terms of liturgy, yeah, but there weren't denominations that ordained women, back in the day in (my state). I didn't know a woman ordained. And I met a woman priest, and I'm like, wait, here, I'm 18, ya know, 1991? Okay. And I was like, a woman priest, and this big soup kitchen. It was two, two male priests. One of them was a gay man who was out -*

I'm like, this was a new experience for me. This was, you know, this sort of this layered *upon layer, education within education, something so familiar, and yet totally brand new to me. And I landed there, and without thinking, I became an Episcopalian. I felt… I felt delivered.*

It is late afternoon, and we are sitting in the library of the church. Padre delivers his Sunday morning homilies in English at the 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM worship services, and then again in Spanish at the 12:00PM service. He is sharing with me his back story before getting into his experience with liturgical music and his supernatural or numinous experiences, and he becomes very animated with the topic of changing lyrics and hymns to embrace social justice.

*Oh yes definitely. As we've grown we have added to our hymnal, which I think is beautiful things like 'Wonder, Love and Praise', and even a whole other hymnal called 'Lift Every Voice and Sing', you know, that's an African American one…and we sang last year for what I have come to call the The Epiphany Insurrection, (*the January 6, 2021 Capital Insurrection during the Holy Day of Epiphany, celebrating the visitation of the Christ Child by the Magi). *On the one year anniversary we sang 'We Shall Overcome' that night. You were there.*

I tell Padre. "I have heard about the experience you had when you and a group of young of people were reaching out to a higher power, meditating in the chapel. Would you call it an out of body or out of time experience? Or an out of reality experience? How would you describe that, and have you had any other similar experiences?"

In some real way, time froze. And I do think, you know for God there's no tomorrow, yesterday, today. I've heard people say it's all on the head of a pin for God, what's happened…what is happening… what It will happen. It's not linear like for us. And so I felt like things, like maybe I was sucked into…like I was relieved of my ego for a moment and could feel the presence of God, and it was less about me and more about out, the connection, the strong - the feeling of being eternal with God…and even feeling, feeling that feeling in that moment.

"Have you ever had a similar experience? Or do you ever get close to that point? In church services? But even more specifically with music? Have you ever experienced where you just transported?"

Certainly. And I'll confess to you more so when I was a little boy, young kid, a teenager, when my friends were part of the - they went to the Assembly of God, which I told you, I like. Often, there were immigrants. Yeah, hallelujah church in Nebraska. And we listen to all that music. And they will, you know, they will create a frenzy. No, looking back. I'm not, I'm not going to judge but where they would, you know, lift your hands and you know, and I would be, it was, it could be. But I feel that way, less so when I'm the presider. But in a very beautiful church. And either like, I didn't listen to Queen Elizabeth funeral, but I heard a little bit of this. If I sat and listened to an entire, you know, chant and song where that beautiful choral music is, for me, they're voices of angels. And I used to sit and meditate to Thomas Tallis.

Padre begins to sing "*If ye love me, keep my commandments"* by Thomas Tallis in the 16th century, and taken directly from the scriptures found in the Book of John, and quoted at the beginning of this chapter:

> *If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father,*
> *and he shall give you another comforter,*
> *that he may bide with you forever, e'en the spirit of truth.*

> *It can definitely do it, and sometimes in my own meditation practice, I'll listen to music although not as much recently and be, but in my meditation - okay so I've evolved away from that practiced meditation. I do about 10 minutes, usually not much more. And very often, I am so focused on meditation that I don't know where I am. Okay. I will tell you I have had, Mondays I read the lectionary readings. So the books, the Bible stories that we'll hear on Sunday I read them. And then I meditate. And sometimes by the end of my 10 minute meditation, I have a complete sermon. Not from me, just suddenly*

But, when push comes to shove, and the inappropriate use of lyric compromises our church in a kerfuffle over cultural appropriation, will Padre stand strong, regardless of the potential consequences - if standing firm means losing an interim choral director immediately prior to the Advent Season? As Cantor has told me in the last chapter, "*You're really stuck between what's the mission of the place of worship, and the idea that if you're not careful, you won't have a place of worship? Right? It's also a business".*

As a participant observer, I am feeling the tautness of the tightrope which anthropologists walk when being so close, perhaps too close, to their informants and their informants' choices. Will the chord snap, and if so, will the frayed ends be able to be mended?

Deacon

Deacon, the Parish Administrator at our little village church, is also an ordained Deacon within the Episcopal Church. This is a 4-5 year process of academic study in scripture, ancient texts, and other religious traditions, which predates the orders of priesthood within the church. According to Deacon, the Episcopal Church, (the Anglcan Church in North America), consisted of only the various Diocescian bishops, who presided over the various types of sacraments, including the Eucharist, while ordained deacons ministered to the day to day needs of the parishes, like visiting the sick, feeding the poor, caring for those in prison, etc. But as the church grew and expanded, priests were added to handle the weekly sacraments, as the bishops could not be at every church within a dioceses.

Like me, Deacon had her first numinous experience when she was a child, singing in an Episcopal children's choir. As she relates it:

> *I remember sitting in the pew in the choir stall of the church. I grew up in and it brings tears to my eyes because I can remember singing the Nicene Creed. I can remember and I can connect to that in a way because it was a numinous moment - there was a moment*

where I felt the indwelling of the Spirit. We sang all of the parts of services. But remember that moment. I can remember sunlight coming in through through a stained glass window. I can remember you know, I mean it's, it's one of those moments in your life. And if if you are blessed enough to experience these moments and recognize - and we all have them - but it's recognizing them as numinous. They stay with you. You know that they're part of my inside. Yeah. Spirituality. So singing, singing for me as a child and then young adult was very important.

Deacon shares various points of experiences of numinosity, which she admits come sometimes, unexpectedly, and at others when she is searching the leading of the Holy Spirit. She experienced just such a numinous encounter when she felt lead to become a Deacon.

We were at Mariandale in Ossining. (Center at Mariandale). We were sent out to pray about something that we wanted to ask God about. And I went out and I was sitting on a bench overlooking the Hudson River, and I was sitting there praying, and I was asking God, okay, what is this about the Deaconate? You know, "Am I called to the diaconate? What, what do I need to do? Is this something I need to pursue? What do what do I do here, God?", you know, that was the prayer on my heart. And suddenly - it was a gorgeous afternoon, early spring and, and the Hudson had been calm and beautiful and looking across, the river to Nyack was gorgeous. And I'm just sitting there and suddenly out of nowhere, this wind came up. Oh, and it was driving - it was driving me from the left. And pushing towards the building where my priest was. And in that instance, I had a numinous experience of God saying, Get up and go, get up and go talk, go and talk to your priest. And I just knew the second the wind came up and started pushing literally pushing me physically that I had to come and talk to her and I didn't know what I needed to say. I just knew I needed to go to her and I went straight to my priest. And I found her inside. And I said, "I think, I think I need to talk to you about the Diaconate…I might be called". And she very calmly and lovingly said to me, "Oh, my dear (Deacon), I was wondering when you would come to me". I think that was the first time I ever recognized a numinous experience. Now since then, of course, I've been able to look back on my life and see these other experiences of singing the Creed and etc. You know, there are other moments in my life that I know as numinous. But that was a profound experience.

Deacon's most recent experience of numinosity was while attending one of our services at My church, when we sang Hymn # 333 out of the 1982 hymnal, "*Now the Silence, Now the Peace*", this past summer. She said this song, written by Jaroslav J. Vajda, in 1968, and set to music by Carl F. Scahlk - Hope Publishing Company, 1969, keeps coming to her mind and it transports her wherever she is.

Now the silence, now the peace,
Now the empty hands uplifted;
Now the kneeling, now the plea,
Now the Father's arms in welcome;
Now the hearing, now the power,
Now the vessel brimmed for pouring;
Now the body, now the blood,

Now the joyful celebration;
Now the wedding, now the songs,
Now the heart forgiven, leaping;
Now the Spirit's visitation,
Now the Son's epiphany;
Now the Father's blessing,
Now, now, now.

Chapter 5: Life Goes On, But Lyrics Still Matter

> *44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'*
> *45 "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'*
>
> Matthew 25:44-45, NIV

Part I

Shortly after my interview with MD, he announced to the choir that he was leaving us to take a position as Musical Director at a fairly prominent New York Epsicopal church. The commute from their Bronx, New York apartment to her new musical faculty position on Long Island, had become to much for MD's partner. Family must come first, and so MD had sought a new job closer to hers, such that they could split the commute, and he quickly received offers.

We were both devastated and overjoyed for them, as the new gig is prestigious, comes with a significant salary bump and, as it turns out, an apartment. But as the holy season of Advent was fast approaching, MD was required to begin his new position almost immediately, which left Our little church in the unenviable position of having to find both an interim organist/choir director for Advent, as well as begin the arduous task of advertising for and interviewing potential candidates for a permanent position.

A local New York musician of some note, with experience not only in keyboards, composition and musical production, for which he has won Grammy nominations and more, and who had previous ties to the church, accepted the interim position through the end of the year, (2022). While he has worked with various churches in the past, he is not committed to keeping the liturgical calendar in mind when choosing music, nor to creating safe spaces through choice of lyrics.

In a recent kerfuffle at our church, as we prepared for the November 20, 2022 Christ the King Sunday celebration, this interim director chose to have the choir sing the Reggae/Rasta anthem, "*By the Rivers of Babylon*" by Brent Dowe and Trevor McNaughton of the Jamaican reggae group, the Melodians, from 1970. After two practice sessions which included this piece, I asked this Interim if I could speak with him, and shared my concerns about our cultural appropriation of a song of lamentation and protest by descendants of former slaves under the brutal, hegemonic oppression of White "Christian" Colonialism and Imperialism. I also pointed out that the words, while found in several scriptures, and which also refer to the devastating circumstances of slavery and oppression of Hebrews in Babylonian captivity thousands of years ago, were still not part of the November 20, 2022 liturgical calendar and were inappropriate for a celebratory close of one season at the start of Advent.

He became very angry, insisted that it was okay because he had played this music with black musicians who did not seem to mind. I pointed out that his experience was not in an intentional worship setting, (his was in bars and other commercial venues), not in a church setting meant to create safe spaces. This interim director seemed to be oblivious to the concept of cultural

appropriation, and to the effect of capitalism in the music industry, which obfuscated the real message of devastating sorrow and pain at the hands of entitled white patriarchy. He actually crossed his arms over his chest, and turned towards the wall behind the organ bench, as he told me he was not discussing this any further.

Since engaging in the first step of Jesus's own 3-Step instructions to handling conflict within the church, as found in Matthew 18:15-17, by approaching our interim choir director, in private, to discuss my concerns about the cultural appropriation of Dowe and McNaughton's song of protest and lament, I asked Padre to go with me to speak with him as well - which is the 2nd of the 3 Steps which Jesus requires for conflict resolution. Padre refused to go with me to talk to the Interim - as he was in fear that the Interim might walk out in the middle of the Advent season when the church most needs an organist and choir director.

Because I was not allowed to engage in Step 2 of Jesus' Commandment, I then moved to Step 3, and wrote a letter to Padre, my Vestry, as well as to members of the choir, explaining the history of White Cultural Appropriation, and including a short, academic article written by Katrina Lacey who was at that time a doctoral candidate at Arizona State University. Her article, entitled *Rastafari, Reggae, and Resistance,* discusses this very aspect of cultural appropriation of Reggae music. "*For the Rastafari, the Babylon system represents all of the exploitative and oppressive practices in Jamaica (in particular) and Western society (in general). This oppressive system began to come under increasing scrutiny in reggae music. Reggae lyrics, like the above, are indicative of the reggae protest songs popular during the 1960's and 1970's".*

I even took Psalm 46, which is part of the liturgical scriptural setting for November 20th - Christ the King Sunday - and adapted it to the music composed by Dowe and McNaughton, as our steel band was also playing the music during the bi-lingual, multi cultural service.

As I had explained in the letters, the lyrics appropriated the pain and suffering of the disenfranchised peoples who were ripped from their homelands on the continent of Africa, and forced violently into slavery, hundreds of thousands of which ended up in South and Central America and on the Caribbean Islands, where their descendants still struggle under ever-changing, sometimes brutal regimes which were set up by Western European and U.S powers. I iterated what the definition of cultural appropriation was.

And, because I was met with resistance from both Padre and the along the lines of, "Well the song has scripture in it", I included another scholarly article addressing the violent, anti-LGBTQ Jamaican music of the hyper-masculin Jamaican dance club scene, based on scripture and set to the same "happy" rhythms and music, entitled *Battyboy must die! Dancehall, class and religion in Jamaican homophobia,* by Winsome Marcia Chunu, of Ohio University..

I was then contacted by several Vestry members, including the Senior Warden, (in Episcopal churches, like the CEO), that this would be discussed at the following Tuesday night Vestry meeting, but that in their opinions, the best solution would be to remove the singing of the lyrics from the service.

The morning after the Vestry meeting, I was summoned to a closed door meeting with Padre, our Senior Warden and our Junior Warden and another Vestry member. I was yelled at by both Padre and our Junior Warden. In fact, the Junior Warden yelled at me, pointing her finger, and told me that I had wasted her time with my letter and the articles I had included. Both Padre and the JW said cultural appropriation was done all the time, and as examples they cited music by both Elvis Presley and the Beatles. I pointed out that if their music was culturally appropriated, it was in a secular setting, not within the very sacred spaces of a church setting, meant to protect people, and that they were mixing apples and oranges.

The JW then told me that I needed to shut my mouth and give more respect to Padre, as he was a man of love. The JW accused me of being a racist for even bringing this up to the Vestry. And, Padre told me that while he had been at the an recent Episcopal gathering that previous weekend, he asked several peoples from the Caribbean if singing this song would be cultural appropriation. He told me, that "they" said "No", and that "they" thought I must be a racist for bringing this up.

Furthermore, I was told that I had alienated every single member in the choir with my letter, and when I noted that I had been contacted by two choir members and two vestry members who agreed with me, he admitted that he had only talked to four members from the choir. Padre and the JW demanded to know who the members were which supported me. He started naming off the remaining choir members whom he had not actually spoken with. Oddly, one of the two vestry members, who is also a male member of the choir, and is one of the Vestry members who emailed me thanking me for the research and declaring that we should not be singing the song, was sitting at the table that morning, in the meeting. I turned to that individual and asked why he had emailed his adamant support, but sat in agreement with Padre and the JW that morning. He shrugged and said he guessed he had changed his mind, and had hoped this sort of meeting would not be necessary.

I was then informed that I was being removed from my position on the Worship Committee and Search Committee for a new Music Director.

As I had already begun to sob, they relented and came around to hug me, saying they loved me, and had only done this for my own good. But there was no love in that meeting. Jesus could be found nowhere in that angry, vitriolic display. Christ was absent from the name calling diatribe of a parishioner who was trying to do the right thing, and who had followed Christ's own instructions on how to approach conflict, as found in the Book of Matthew, chapter 18.

I was devastated at their reaction, noting that they were very concerned about two things.

First, Padre said he wondered if I was going to go above his head to the dioceses, and then made a joke about how I used to report to the GBI in my former occupation researching public corruption. Two members asked what the GBI was, and so I explained it was the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

Secondly, they wanted to be sure that I not make a show of my protest by walking out of the choir loft when the song started, as the Interim had suggested, nor of attending the service to sit only in the congregation, because this would arouse suspicion and questions. I was told,

however, that I could stand with the choir, in the choir loft and not sing, if I wore my COVID-19 Mask, because no one would realize I was not singing. I chose to absent myself from the November 20th Christ the King service at my church, and instead traveled to New York City, where I attended and sang with the choirs of the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in Manhattan, for their Christ the King Even Song Service, an annual event within the State of New York

Since that Sunday, other members of both the Vestry and Choir have come along beside me to encourage me, and to tell me that they support me, and that I did the right thing in challenging the use of the Dowe & McNaughton lyrics for a joyful celebration. I have stayed quiet since that meeting several weeks ago, speaking only when spoken to at other church gatherings.

This kerfuffle in my church will not destroy us. And, as Christ taught us to do, I must turn the other cheek, go back into choir, sing with humility and grace, but speak up in love and grace, again, if and when we are about to do something unloving and metaphorically, but lyrically tone deaf. After all, it is okay to get into a little "Good Trouble", as the late Georgia Congressman John Lewis called it, because - lyrics matter:

Jesus was a Rebel…Jesus spoke TRUTH to POWER…Jesus never said "Alright, let us just get through the Passover and then we will deal with those Pharisees who are oppressing the poor." Indeed, Jesus became the sacrificial Paschal lamb during the Passover of his last year. Jesus never said to the rich synagogue leader, sincerely seeking Jesus' opinion about his wealth and position, "Oh, I get it. You are a famous, wealthy, Grammy award winning music producer, so, you do not have to worry about following my commandments". Jesus dealt with each person and each problem as they asserted themselves - healing some, correcting others and condemning actions by those in power.

By the rivers of Babylon or
Verse 1
By the rivers of Babylon
Where we sat down
And there we wept
When we remembered Zion
Chorus
For the wicked carried us away
To captivity
And required of us a song
Now how shall we sing the Lord's song
In a strange land?

Psalm 46
Verse 1
There's a river of Life in us,
Refuge and strength
An ever present help
In our times of trouble
Chorus
For the Lord of Hosts is with us
Come behold His Works
He causes wars to cease
He breaks the bow and He shatters the spear
And He burns the shields
Teresa Watson for Christ the King
Sunday, November 20, 2022

MD oft times had us sing an anthem by David Hurd - *We Are Not Our Own.* It speaks beautifully, tenderly, alternating between metaphors of humanity, but also specifically addressing concerns of the way we handle social justice. Verse 4 reads: "*Therefore, let us make thanks giving, And, with*

justice - willing and aware, give to earth and all things living, liturgies of prayer". But, MD is no longer here to call for social justice and awareness, and my cries have fallen on (mostly) deaf ears.

Part II - Accident/Catalyst…Then Choice

> ***If I speak/sing in the tongues[a] of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal****…Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.* ***It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs****. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.* **Saint Paul - I Corinthians 13, NIV**

I began this Senior Project with joyful anticipation to learn and discover more about what I see as a slowly moving impetus by the Episcopal Church to create safe spaces in which anyone who walks through our doors can experience and engage with the divine and numinous…to experience transcendence. I established my field site in my own parish church, as a participant observer, expecting to encounter little push back or controversy. But even as Emilio Spadola writes about in *Forgive Me Friend: Mohommad and Ibrahim,* I find that unforeseen events have the potential to create broken relationships with primary informants, creating an abrupt change in fieldsite, such that the boundaries of relationships are strained and challenged, and can ultimately break, unless the second trigger or catalyst to the unforeseen, is applied - forgiveness.

This second trigger is no accident, but one of choice, and there is no guarantee that once relationship has withered on the vine, forgiveness will be offered. However, if and when it is, these same pre-existing boundaries can become stronger and more flexible, allowing for both individual personal as well as mutual growth of those immersed in relationship. Indeed, Spadola, writes, "Mistakes, by their sheer incalculable, accidental quality are quintessential gifts. And they are recuperated through the return, the act of forgiving'. (*Forgive Me Friend: Mohommad and Ibrahim,* 2011:754).

Thus it is unfolding since the "accident" of MD's resignation, and the consequential hiring of the Interim Organist/Choir Director.

Since the angry and accusatory, name-calling admonishment by my priest and several Vestry members - of me - I have returned to choir, singing first on Tuesday evening, November 22, 2022 at our Interfaith Service, where clergy and leaders from several faiths, including Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Christian Science participated in reading of scriptures and prayers from their respective faiths/traditions. Our choir was joined by the choir of a nearby Jewish temple, and their cantor led us to sing a Hebrew song of love and acceptance, *Hineih Mah Tov,* by Becky Mann. That cantor then sang a solo, *We Rise Above,* by Batya Levine, which was so joyful, we all started singing and clapping on the chorus:

> Verse 1
> We rise, humbly hearted.
> Rise, won't be divided.

Rise, with spirit to guide us,
RISE!
Chorus
In hope, in prayer, we find ourselves here,
In hope, in prayer, we're right here

Healing among and careful attention to other faiths and cultures, as well as awareness and sensitivity to those who have been oppressed by our Western hands, was the theme of the ecumenical service.

The irony is not lost on me.

But, I must be the first to humbly forgive, and work to heal division in my Vestry and Choir. I am working towards this in my cries of lament and sorrow over how I was treated. "Forgive them, and humble me to love them, Lord", is ever present on my mind, and joy is filling my heart again, as I chant through words in a language I do not know, the meaning of which I am unsure. So, too, lyrics fill my heart from anthems MD had us sing in months past, which challenge me, because lyrics matter. Lyrics, for instance, found in the anthem by Rosalind Herklots, music by William Bradshaw, and arranged by MD for us - *Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive*, whose words in the second verse are, "How can your pardon reach and bless the unforgiving heart, that broods on wrongs and will not let old bitterness depart".

Perhaps my favorite lyrics about letting go of division and resentment can be found in the Gregorian Chant, now also set to countless compositions - "Ubi Caritas", which MD oft times had us sing and/or chant for an anthem, based, in part on the scripture at the Last Supper, the night before he was crucified, when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, telling them to love one another, promising he would be in their midst... In pur midst. It also draws from elements of I Corinthians 14: 4-8, "*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails*".

Ubi caritas
Latin Text
Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor.
Exsultemus, et in ipso jucundemur.
Timeamus, et amemus Deum vivum.
Et ex corde diligamus nos sincero.
Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
Simul ergo cum in unum congregamur:
Ne nos mente dividamur, caveamus.
Cessent iurgia maligna, cessent lites.
Et in medio nostri sit Christus Deus.
Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
Simul quoque cum beatis videamus,

Glorianter vultum tuum, Christe Deus:
Gaudium quod est immensum, atque probum,
Saecula per infinita saeculorum. Amen

English Translation
Where charity and love are, God is there.
Love of Christ has gathered us into one.
Let us rejoice in Him and be glad.
Let us fear, and let us love the living God.
And from a sincere heart let us love one.
Where charity and love are, God is there.
At the same time, therefore, are gathered into one:
Lest we be divided in mind, let us beware.
Let evil impulses stop, let controversy cease.
And in the midst of us be Christ our God.
Where charity and love are, God is there.
At the same time we see that with the saints also,
Thy face in glory, O Christ our God:
The joy that is immense and good, Unto the
World without end. Amen.

Love "does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs" and "Let evil impulses stop, let controversy cease. And in the midst of us be Christ our God".

Scripture and Lyrics to live by, indeed. Let us, therefore, create safe spaces with music and lyrics within which we can encounter the Numinous and Divine…where we inhabitants of the Anthropocene Epoch can experience Transcendence, and perhaps change the trajectory of violence and destruction in our world.

But, love and forgiveness must start with me.

Chapter 6 : The Elephants in the Room - Materiality, Mediation, Aural Prosthesis, and Market Commoditization of Intended Sacredness

When I was a child, growing up at Ft. Benning, Georgia, my siblings and I would oft times make "phones" out of two tin cans, paper cups or other cylindrical, open ended objects, connected with string or wire. As hard as it is to believe, we actually transmitted vibrations from one point of contact to the other, and could hear and understand some of the garbled words from the sibling at the other end. It was both an aural and tactile experience, as we could both hear our sibling's words from the other end, as well as feel the vibrations being transmitted into the "receiver". Basic laws of sound, physics and mechanics could thrill us with the magic of the other worldly communication.

In many of today's churches, homilies, sermons, music and more are amplified with microphones, and, as became necessary during the COVID Pandemic, across streaming services such as ZOOM and FACEBOOK Live. More sophisticated, to be sure, than a child's tin can and string, but the effect is similar. My own church is no different. Our listeners, like those in Blanton's 2015 book *Hittin the Prayer Bones: Materiality of Spirit in the Pentecostal South*, can experience the community of a gathering…can feel connected to that community. Indeed, engaging those present in the sanctuary and those watching from home, allows for a multitude of church processes to continue…even the annual Pledge Drive to fill the struggling coffers which pay salaries, feed the poor and and keep the lights turned on.

In fact, it is Pledge Season, now, at our church. Advent Season, Pledge Drive Season, 'collect large donations before the end of the year tax deduction justification escapes us' season… none of which are good seasons to be without an organist or a choir director. So, the pressure on a Priest and Vestry in a struggling, post-COVID economy is palpable. Perhaps it is understandable that concerns about cultural appropriation could be set on the back burner…after all, it is just for one Sunday. If those in church and at home can enjoy a little lively reggae music which contains scripture, perhaps the tithe pledges and offerings will continue and even grow.

But does this place us in the same position as the money changers in the Temple of Jesus' day?

One can experience the numinous, other worldly charismata - anointing of the Holy Spirit - through these mechanical means, with the touch of a finger to connect a device to satellites beaming communication around the world in the blink of an eye. For Blanton's informants, it was the "Divine Ear", or the technology of the radio which allowed connection to sacredness, as if present there in the room. "The prominent practice of radio listening, in combination with the aurally saturated metaphors of early Christianity ("Faith cometh by hearing," as an example), significantly influences the way many of the charismatic faithful, broadcasters and radio listeners alike, experience and understand practices such as intercessory prayer, faith healing, and glossolalia". (Blanton, 2015:14).

Does the fact that people are experiencing numinosity or transcendence via a mechanical or digital device make the experience less real? In a recent Senior Seminar at SUNY, Purchase College, I led a discussion on worship through music across various religious disciplines. Near the end, I asked the class if they thought the numinous and divine could be experienced if the

worshiper were not present, in time or space, as they listen to a recording of such music. The consensus was that, indeed, music's impact, spiritual or not, was not dependent on whether or not the listener was present in time and space, but could be experienced as if the music were living outside of those constraints, through recording, streaming or broadcast.

Sound is eternal.

As Science and Physics journalist David Niels explains it, in his article for ScienceAlert.com, while humans may not be able to hear sound in space, because there are not enough particles in the vacuum of space for sound waves to hit and interact with, sound waves do still travel, becoming weaker and weaker until they transform into heat waves. But even Black Holes produce sound, "which emanates the lowest note scientists know about so far: it's about 57 octaves below middle C and well below our hearing range (about a million billion times deeper than the sounds we can hear). You'd expect to be able to measure about one oscillation every 10 million years in a black hole sound, whereas our ears stop short with sounds that oscillate 20 times per second". (Niels, D., *Sound Can Travel Through Space After All – But We Can't Hear It*, 2015).

Sound indeed seems to be a never ending energy, and so worship to/and communication with an alterity by a worshiper singing and praying out loud continues into eternity. But it is this very eternal characteristic of all sound which makes it just so mediable, which in turn causes a feeding frenzy of capitalistic vultures, who circle and descend to the faithful, and who then glitz up music meant to minister to a group of faithful, turning worship into money through sales of recordings and merch, and organized, highly produced pop culture concert gigs. I am reminded of a question by a classmate in the same seminar where I was presenting, when "G" asked if I was familiar with *The Miami Boys,* a group of ever matriculating young, (teen and pre-teen), Hebrew performers along the lines of BackStreet Boys or Boys to Men…(insert any boy band over the last several decades, which draws huge crowds of adoring fans), who perform songs of worship Hebrew.

I am not a fan of the glitz, as I am not a fan of televangelists who perform works of healing for their audiences, because it seems less like worship, and more like showmanship and performance for money with contrived pseudo-healings and miracles. But as our class discussed it, there was a consensus that this did not necessarily take away from the young men who are singing and dancing their scriptures. They could, and probably in many cases, are, sincere in their beliefs and worship to their God. But the question of agency then comes into play. Are they, their talents and their belief, at their preteen years, being manipulated solely to line the pockets of their directors, producers, and choreographers? How fat are those recording contracts? Is it wrong…is God glorified and pleased? Most of us have an opinion, but does this mean that if even in the heart of even just one child member that true worship is occurring, and that if at least in one of hundreds of thousands of listeners is truly worshiping God in "Spirit and in Truth"…could they not be experiencing the Divine?

Indeed, in Hebrew scripture, in Chapter 18 of the Book of Genesis, we find the telling of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham pleads with God to spare the city if in it can be found 50, then 45, then 40 and so on, down to 10 righteous men. God agrees to spare the city if

even only ten righteous men can be found….So, perhaps, God's spirit can be worshiped and engaged with even just one pre-teen Miami Boy.

With the ever expanding and evolving technologies of communication, hawkers of charismata - real or otherwise manipulated for consumption by the Consumer Faithful - can produce theurgical orientation for their listeners through prosthetic intervention of/by the Holy Spirit. As Blanton writes, "Senses of transcendence are infected, attuned, and augmented in particular ways by the religious mediations within the worship context". (Blanton, 2015:18). And, visual images can, of course, now be televised or streamed across multiple platforms, whether telephone wires, cable, broad band or the capture of data bouncing from satellites beaming transmissions. Which begs the question: What will the next great charismatic prosthesis be? From where and to where will faith intersect with the numinous? How will theurgic orientation be constructed for the faithful? Perhaps aural and tactile experience, outpourings of emotions and rapturous joy and a sense of the divine will simply be transmitted via the prosthesis of neural implants.

Mediation, aural and visual prosthesis, enhanced worship, money-changers in the Temple…commodity fetishism. These are the elephants in the room which threaten to damage all of the delicate sacraments and rituals of worship, but ultimately, musical worship is not destroyed, and those of us who participate in it, rejoice in the ability to just be in the numinous, divine presence of our God.

Chapter 7: The Liturgical Calendar: Engaging in Ritual to Summon the Divine and to Engage in Social Justice

In order to understand how and when a particular piece of music is used in any Episcopal church, or any church with roots in the Anglican Communion, one must have an awareness of the liturgical calendar. But, what is the Anglican Communion?

The AC is one of the world's largest Protestant Christian communities, spanning the globe in 165 countries, and comprising millions of people. The hierarchy from top to bottom is Province, (41), Extra-Province, (5), Dioceses and Parrish. My church is in the State of New York, but for the sake of anonymity of most of my informants, will not be identified by parish or diocese. There is no central governing authority, and the various provinces are autonomous. In fact, while the issue of Female and LGBT ordination was thought to be settled years ago, since the death of Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, last year, many Anglican churches in Sub-Saharan Africa, including archbishops of Nigeria, Rwanda and Uganda, refused to attend the diennial Lambeth Conference, in England. In order to make peace, the Arch Bishop of Canterbury, Justin Welty, affirmed the 1998 policy which rejects "homosexual practice as inconsistent with scripture", but said that diocese who chose to honor LGBT rights, including ordination and marriage, would not be sanctioned. According to Padre, while at the the conference, an old colleague of a New York bishop, the Rt. Reverend Mary Glasspool, herself a lesbian, married to Becki Sander, refused to take Holy Communion with Mary because of it. This issue, this human right, is a key component of the change the Episcopal Church in America is trying to effect.

However, all churches within the Anglican Communion follow the same liturgical calendar, as do several other Protestant denominations, such as the United Methodist Church and the Lutheran Church. There are seven Liturgical Seasons within the Liturgical Calendar, corresponding to significant events in the life of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, (hereafter Jesus), believed by Christians to be the Messiah promised to the Hebrew, (Jewish) peoples of ancient times:

The Cycle of Light - is the umbrella of the first seasons of the Liturgical Calendar, and relates to the ancient Hebrew, (Jewish) prophesy by Isaiah, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned". (Old Testament, Isaiah 9:2).

1. Advent - is the first season of both the Cycle of Light and of the Liturgical Calendar, beginning four Sundays prior to Christmas Day, set aside to commemorate the unknown birth date of Jesus. It should be noted that the first day of the Liturgical calendar corresponds roughly with Thanksgiving Day in the United States. This year, 2022, Christmas actually occurs on Sunday, and so the calendar starts fresh on Thursday November 24, 2022 and the Advent Season officially begins on Sunday, November 27, 2022. Advent runs through the 12 Days of Christmas, starting with December 25th and running until Epiphany.

2. Christmastide or Nativity - begins on December 25th, Christmas Day, and runs through 12 Days, celebrating the twelve Tribes of Israel, of which Jesus' lineage comes. It anticipates the

twelve apostles or disciples whom Jesus will choose to continue his work after his death, foretold in ancient Hebrew writings;

3. Epiphany - is celebrated on January 6th, and commemorates the visitation of Mary, Joseph and Jesus by the Magi, (aka Three Wise Men), when Jesus was a toddler. Note, most unchurched and many churched folks think the Magi visited the infant baby and his parents on the same night the shepherds did, but not so. However, in attempting to capture all of the important events in Jesus 33 year life, in a condensed one year period, story lines get blurred.

The Cycle of Life

4. **Lent** - is the pre-Crucifixion,(execution of Jesus), time when Christians seek to repent and mourn the impending execution of Jesus at the hands of the religious elite in conspiracy with the occupying force of the Roman Empire. Supplicants, (believers and followers of Jesus), engage in various sacrifices of humility and fasting;

5. **Eastertide** - Marks the crucifixion, (formal execution of Jesus by the Roman governing authority on a cross). Easter always follows the Hebrew/Jewish calendar for Passover, celebrated for when the Israelites, (Jews) were led to freedom by Moses - specifically the night that the Angel of God sent to take the first born male of all Egyptians, "passed over" the homes of all who had painted their door lintels with the blood of a sacrificed lamb, to repent for sins and to honor God. The Messiah, according to ancient Hebrew texts, would be the final Passover Lamb, (Paschal Lamb) necessary to repent for sin. Jesus became the sacrificial lamb for the world.

The Cycle of Love:

6. **Pentecost** - this season marks the event when the Holy Spirit, part of the Holy Trinity God/Triune God - (God the Father, God the Son Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit), visited the 12 Apostles and other believers who were gathered together waiting for supernatural intervention, as Jesus had instructed them to, after his resurrection from death, and before he supernaturally ascended into heaven. This event, found in the New Testament Book of Acts, included the supernatural expression of praying, singing and speaking in other tongues, which were foreign to those who were singing, speaking and praying, but which was understood by foreigners visiting in the area. It also marks the beginning of Christianity, called simply, at that time, "The Way", an offshoot of the Jewish Religion, as so many believers were Jews. It was during this critical period of time, through the first century A.D., when believers/followers of "The Way", began what is essentially the first form of Communism in the Western World:

Acts 11:29 states: "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea." The phrase "To each according to his needs" also has a biblical basis in **Acts 4:35**, stating "to the emissaries to distribute to each according to his need".

II Corinthians 8:8-15: "8. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. 9. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. 10. And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. 11 Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. 12 For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. 13 Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. 14 At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, 15 as it is written: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little."

Acts 4:32-37 - 32. All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34. that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35. and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. 36. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), 37. sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

7. Ordinary Times - This period, often included as part of Pentecost, is called ordinary, simply because it is ordered or numbered, (i.e. 1st Sunday After Pentecost, 2nd Sunday After Pentecost, etc); and follows through the summer and fall months of the Gregorian Calendar. But, as Bobby Gross writes in his book, "Following the Christian Year", "Yet, our usual sense of the word applies, since this is the non-feastal part of the year. But it is not ordinary, from a spiritual point of view. Pentecost sets the overall theme: Christ is present in the world through the (Holy) Spirit, transforming the individual Christian and empowering the church for mission. In this season, we renew our commitment to love God with our whole being, and our neighbors as ourselves". (2009:25).

The Liturgical Calendar ends in late fall with Reign of Christ Sunday, or Christ the King Sunday in November, celebrating Christ's heavenly kingdom, and praying, as we do every day, that His Kingdom will come, (on earth) as it is in heaven. The start of a new Liturgical Calendar begins the following Sunday, to mark Advent, again. It is within this liturgical calendar framework that we, as Episcopalians, practice ritual with which we seek to create safe spaces for supplicants to "Summon the Divine, and Engage Social Justice".

Conclusion: But Why Does All of This Matter? Skepticism Leads to Discovery

> *24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."*
>
> **Book of John 20:24-25**

Why does it matter that music directors, a priest or an ordained deacon, who deals with parish administration, including typing and retyping the changing lyrics for the music program, or a Jewish Cantor, believe we need to create safe spaces for worshipers to experience the numinous and divine within religious music? Skeptics about these transcendent religious/spiritual experiences which we are attempting to foster would point to Geertz' definition of religion, as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing those conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."(Geertz, C. *Religion As A Culture, 1993:87-125*).

But we find in James Bishop's *Encyclopedia of Religion, Society and Philosophy*, this observation, "Of course, writing for the *Academy of Religion*, W. Richard Comstock suggests that "Even the representations of art and literature have an "aura of factuality" about them, though they make no ontological claims. The proposal would seem to have little to commend it when taken as an essential definition" (6). For Comstock, the best Geertz's definition does is to refer to religion as "a system of symbols", but this itself does not provide a succinct definition capturing the essential feature that determines what religion is. (Bishop, 1966).

Then again, others suggest that Tanya Luhrmann's work goes even further, to suggest that those claiming to have intimate relationship with God(s) are on the slippery slope to psychotic breaks. However, a thorough reading of her ground breaking work, *'When God Talks Back',* in which she lays out her exhaustive ethnographies, and structured clinical research conducted with psychologist Howard Nussbaum and his graduate student cohorts, reveals something much more, and undefinable. Luhrmann had already tested her informants in multiple psychological and personality scale tests to try to get a fix on what was going on when people said they could hear God speaking to them in prayer, including the Launey Slade Hallucination Scale, and the Tellegen Absorption Scale, the latter having been developed by Nussbaum and his students.

With Nussbaum and his students, they grouped the informants' responses by age, gender, race, etc, and their type of experiences were subdivided into "focus" clusters, "senses" clusters, "person-like" clusters, and then these same informants' responses were compared to the Tellegen Absorption Scale.

After four years, what Luhrmann determined was that persons who prayed regularly, also scored higher on the Tellegen Absorption Scale, which reveals how various peoples use their mind, even when holding absorption constant. "*If I in effect removed absorption from the analysis, by correcting for it, (I will call this holding absorption "constant"), the length of time somebody prayed everyday was significantly related to whether they said they had seen a vision or heard a*

voice. That was striking". (2012:197). **"***I would not call myself a Christian, but I find myself defending Christianity…. I do not think of myself as believing in a God who sits out there, as real as a doorpost, but I have experienced what I believe the Gospels mean by joy…I began to,pray regularly under the touteledge of a spiritual director, and I began to understand the parts of the church teaching, not just as so many intellectual doctrinal commitments, but as having an emotional logic of their own.* (Luhrmann 2012: 325).

For all her attempts at defining what encounters with God were from an intellectual, clinical aspect, she found it was a deeply personal experience which could not be dissected. This squares with what Jeffers Englehardt writes with regards to religion and it's music, "*Both ethnography and historiography appeal to Enlightenment reason, the hermeneutics of suspicion, verifiability, critical reflexivity, and the nonabsolute, nontranscendental worldliness of secular knowledge (Said 1983), which is what locates ethnomusicology and historical musicology in the discourses of the social sciences and humanities as opposed to religious discourses*. (*Music, Sound and Religion,* 2012, 299-307*),* In quoting Friedson's 2009 work, Engelhardt underscores why religious music is a gateway to transcendence. "*Yet the effects and affects of what can be called religious musics may arise precisely because music is not humanly organized sound. Rather, the musicking body and subject may be a sonic medium for divine revelation, spiritual presence, and cosmic union, reframing (or effacing) the role of human agency in the efficacies of religious musics (Friedson 2009, 9)*. Ibid 299-307.

Each of my informants,MD, Padre, Deacon, Kent Tritle, Cantor, as well as myself, have experienced marginalization, trauma and struggle. And for each of us, worship music has enhanced our encounters with God, and has been a conduit which has enabled us to cross that liminal divide into a place of transcendence, where time and space do not exist, and where/when we are in the presence of, materially engaged with the Mysterium Tremendum…God.

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