

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

WORSHIPING IN THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS:
WESLEYAN-HOLINESS SPIRITUALITY AND CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP
ORDER, WORSHIP, AND SERVICE

A CLOSE STUDY OF EARLY CHURCH ORDER LITERATURE AND
THE FORMATIVE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN
WESLEYAN-HOLINESS CONGREGATIONS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY
SPIRITUAL FORMATION

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ALBANY, GEORGIA 2023

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Date of Defense: February 26, 2024

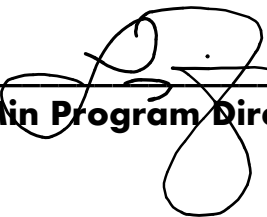
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ABSTRACT

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Worshiping in the Beauty of Holiness: Wesleyan-Holiness Spirituality and Christian Discipleship Order, Worship, and Service

This dissertation presents a close study of the *Didache*, *Church Order Literature*, and early church worship liturgies. This research suggests these early documents preserved a means for spiritual formation within Christian community that can be emulated in any Christian worship context through intentional embedding of the core teaching of the Christian faith (*orthodoxy*) or right belief in tandem with (*praxis*) or embodied practice in the liturgy by used to order and guide (*ordo*) corporate worship services, small groups, Christian fellowship, Christian conferencing, and Christian service.

Further, this study proposes that the earliest worship elements, forms, and spiritual practices in Cyril's Jerusalem ushered in a universally accessible Christocentric imaginative worship form that became a means for the formation of Christian identity through immersive experience in Christian community. The culmination of this dissertation is an invitation for Wesleyan-Arminian leaders and congregations of the Georgia District and USA Canada Region to critically examine and honestly evaluate what the order, worship, fellowship, church administration, and service of their local church family is proclaiming and producing.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My dissertation journey has been a wonderful pilgrimage for me academically and spiritually. I have experienced mountaintop highs, mundane middle-of-the-road fatigue, and debilitating emotional lows as I prayerfully conducted research, compiled, and analyzed data, and authored this dissertation. Through it all my husband has been my ardent supporter, spiritual friend, and loving companion. I also want to thank my family for the support and love that they have extended during my spiritual formation pilgrimage at Nazarene Theological Seminary. It would not have been possible for me to finish this dissertation pilgrimage without the prayers, hugs, and life-giving connection I have received from my parents, children, and grandchildren. I must also thank my church family, fellow pastors, and Georgia District leaders who generously gave of their time and allowed me to learn from them and the Georgia District Nazarene congregations. Lastly, I want to thank Dr. Jacob Lett, my advisor, Dr. Brent Peterson, my second reader, and the directors and instructors of Nazarene Theological Seminary for sharing their expertise so that pastors and leaders can be equipped to serve and lead ministries that make space for holy encounters with God and form Christian communities where God's people experience Christ-like spiritual formation by the transforming grace of God.

INTRODUCTION

It may seem odd to be reading a spiritual formation dissertation that explores ancient Christian worship with a view to provide insight for spiritual formation in Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness churches. One may question what Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness pastors and congregations who now minister in a post-Enlightenment, post-Modern, post-Christian era can learn from the *Didache*, *Church Order Literature*, and early church worship liturgies. This lens from the past may appear as an unnecessary theological excursion. Pastors and laity alike who may not have had the privilege of studying Christian history and the apostolic Christian Faith in a Christian secondary institution, university, or seminary might overlook the genius of the catechetical instruction that has been preserved in them for Christians in the current age and for future generations. Quite often pastors and congregations have not been afforded the luxury of experiencing Biblical history and contextual expressions of the Christian Faith in diverse worship contexts, or through participation in an international Christian pilgrimage of holy sites. In many local contexts pastors and their congregations have heard truly little of ancient Christian documents and the catholic (universal to all Christians) faith essentials shared by all Christians, and the origins of the many forms of Christian worship that now exist and are practiced among the nations of the world.

The research conducted in this dissertation supports the assertion that spiritual formation is occurring in every context, through every worship form, and by participation in the rhythm and flow of every community. Although often overlooked, a strength of the worldwide holiness and great commission movement in the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition always has been and is still today a call to spiritual formation through immersive experience and participation in Christian community. It is through participation in a local church community of faith that individuals

understand their Christian identity as a beloved son or daughter of God and member of the Church Universal, which is understood to be the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). The work of God's people is a *leitourgia*, or sacred ministry to the Lord as holy, appointed priests. (1 Pet. 2:9).¹ The way in which the household of faith lives in Christian community forms their identity, shapes their worldview, and directs the way in which its members and the community-as-a-whole are ordered and live in relationship.

This dissertation is organized as an academic pilgrimage through the *Didache*, *Early Church Order Literature*, Fourth-Century Christian pilgrimage, and Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness inherited worship forms. The journey of spiritual formation gained through Christian pilgrimage is examined through the eyewitness testimony of two early pilgrims and the Imaginative Christocentric Worship that they experience in Cyril's Jerusalem. The early Christian pilgrims become a living liturgy and serve as holy ministers for the adaptation, transmission, and implementation of immersive, participatory, imaginative worship in their Christian communities. The applicability of the ancient spiritual formation and worship forms to the current ministry landscape of the Georgia District of the US and Canada Region is investigated and evaluated. The culmination of the academic pilgrimage is a proposal for addressing the current loss of Christian identity and stunted spiritual formation within Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness churches within the diverse worship contexts of the Georgia District.

¹ Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers 1995, Electronic Database. Seattle: Biblesoft, Inc 2002, 2003, 2006, 2011), <https://biblehub.com/thayers/>.

CHAPTER ONE
Surveying the Ministry Landscape of the Georgia District
Local Churches of the US and Canada Region

*“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith;
test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless,
of course, indeed you fail the test?” 2 Corinthians 13:5 NIV*

Dissertation Research Context

The research context of this dissertation is the Georgia District local churches of the US and Canada Region. There is growing concern in the Georgia District and the US and Canada Region for declining congregations, decreased participation in worship and discipleship, and minimal community engagement and impact.² The burning desire of pastors and congregations is often expressed in terms of a hope for an outpouring of God’s Spirit upon their churches that will bring spiritual renewal to God’s people and revival that results in vibrant, vital churches.

However, often there is tremendous diversity in what pastors and congregations mean by spiritual renewal, revival, and vibrant, vital churches. At times, there is a desire to return to an earlier time, resembling the Israelites who mourned for the loss of the “pots with meat” that they had when they were slaves in Egypt (Ex. 16:3). Clearly, there is a distortion of how well-off they were in Egypt. The life of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt had been wrought with hardship, peril, subjugation, and mourning rather than comfort, safety, freedom, and rejoicing; yet they longed to return to Egypt.

² Gary Hartke, *Annual Statistics from the General Secretary’s Reports: Church of the Nazarene Growth 2012-2022*, (Lenexa: The Global Ministry Center, 2023) <https://resources.nazarene.org/index.php/s/P4PWDYp89p2avgJ>.

Though pastors, church leaders, and congregations recognize that it is foolhardy to romanticize any previous era because there was no earlier time in which the church was without challenges and problems, often that is exactly what pastors, church leaders, and congregants do. At other times, there is a push for new leadership and comfortable, cultural expressions of worship that mirror the syncretistic, idolatrous worship on the high places that plagued God's people.

Many hours of research have been conducted to document the number of religious adherents there are in the world, the number of adherents of Christianity, to document religious identity trends and theological beliefs, and to ascertain why mainline Christian denominations have declined and are still declining worldwide and especially in the United States.³ There appears to be a sharp divide between Judeo-Christian values and the social mores (socially constructed morality) and cultural norms (social expectations of behavior) of post-Christian America and within the theological landscape of global Christianity. Most alarming is the willingness of evangelical denominations to compromise essential Christian doctrines for the sake of pragmatism that furthers the implementation of a culturally defined common good, which is touted to be free of religious bias.

³ Philip Jenkins, "Damned Lies and Statistics" in *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* Third Edition (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 108-112; Pew Research Center Staff, *Religious Landscape Study* (Washington: Pew Research Center, 2014), <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/>. This study is an ongoing research project that began with a sample population of 35,000 participants from all 50 states. The study documents religious affiliations, beliefs and practices, and social and political views; Pew Research Center, *America's Changing Religious Landscape* (Washington: Pew Research Center, 2015), <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>. The statistics presented in this study are particularly pertinent to the trends identified in the Nazarene churches of the Georgia District and USA/Canada Region; Gina A. Zurlo, *Global Christianity: A Guide to the World's Largest Religion from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022), 1-4. This work compiles data from the countries of the world and documents the decline of Christianity in North America, the spread of Christianity in Africa, and the diversity of Christian denominations.

The religious landscape of the United States now includes an individualized spiritualism that rejects all meta-narratives in favor of a pluralistic personal religion without any allegiance to any world religion.⁴ In this age, more than ever, worship that faithfully tells the Good News of God's full salvation, is crucially important. There is a critical need for a return to holy living as a sanctified people of God. The conversation is no longer about worship order and music styles. Rather, for many in the American religious landscape, the question is about Christian identity and "authenticity."⁵ For pastors and Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness congregations the task is to identify an effective way in which God's salvation may be proclaimed and God's people nurtured so that authentic spiritual transformation occurs within the Christian community and equips its members to share the gospel of Jesus Christ across the diverse and fragmented religious landscape of the United States and the diverse global Christian contexts.

At the time of the writing of this dissertation, disillusioned people of all ages now exist within the Church Universal.⁶ There now exist within the Christian community people of every generation living upon the earth today who are willing to accept a new expression of the

⁴ Bruce A. Chadwick, Richard J. McClendon, A Review of *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, by Christian Smith, with Melinda Lundquist Denton, in *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 4: Issue 2, Article 17, (May 1, 2006), 167-170, <https://scholarshiparchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol45/iss2/17>. This book review presents key findings of the study conducted by Christian Smith readily available and documents the changing theological views and values in the United States among teenagers.

⁵ Andrew Root, *Faith Formation in a secular Age: Responding to the Church's Obsession with Youthfulness, Ministry in a Secular Age Vol. One* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. 2017), 130-135. Root explores both authenticity and its "ethic" and contends the ethic of authenticity or the search for what is real, provides common ground for bridging the gap between the gospel of Jesus Christ and the skeptical members of American culture who truly desire truth and authentic experience with the divine.

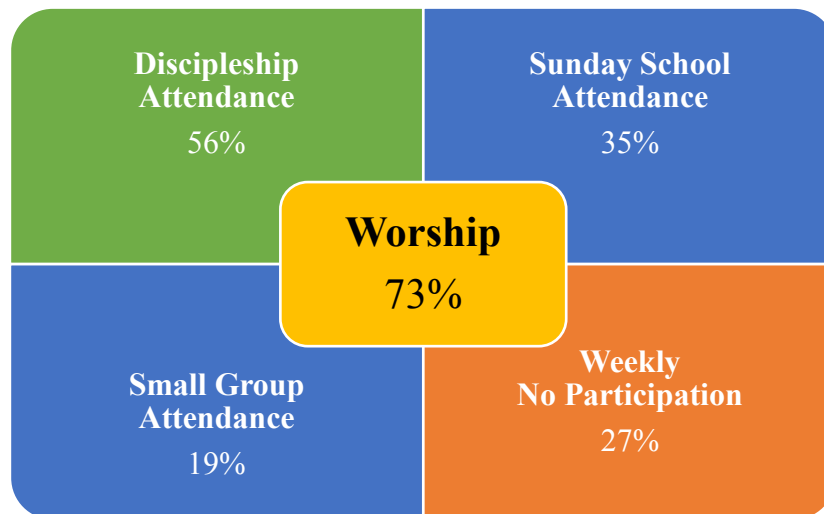
⁶ P.R.R.I. Staff, "2022 P.R.R.I. Census of American Religion: Religious Affiliation Updates and Trends," *Public Religion Research Institute*, February 24, 2023, <https://prri.org/spotlight/prri-2022-american-values-atlas-religious-affiliation-updates-and-trends/>. This report documents religious diversity and indications of religious confusion that has led to the rejection of the apostolic Christian Faith.

Christian Faith if it will result in preservation of the status quo and avoid cultural conflict. In this same Christian community, there are others who desire to dismantle the institutional church entirely and usher in a new era of social reform and universal acceptance of all spiritual expressions of faith. Fortunately, there always have been and still are faithful disciples of Jesus Christ who are willing to stand for the essentials of the Christian Faith but also recognize the need to step out in faith to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ through genuine love for God made visible by our love for each other and the way in which we care for our neighbor (Jn. 13:34-35; 2 Jn 1:6).

However, it has become painfully apparent that although the people of God who are members of the Nazarene churches in the Georgia District genuinely love God and desire to make disciples of Jesus Christ, the combined ministry impact of Nazarene churches has fallen short of their heartfelt desire and best ministry efforts. An examination of the 2012-2022 Decadal church summaries and detailed statistical reports of Nazarene churches in the Georgia District demonstrate significant declines in full membership, worship attendance, and engagement in discipleship ministries. The 2022 Nazarene Research Statistical Report data submitted by the pastors and leaders of the Georgia District Nazarene Churches records that at the end of 2022 the number of organized churches decreased from 83 to 81 due to the merging of two congregations. The organized Georgia District Churches reported that holiness is taught, and ongoing discipleship ministries are in place. According to the pastoral and Georgia District statistical reports the congregations are hearing holiness doctrine proclaimed and have access to district level discipleship programs as well as national and global discipleship materials and opportunities. But the same statistical report also indicates that the Georgia District Church

discipleship responsibility list decreased by 586 people, the NYI membership decreased by 87 members, and only 89 children are enrolled in Caravans.

If the reported Discipleship Responsibility total of 6,218 (adjusted by -586 loss reported in 2022) is compared to the 4,530 Average Weekly Worship, 3,511 Discipleship Attendance, 2,169 Sunday School Attendance, and 1,170 Discipleship Attendance the following percentages demonstrate a disconnect between the preaching of holiness doctrine (*orthodoxy*) and engagement in Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness spiritual disciplines (*orthopraxis*). Using a comparison of the average weekly attendance statistical data and the spiritual disciplines of Worship, Bible Study, and Participation in immersive Christian Community the percentage of Georgia District Church members and participants who regularly engage in these basic spiritual disciplines are demonstrated in the following graph.



The data utilized for this chart was collected from the Church of the Nazarene General Secretary's 2012-2022 Church Growth Statistical Report published in 2023 by Nazarene Research Services.

The Georgia District statistical data indicates that even long-established churches have a high attrition rate, that is more members are lost to death or transfer to other denominations each year than are gained through birth, professions of faith, transfer of membership into Nazarene churches, or new members gained.⁷ This problem has been recognized by the leadership of the Georgia District and steps have been taken to plant new churches and encourage organized churches to launch new ministries. In 2023 the Georgia District New Church Development Report indicated a gain of 13 New Starts (5 English, 5 Hispanic, 2 Haitian, and 1 Congolese).⁸ However, the declining engagement in immersive Christian community and ministry remains prevalent among established organized churches.

There are several other statistics that signal a disconnect between holiness teaching and ministry practice. They are: 1) The lack of development of leaders through ongoing Christian Lay Ministry Studies (CLT). The 2022 Church of the Nazarene Growth Report indicates that of the 4, 474 organized churches and 745 not yet organized churches of the USA/Canada Region only 210 offered Christian Lay Training; 2) The limited intentional discipleship through Christian education of children and youth through Wesleyan-Arminian-Holiness programs and curriculum. In the Georgia District the statistics provide the following snapshot of the small-scale investment, engagement, and ministry impact of the discipleship ministries of the registered Georgia District Ministries: 26 of the churches held a VBS, 7 churches operate a weekly Caravan program, there are 67 NYI Chapters, and 2 Christian Schools; 3) The scope of missional outreach is predominantly participation in Nazarene Missions International demonstrated by the 72 churches who indicated they participated through compassionate

⁷ Daniel Sperry, "General Secretary Releases 2022 Statistics," *Nazarene News*, Jan. 25, 2023, <https://nazarene.org/article/general-secretary-releases-2022-statistics>.

ministries. Yet, the necessary components of local investment in relational missional discipleship and congregational buy-in needed for authentic, healthy spiritual formation in immersive Christian community is not evident in the ministry statistics or ministry footprint of the churches in the Georgia District or the USA/Canada Region. If the current declining trend reflected in the 2012-2022 decadal report continues it will result in the closure of many of the Nazarene churches in the Georgia District as their membership dwindles and financial resources are exhausted.⁹

Although a declining trend may be affected by a myriad of social and economic factors, the declining participation in the discipleship ministries of the churches in the USA/Canada Region is an indicator that there is a need for honest evaluation of the way in which spiritual formation is occurring in Nazarene Churches through the preaching of holiness doctrine. Although it is uncomfortable to acknowledge, nearly half of the Georgia District Nazarene congregations are being spiritually formed by the culture far more than their participation in immersive Christian community. The loss of engagement in spiritual disciplines or Christian discipleship is not peculiar to the ministry landscape of the Georgia District. Tragically, this appears to be true of many Nazarene congregations of the USA Canada Region and all mainline denominations.

The Church of the Nazarene Annual/Decadal Statistical Comparisons report published by the General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene documents a 13, 2 92-member decrease of total church membership, a 73,716-member Decadal decrease, and a 11.29% decrease in the US and ¹⁰Similar statistics are shared by numerous Nazarene churches in the US and Canada

⁹ Georgia District, *109th Georgia District Assembly* (Dublin: May 31 – June 1, 2023), 41.

¹⁰ Hartke, "Annual Statistics from the General Secretary's Reports," 2.

Region. Likewise, leaders of Nazarene churches in our global church community have identified a loss of Christian identity and theological confusion regarding doctrine and procedural anomalies exacerbated by ignorance of, or intentional disregard for, Nazarene polity. The Board of General Superintendents of the Church of the Nazarene sponsored a *Holiness Today* publication entitled *Nazarene Essentials* in 2015 as a response to an urgent need expressed by Nazarene church leaders serving around the world, for a resource to educate new believers in the basic teaching of the doctrines of the Christian Faith from a Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness perspective and the history and polity of the Church of the Nazarene.

The reality of the ministry context of the Georgia District, and the USA Canada Region, is that although the pastors and church leaders report they are teaching Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness doctrine, there appears to be declining engagement in worship attendance, discipleship, and service within the walls of the church as well as minimal missional engagement in the ministry context in which the churches are located. It is tempting to attribute membership losses and worship declines to the aftermath of the Covid-19 Pandemic, but the Decadal reports of the Nazarene Churches in the Georgia District demonstrate a pattern of decline prior to the Pandemic with a few churches reporting spikes in membership in the previous decade and modest increases in membership, worship, and discipleship attendance prior to the Pandemic. Further, the Statistical Summary report displays the lifespan of each of the churches in the Georgia District and documents a pattern of membership, discipleship, and ministry footprint declines that began before the year 2000, and in some cases as early as the 1990's (See Appendix A).

There have been attempts to utilize small groups and restructure corporate worship with culturally familiar worship content that limit or eliminate denominational distinctives. In some

Nazarene churches, altars, pulpits, communion tables, and crosses were removed from their sanctuaries. In these churches the attempt has been to foster a more open worship space that resembles an auditorium with a platform and immersive multi-media experience. In many churches, sanctuaries and worship elements have remained the same but family life centers have been built and alternative worship opportunities have been added. Lastly, some church buildings and worship elements have remained essentially unchanged, and ministry and mission have been reduced to a weekly corporate worship service. Sadly, the Christian spiritual formation in every context appears to have fallen short of the sincere efforts of God's people to make disciples of Jesus Christ who live the faith that they profess.

This dissertation research of Christian spiritual formation reflected in the life of the ancient church has led to an exciting possibility of worship renewal and recovery of Christian community that faithfully catechizes (trains and equips) the members of local churches. The genius of Christian spiritual formation preserved in early church documents that led to a transformed mind with an understanding of Christian identity and bold, holy living may be utilized in the churches of the Georgia District and the USA Canada Region to infuse Nazarene congregations with the essentials of the Christian Faith and the beauty of worshiping in holiness of heart and life.

Dissertation Process

The hope of this dissertation is that it may be useful to the people of God in the Georgia District and the USA Canada Region of the Church of the Nazarene. It is the premise of this dissertation that immersive experience in Christian community that includes participation in Christocentric Corporate Worship in tandem with the practice of spiritual disciplines are effective and necessary means of spiritual formation. The goal of this dissertation is to present a practical

way by which local churches may intentionally reclaim the corporate worship service and their Christian community as a means of Christian spiritual formation. The identification of the means of grace available to us through the Fourfold pattern of worship (Gathering, Word, Table, and Sending) and spiritual disciplines (works of piety and works of mercy) modeled and experienced in Christian community provide a powerful, visible witness of our local churches as a household of faith living in *communitas* which may be understood as dwelling together in Christian unity (Gal. 3:28).

This dissertation has been designed with a focus for worship renewal in the diverse worship contexts in the Georgia District and USA Canada Region of the Church of the Nazarene. It is the desire of the researcher that the presentation of the case studies and supporting research of the ancient church order documents and Christian pilgrimage will become a catalyst for worship renewal that leads to honest evaluation of current worship orders, theological content, and local church discipleship patterns in conversation with the genius of the early church catechesis. The continuing refinement of the *Didache*, *Church Order Literature*, and early church liturgies demonstrate ongoing prayerful and intentional shepherding of the people of God within immersive experience in Christian community. Their witness is still speaking. The bold witness and ministry impact of the early Christians illustrate that the intentional investment in prayerful examination of order (1 Cor. 10:14-22; 14:26), worship (Heb. 12:28), and service (Jms.2:26; Matt. 10:8) can lead to the identification of missing faith essentials, correction of malformations, and equip the pastors, lay leaders, and laity to intentionally fulfill the call of Christ given to the Church Universal to preach, teach, and live as faithful witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The witness of the early church stands as an invitation for the Georgia District leaders, pastors, and laity to critically evaluate congregational worship and community practices that take

place within the local church bodies. Further, the task of honest examination of the ministry impact includes the identification of practices that have caused harm or that hamper meaningful transmission of the gospel of Jesus Christ within the ministry context. Finally, the boldness of the early church leadership serves as a reminder that speaking the truth in love does not mean acceptance of sinful social mores, rewriting essential doctrines of the Christian Faith for the sake of unity in the church, or minimizing the teaching of entire sanctification to accommodate sinful life patterns in thought, words, and deeds. Although painful, Christians, especially Nazarene Christians with a testimony of entire sanctification, who desire to worship in the beauty of holiness, have an invitation to examine the spiritual formation that is occurring in the worship and Christian community of Nazarene churches.

The Church Order documents of the Christian Church were examined with a focus on the first five hundred years of the ancient church. Particular attention was given to the way in which the early church congregations fulfilled their mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ and essential worship patterns, theological content, and Christian discipleship practices that remained the same regardless of cultural or historical context were identified. Expert studies that explored the history, orthodoxy, and praxis of Christian worship, Christian pilgrimage, and Christian spiritual formation were utilized to ascertain their implicit connection with the Nazarene worship, discipleship praxis, and patterns of Christian community. The case studies of Dirk R. Ellis, the Gen X neo-liturgical churches presented by Winfield Bevins, and the worship thesis and project of Brent D. Peterson were studied and integrated considering the connection between Nazarene worship and spiritual formation in Wesleyan-Arminian-Holiness congregations.

The available statistical data for the ninety-three churches of the Georgia District listed in the Church of the Nazarene Research Services database and the 2022 and 2023 Georgia

District Assembly Reports were studied. The online worship and available published media of twenty-three Georgia District churches were viewed and analyzed for theological content and evidence of worship liturgy and immersive Christian community. A survey of thirteen pastors, seven worship leaders, and thirty-eight worship participants from the survey sample context was conducted to identify indications of spiritual formation or malformation within these Georgia District churches.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Conversations That Explore and Address the Loss of Christian Identity and The Transformative Value Of Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Worship Liturgy

*“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer
to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.
But do this with gentleness and respect.” 1 Peter 3:15*

Literature Review

Brent D. Peterson and Recovery of Christian Identity through Intentional Worship Planning

The work of Brent D. Peterson presented in *God’s Invitation to Become Fully Human* offers a unique perspective through his “Worship Mosaic” and practical exploration of Christian worship and the value of Christian community for Christian spiritual formation in Wesleyan congregations. The theological grounding for worship liturgy and the recovery of Christian spiritual formation by participation in Christian community is a strength of Peterson’s work and is directly applicable to the focus of my dissertation. The worship mosaic expertly encapsulates a beautiful vision of how human beings may worship in the beauty of God’s holiness. The worship mosaic states:

Christian communal worship is the glorification of humanity as a divine-human event where God offers transformation and healing to help people become more fully what God created them to be and do. God breathes (inhales) and gathers in individual Christians to heal, transform, and renew them as the body of Christ to breathe (exhale) them out to continue the ministry of the incarnation that participates in the kingdom of God more fully coming. The consummation of the kingdom will come, and God will be all in all.¹¹

¹¹ Brent D. Peterson, *Created to Worship: God’s Invitation to Become Fully Human: Created to Worship* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2017), 11.

Peterson identifies the grounding of his theology of his worship mosaic in the Christian understanding that human beings are created in the image of God to be in loving relationship with God and each other. He rightly asserts that to be fully human is to live for God rather than self.¹² From this perspective God defined human identity as human beings, both male and female, have been created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27-28). Although the first humans sinned and brought corruption, suffering, and death into the human experience and creation, God invites all who will accept his invitation to be recreated in Christ by his divine action to receive eternal life and be restored, or in Peterson's framework be the human beings we were created by God to be (Jn 3:16).

As new creations in Christ, Christians have a new heart of pure love for God that is Spirit created and enabled with an ability to love God, love self, and love others (2 Cor. 5:17; Jn 13:34-35). There is a connection between the creation account, in which God created both male and female in his image and then animated them with his breath (Gen. 2:7), and the recreated life that Christians now live as new creations in Christ by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:10).

Another important aspect of the beginning of human beings and their portion of the story is the marring of human identity through rebellion against God. Peterson makes an especially important observation when he states that human beings always have a choice to worship God, or as our first parents chose, not to worship God. In Peterson's perspective, the choice to reject the love of God and turn away from God is the sin of "failing to be fully human."¹³ The Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness tradition understands that anyone who will accept the invitation of God to be

¹² Peterson, *God's Invitation to Become Fully Human*, 30-33.

¹³ Peterson, *God's Invitation to Become Fully Human*, 34-35.

rescued from the devastation and loss brought by sin will be forgiven, cleansed, restored, and then kept or shielded by God himself for all eternity (1 Pet. 1:5). However, Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness tradition also understands that the sanctifying work of God makes it possible for Christians to experience *theosis* and live in dynamic, ongoing, unbroken communion in God. Peterson proposes that in corporate worship as God is glorified Christians tell this story, the story of God's salvation. Through embodied worship Christians remember the gift of salvation that they have received. As God is glorified in worship Christ is lifted up and the Holy Spirit works through the mystical (mystery of the faith) experience of His presence and then sends them or exhales them to go out live as the new creations in Christ.

According to Peterson, there is a life-giving “breathing” of God that “gathers in individual Christians to heal, transform, and renew them as the body of Christ to breathe them out to continue the ministry of the incarnation that participates in the kingdom of God more fully coming” which occurs in communal worship.¹⁴ Once again the allusion to the divine creative work of God through his breath is evident. It is also unmistakable that there is an underpinning of the day in which everything will be restored that was lost in the fall. The kingdom of God is present but has not been completely revealed or experienced in its fullness as the kingdom of God. Therefore, Christians must be gathered (breathed in) or called by God to worship and then (breathed out) or sent by God for “doxological mission.”¹⁵ It is God's Spirit that is gathering the church and then breathing new life so that healing and Christ-like transformation occurs during the communal gathering. This metaphor connects the work of the Holy Spirit with spiritual formation and underscores that true spiritual formation culminates with restored, equipped

¹⁴ Peterson, *God's Invitation to Become Fully Human*, 41.

¹⁵ Peterson, *God's Invitation to Become Fully Human*, 44.

believers who glorify God as they are “exhaled” to live in life-giving relationship with each other in the church and then as ministers of the gospel of reconciliation to their neighbors (2 Cor. 5:11-21).¹⁶

If as Peterson suggests, communal worship is a means of grace in which the Christians gathered to worship are to experience the transforming presence of God, then it follows that the content and forms utilized in corporate worship must be glorifying God, telling the story of salvation, and making space for the divine-human encounter with the Spirit of God. Peterson does recognize that when placed in this light there is a heavy burden placed upon those who are responsible for leading worship. The strength of this work is the honesty in which Peterson evaluates the role of pastors and worship leaders and acknowledges that true worship planning begins with prayer and is enabled by the Spirit of God.¹⁷ From this vantage point, Peterson outlines practical ways for pastors to plan communal worship in cooperation with worship leaders, and musicians.

Perhaps the most important practical offering that Peterson makes for recovering Christian identity through intentional communal worship planning is the emphasis he places on educating the congregation so that they understand the importance of baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and holy days of the Christian year, such as Pentecost.¹⁸ Too often, pastors, worship leaders, musicians, and congregants unknowingly dismiss the use of important symbol, sign, and ritual because they are foreign to them. In fact, very often introducing a powerful service element that challenges a long-cherished tradition or personal preference creates cognitive dissonance and emotional

¹⁶ Peterson, *God’s Invitation to Become Fully Human*, 44

¹⁷ Peterson, *God’s Invitation to Become Fully Human*, 64

¹⁸ Peterson, *God’s Invitation to Become Fully Human*, 92-96.

discomfort that leads to anger and mistrust if an unintentional idol or sacred cow has been revealed by the Holy Spirit through the liturgy to the worshipping congregation.

Nevertheless, Peterson has placed an important light upon the necessity of prayerful planning that has intentional embedding of essential doctrines presented in culturally and contextually appropriate worship forms. There is no doubt that the recovery of communal worship in which there is a purposeful order that marks time with the Christian year is an invitation to experience spiritual formation in Christian community through corporate worship that is embedded with the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith. Further, the *ordo* or service order suggested by Peterson includes time-honored spiritual disciplines such as: Scripture reading, prayer, singing, proclamation of the Word, confession and pardon, regular participation in remembering baptism and receiving the Lord's Supper, a purposeful passing of the peace of Christ, and sending forth. The implication of worship that consistently guides worshipping congregations through the Theology of Worship Mosaic may be considered at the very least a viable beginning for the recovery of Christian identity.

Dirk R. Ellis and Recovery of Christian Identity by the Recovery of Anglican Liturgical Models

The historical exploration of the liturgy of the Church of the Nazarene that may be observed in the literature and worship practices of the diverse congregational contexts proffered by Dirk R. Ellis in *Holy Fire Fell: A History of Worship, Revivals, and Feasts in the Church of the Nazarene* underscores the formative power of corporate worship liturgy and participation in the life of the local church. While the work of Ellis is a treasure trove for historical documents, his hypothesis for recovering Christian identity through worship liturgy differs from the hypothetical model presented in this dissertation.

Ellis suggests that early Nazarenes abandoned spiritual practices and Anglican worship liturgies to their own detriment. However, he appears to downplay the value of hymns, gospel songs, choruses, testimonies, mentoring, and theologically sound proclamation. A closer investigation of the theological content of the free worship of early Nazarene reveals a sound, scriptural proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ that led to holiness of heart and life. Nonetheless, Ellis contends those who desire to preserve their inherited local traditions do so out of ignorance and nostalgia. While this was undoubtedly true of some of the local congregations of the holiness movement, and sadly is still true of some long-time Nazarene churches, the research conducted for this dissertation suggests Ellis has constructed and avowed an unnecessary demarcation in that all worship, whether formal or informal, is a form of liturgy. Therefore, an examination of formal and informal literature supports that it is the focus and content of the worship and practice of the local church that becomes a place of spiritual formation for God's people.

An example of a holiness model of worship that was a contextual adaptation of Anglican liturgy is the following order of worship: Invocation, One or two hymns, Reading of Scriptures, Prayer, Hymn, Sermon, Invitation hymn, Lord's Supper, Hymn, and Benediction.¹⁹ The theological content of the service elements included in a holiness camp meeting revival or holiness model of worship can offer a rich and effective presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and be embedded with the essentials of the Christian Faith. For instance, an impromptu invocation offered by a pastor, worship leader, or lay leader who has prayed and thoughtfully prepared his or her soul will be enabled by the Spirit of God to pray as the understanding of the

¹⁹ Phillip V. Miller, "Historic Models of Worship" in *Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship Vol II of The Complete Library of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville: Star Song Publishing Group, 1994), 252.

congregation is opened by the same Spirit. While the language may be simple and peppered with colloquialisms, it is just as effective as a formal liturgical invocation, or possibly more effective depending on the context, if the congregation is led into the presence of Almighty God.

An adaptation of a response liturgy described in the holiness journals is the reading of a hymn by the pastor or worship leader that is then sung by the congregation. Once again, the hearing and singing of a hymn that presents scriptural truth in a contextually appropriate worship form becomes a means of grace through which the Lord moves. Chapman affirms the divine aspect of extemporaneous worship while underscoring the necessity for service planning, preparation, and a balanced order of worship. J. B. Chapman stated, “Spontaneity is wonderful for occasions, but it is not dependable as a regular affair. The preacher should have a definite idea of where he [or she] is going from the time the first hymn is announced until the last handshake at the door. If an unusual outpouring of the Spirit directs the meeting in other channels, he should always be glad...But if the meeting proves to be “usual,” it should have order.”²⁰

Ellis rightly states that “words, actions, rhythms, and patterns found within a church’s worship are not inconsequential” because they do have the “capacity to assist in shaping us in the image of Christ” if they are healthy but may also lead to “malformation” if they are haphazard or lacking the ground of sound doctrine.²¹ Ellis observes that Nazarene worship tends to place a premium upon the preaching of the Word through the sermon and the altar call in which people respond to the message that has been preached. He notes that worship services have tended to be

²⁰ Dirk R. Ellis, “The Structure and Characteristics of Sunday Worship” in *Holy Fire Fell: A History of Worship, Revivals, and Feasts in the Church of the Nazarene* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 87.

²¹ Dirk R. Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell: A History of Worship, Revivals, and Feasts in the Church of the Nazarene* (Eugene: WIPF & Stock, 2016), 6.

constructed with the sermon as the focal point or “primary means of grace,” almost to the point that everything else is superficial or extraneous in the corporate worship. In this worship model a premium is placed upon the rational decision that will be made in response to the sermon.²² Especially important to note is the imbalance that continued with a shift in the 1990’s and 2000’s which made music the central or primary “means of grace” so that many congregations utilize worship and music interchangeably. The issue is the same in that an imbalance and over emphasis on one element and portion of the service is emphasized and the rest of the service inadvertently becomes secondary and subservient to the emphasized service element, such as the music in the later Nazarene worship orders.

It is particularly important to note that Ellis draws upon the work of Mark Searle and his work with the “bodily dimension of worship” that is experienced through liturgy.²³ The implication is that as a congregation experiences the rituals and liturgical worship that has been intentionally crafted and embedded with Christian theology and doctrine which in turn shapes the way in which worshipers think about God, respond to God, construct a worldview, and live in community.²⁴ There is a blending of anthropological thought drawn from the work of Searle that is correct in the sense that rituals do form the way in which human beings construct ideas and express them through their bodily existence. However, liturgy in and of itself cannot transform anyone into a Christ-like believer. More likely, the person will have sound ideas and struggle every day to understand why he or she is unable to overcome sinful thoughts and sinful life patterns. Ellis emphasizes the gradual effect that liturgy has in the sanctification process in that

²² Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 6.

²³ Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 7.

²⁴ Ellis *Holy Fire Fell*, 7.

he states that the “Holy Spirit works both gradually as well as instantaneously in the process of transformation.”²⁵

While Ellis states that he is not suggesting that crisis moments and instant decisions at the altar are not real he strongly suggests that the communal aspect of Christian worship is essential if the person is to become truly Christian because faith must be “lived out in community.”²⁶ The demarcation between cognitive understanding and physical experience seems at odds. To process experience human beings must have the cognitive ability to think and make sense of the experience which is a personal endeavor. Through the cognitive personal endeavor, a person constructs meaning from his or her experiences with self, God, and others. This is at the heart of Wesleyan-Arminian holiness understanding of a crisis experience or in a more millennial colloquialism “mind-blowing” or “amazing” epiphany. The personal spiritual experience is valid; and is experienced intimately between the Spirit of God and the person who has responded to the grace of God. However, the appropriate understanding of what the Lord has done in that crisis experience must be processed using the lens of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience (which includes personal spiritual experience and the testimony of the Saints/Church Universal on earth and in heaven) which as Ellis aptly states will be done in Christian community.

Ellis sites the work of Mary Douglas who suggests that movement away from Christian ritual results in a “contempt of external ritual forms, the private internalizing of religious experience, and a move to humanist philanthropy.”²⁷ Perhaps this is the crux of the matter if, as Ellis contends, the Nazarene church has lost the richness of the rituals that were inherent in the

²⁵ Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 7.

²⁶ Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 7.

²⁷ Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 9.

first holiness groups because of their rich Anglican heritage. It seems plausible that over time the marginalizing of the sacraments and rejection of liturgical practices has led to an individualized understanding of the Christian faith and worship rituals that have become an incomplete presentation of the whole story of God and His salvation. Ellis rightly challenges Nazarenes to examine worship practices and the way in which they are spiritually forming the people of God in the local church body.²⁸ It is a powerful reminder that from the beginning of the Wesleyan movement “the liturgy of the church, both in its ritualization and sacramental life, were not inconsequential but had immense implications for Christian piety.”²⁹

Another important voice presented by Ellis is that of Phineas F. Bresee who did avoid the imposition of a unified, compulsory worship liturgy, but offered the liturgical practice of the ancient Church as a guide for the strategic planning, theological content, worship forms, and order of Nazarene worship services.³⁰ He advocated for the following basic liturgical form: Songs of Praise (voluntary); Hymn (read by the pastor, then sung by congregation); Prayer; Song (one verse) or Chorus; Scripture (an optional responsive Psalm may be added); Offering; Announcements; Optional Songs or prayer may be added; Sermon; and the Response to the Sermon.³¹ Bresee also encouraged pastors to invest in the improvement of the church service, avoid dependence upon “special songs,” and select the Scripture readings, the hymns, and be prepared for public prayer.³² Ellis supports his assertion that Nazarene worship was structured

²⁸ Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 11.

²⁹ Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 12.

³⁰ Ellis, “The Structure and Characteristics of Sunday Worship,” 84.

³¹ Ellis, “The Structure and Characteristics of Sunday Worship,” 85.

³² Ellis, “The Structure and Characteristics of Sunday Worship,” 86.

with the sermon as the focal point with this excerpt. However, Bresee's initial intention appears to have been to ensure that the entire service was faithfully proclaiming the Word of God and making space for Nazarene worshipers to encounter God's grace through the experience of communal worship that is embedded with the core doctrines of the faith.

Bresee's primary concern, voiced in an article in *The Nazarene Messenger* (December 1900), is for Nazarenes to avoid extremes in worship and practice regarding fanaticism, emotionalism, and formalism. Speaking in tongues within services as well as "foolishness" associated with fanaticism and "fads" were rejected; and the order and service order elements described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 are inferred and his understanding of "spiritual worship" drawn from Revelation 7:17 is explicated.³³ This attention to order, structure, theological content, and the avoidance of extremes is a hallmark of Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness worship. A prime example of its enduring character may be demonstrated by the argument made by the Africa Region District Superintendent Katambu Balibanga, which is almost identical to Bresee's, when he states, "The baptism of the Holy Spirit among Pentecostals is not a sacramental baptism, but an emotional one" which Pentecostals hold manifests itself through speaking in tongues.³⁴

The prohibition against extremes in worship is anchored in the text of 1 Corinthians 14:40. The context of this well-known and often recited verse appears in the teaching of the Apostle Paul directed to the Church at Corinth regarding the proper and orderly way to conduct a public worship gathering.

³³ Ellis, "The Structure and Characteristics of Sunday Worship," 70-71.

³⁴ Katambu Balibanga, "Part 3: Holiness, In the Pentecostal Movement" in *Africa Speaks: An Anthology of the Africa Nazarene Theology Conference 2003* (Johannesburg: Africa Nazarene Publications, 2004), 29-37.

The Greek reads this way:

Πάντα δὲ εὐσχημόνως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν γινέσθω.
All things however properly and with order let it be made or done.³⁵

The force of *panta* extends to every portion of the service and every service element including the language that will be employed. There is also a recognition that there are “all sorts of languages in the world” but there is no language that has no meaning (1 Cor. 14:11). However, sometimes the language a person uses may not be understood by others.

In the Corinthian Church, gifts of the Spirit, especially the gift of tongues, had caused chaos that resulted in a disorderly and confusing worship experience. This was the opposite of *euschémonós*, or a “conduct characterized by propriety.”³⁶ The chiding tone of this passage indicates that Paul was somewhat disgruntled with this local church because their self-seeking desire for the spiritual gifts caused them to be as a “stranger” or *bárbaros* (one who speaks a strange language, unintelligible) to Paul (1 Cor. 14:12).³⁷ While Paul does not deny the existence of praying in a tongue, he teaches that only intelligible language that builds up the church should be utilized in a corporate worship gathering (1 Cor. 14:12b-14; 26-29). This admonition is paired with *τάξιν*, (in an arranged, dignified, orderly way) and the verb *γινέσθω* (must be made or done).³⁸

³⁵ Society of Biblical Literature. *SBL Greek New Testament*, (Bellingham: Faithlife Logos Bible Software, 2023). <https://sblgnt.com>.

³⁶ Rick Brannan, “Greek Lemma εὐσχημόνως” in *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020).

³⁷ Brannan, “Greek Lemma bárbaros” in *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*.

³⁸ Brannan, “Greek Lemma τάξιν;” “Greek Lemma γινέσθω” in *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*.

The scriptural mandate calls for the use of language in corporate worship that is understood by the members of the worshipping community who are in attendance and goes even further than utilizing a common language. It must also translate to the context of the local church body so that the intended message is communicated without confusion or corruption (e.g., syncretism). This is especially important so that the individual members and corporate body are nurtured and shaped by their shared belief in God, which has been made alive by the grace of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, by the persuasion of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. It follows then that the core doctrines of the Christian Faith must be present in the worship of each local church if God is to be glorified and if its members are to live the faith that they profess and “advance God’s kingdom by the preservation and propagation of Christian holiness” revealed in the “Scriptures.”³⁹

There is no doubt that Ellis has issued an important call to remember that the Anglican worship liturgy and spiritual practices formed a solid foundation for the holiness movement and Church of the Nazarene. In fact, he is on very solid ground because for the first five hundred years of the Christian Church the shared belief of local Christian communities remained anchored in in Creator God and the supernatural acts of salvation recorded in Holy Scripture that God has done throughout human history and ultimately completed and revealed through Jesus Christ.⁴⁰ Robert E. Webber (27 Nov. 1977 – 27 Apr. 2007), an American theologian known for his work on worship and the early church, observed that the fundamental corpus of the Christian

³⁹ Church of the Nazarene, “Forward” in *The Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* edited by Dean G. Blevins, Stanley J. Rodes, Terry S. Sowden, James W. Spear, David P. Wilson (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2017-2021), 5-7.

⁴⁰ George Duncan Barry, *The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture: A Study in the Literature of the First Five Centuries* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: The Mac Millan Company 1919), 9-25, 35-42; Church of the Nazarene, “Historical Statement” in *Manual* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2017-2021), 16-23.

faith was safeguarded from heresy and faithfully transmitted through the creeds and Christocentric worship that stood fast against political pressure and the ever-changing tide of culture.⁴¹

Although Webber first published his *Complete Library of Christian Worship* to speak into the worship style debate more than thirty years ago, the force and implications of his work and the Convergence Worship Movement (1980's) speak directly to the current state of the Christian community which has fallen prey to political pressure, theological distortions, theological confusion, and cultural syncretism.⁴² Robert Webber's *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelicals Are Attracted to the Liturgical Church* (1985) was a major contributor to the Convergence Movement. As he shared his theological and personal journey with the testimony of six others who made the shift from evangelicalism to the Episcopal Church his ecumenical focus fueled "creatively blended Christian worship styles" across denominational lines.⁴³ Throughout the 1980's Christian congregations from all traditions were encouraged to find common ground and employ blended worship styles that utilized the *Book of Common Prayer* with an intentional focus on baptism and the eucharist (sacraments).⁴⁴ While there was a large buy-in for blended worship, it did not become the unifying liturgical renewal that its adherents had hoped.

⁴¹ Robert Webber, "Worship Does God's Story" in *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 30-40; 44,48.

⁴² Nathan Mee, "Convergence Movement – Timeline Movement," in *The Association of Religion Data Archives* (2023). <https://www.thearda.com/us-religion/history/timelines>. Robert Webber is recognized as the founder of the Convergence Movement because of his work to unify Christian denominations through blended worship.

⁴³ Mee, "Convergence Movement - Description."

⁴⁴ Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 229-252; 261-264.

The work of Dirk R. Ellis, who writes with insider knowledge as a pastor and professor and member of the North American Academy of Liturgy, stands as evidence that the search for common ground and quest for unifying liturgical renewal is still an ongoing endeavor.⁴⁵ Ellis describes a similar progression of “loss of “denominational identity” associated with the “absence of a liturgical theology” to that in the work of Robert Webber and Mark Searle.⁴⁶ Like Searle, Ellis appeals to a multi-disciplinary studies that underscore the formative value of liturgical practices and suggests that the rich liturgical heritage that Nazarenes inherited from John Wesley should be recovered. However, Ellis seems to gloss over the actual service orders that have been preserved in periodicals and even Bresee’s descriptions of the “liturgical thought and practice distinguishing Nazarenes from other congregations in Los Angeles.”⁴⁷

The rub in advocating a return to formalized Anglican liturgy as the solution to the loss of Christian identity seems to ignore the fact that the Anglican Church did not absolutely produce holy people through the formal liturgical forms or through the administration of the sacraments and rites and communal worship set by strict adherence to worship liturgies in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Perhaps there is a middle ground provided by the testimony and practice of John Wesley in his use of “structured liturgy” as a “conduit” for the work of the Holy Spirit in his soul or “inward religion.”⁴⁸ Extemporaneous prayer that is offered by a pastor who is guided by the Spirit, worship services that have been bathed in prayer and intentionally crafted as the Spirit has led the pastor, worship leader, and musicians, and local expressions of sacraments, rites, and

⁴⁵ Karen Westerfield Tucker, “Forward” in *Holy Fire Fell: A History of Worship, Revivals, and Feasts in the Church of the Nazarene* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), ix-xi.

⁴⁶ Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 66.

⁴⁷ Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 66-67. Ellis presents the description of lively services filled with testimonies, lively singing, and spontaneous prayers.

⁴⁸ Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 209.

rituals administered with theologically sound but language expression that is accessible for the congregation appear to be equally valid expressions of liturgy.

There is a freedom in worship that has been distinctive of Nazarenes since its beginning. The region in which a Nazarene Church exists directly influences the worship order, worship elements, and worship model through which each local congregation worships. Therefore, a one-size-fits all liturgical form is unlikely to bring about the recovery of denominational identity in the Church of the Nazarene any more than the Liturgical Renewal efforts of Vatican II safeguarded the Roman Catholic denominational identity.

The most helpful, astute insight offered by Ellis that may be applied across the diverse Church of the Nazarene worship contexts is the need for the recovery of balance in local churches so that members participate in theologically sound corporate worship, vibrant celebratory services, spiritual disciplines, and engagement in service. Further, as with all multidisciplinary efforts, ritual and liturgy must be defined, revised, and developed for use within the Wesleyan-Armenian Holiness theological framework and transmitted without confusion in the social context of local churches for them to be useful for the recovery of the denominational identity and theologically sound Christian spiritual formation.

The sin that can easily befall every church and Christian is to elevate things, such as sacramental liturgies or religious rituals that have been constructed by human beings, as the answer for the human need for God. Ellis affirms throughout his book that Nazarenes understand that there is no saving power in ordinances, sacraments, or rituals but acknowledge that the sacraments are outward symbols of the inward work of God.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, he makes a valid critique of the devaluing of the Lord's Supper which has taken root in the Nazarene churches

⁴⁹ Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 179.

who reduce it to an ordinance rather than a sacrament. The *Manual* does provide suggested liturgy for the administration of the Lord's Supper and Baptism but there does seem to be a lingering rejection of ritual and ignorance of the covenantal theology that these two sacraments embody.⁵⁰ Even so, it seems prudent to affirm extemporaneous or informal worship liturgy that proclaims the truth of Scripture and recognize that every worship form that is glorifying God and rightly proclaiming the Word of God is *litourgia*, or sacred ministering to the Lord as the kingdom of priests that he himself has made his people (1 Pet. 2:9).

Winfield Bevins and the recovery of Christian Identity by Intentional Embedding of Ancient Liturgy in Corporate Worship and Christian Community Through Contextually Appropriate Forms

The case studies presented by Winfield Bevins in *Ever Ancient Ever New* demonstrate ways in which core doctrines of the Christian faith may be infused into diverse contexts through corporate worship and Christian community. The combination of the ancient expressed through contextually appropriate liturgy, worship elements, and Christian discipleship become a powerful means by which the Holy Spirit can bring about spiritual transformation and healing. Likewise, as with any religious ritual, tradition, or community practice there is a danger of malformation if the theological content and worship elements are formed by cultural norms or directed by personal preference rather than scriptural faithfulness that leads to holiness of heart and life.

Bevins presents the results of a survey that he conducted of young people whom he identified as members of Generation X (1965-1980). According to his research Generation X are

⁵⁰ Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell*, 144, 210.

longing for authenticity, catholicity, and holistic spirituality.⁵¹ Bevins suggests that the shift in thinking appears to be attributed to cultural shifts that occurred after the Industrial Revolution. He postulates that the rise of modernity ushered in a rejection of historical religious values which were replaced by empirically based scientific constructions. Therefore, the Bible and the Christian Faith were then viewed as suspect at best and intentionally dubious at the worst, because it is impossible to empirically prove everything in the Bible and the authenticity of the Christian faith by employing the scientific method.⁵² The good news is that the Gen Xer's realize that there is much in the world that cannot be empirically proven by utilizing the scientific method. The longing for an authentic faith and sense of belonging to a life-giving community has driven many young people to search for a place where they can experience God.

These searching Gen Xer's have beautifully illustrated a new expression of Christian pilgrimage that has resulted in new expressions of monastic spirituality through silent retreat, mystic spirituality through spiritual retreats, ascetic spirituality through spiritual formation such as the Walk to Emmaus, and prophetic spirituality expressed through social activism. The trends that Bevins discovered among the Gen Xer's may be compared to the Wilderness Monks, the 4th century practice of pilgrimage and spiritual pilgrimage that is undertaken by adherents of all major religions to holy sites. Bevins observes that the wandering Gen X pilgrims are searching for authentic spirituality and genuine community experience in which they can find peace, wholeness, and acceptance.

⁵¹ Winfield Bevins, *Ever Ancient Ever New: The Allure of Liturgy for a New Generation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 33, 38, 40.

⁵² Bevins, *Ever Ancient Ever New*, 28.

Perhaps the deep desire for authenticity and belonging is a major reason that the timelessness of ancient liturgy that has been preserved and handed down from generation to generation is especially appealing to a Gen Xer or wandering pilgrim of any age who is desperately trying to find something that is truly *catholic*—common to all Christians and in existence before there were denominations. The ancient Church points to a common origin and supernatural revelation and provision of God for the Church Universal. Liturgy and religious rites provide a means in which the members of the Church may participate in the divine action of God. In this view, a sacrament or religious rite is a “tactile expression of the faith” that makes worship an embodied experience in which there is a transforming spiritual encounter with God.⁵³ The stories of young people from Pentecostal, Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Baptist, and holiness denominations who encounter the grace of God through formal liturgy in life altering ways is remarkable. Their testimonies indicate that their experiences in the worship and practices of their local church had seemed deficient or an empty ritualism. But through liturgical worship embedded with the core of Christian teaching, many of the Gen X seekers have experienced the transforming grace of God and been welcomed into a Christian community of faith as a child of God.

The testimonies are wonderful but there is difficulty with the assumption that employing ancient liturgy will result in spiritual revival and the recovery of Christian identity because there is no way to ascertain if the presentation of ancient liturgy has been received without corruption by worship participants. While theologically sound liturgy can be an effective means through which Christian worshipers encounter the grace of God and experience genuine Christlike transformation, there is an ever-present danger of malformation. Liturgy embedded with a

⁵³ Bevins, *Ever Ancient Ever New*, 33.

holistic, catholic, unifying adaptation of the Christian faith can be forming cultural expressions of spiritualism rather than recovering the scriptural understanding of Christian identity. It is interesting that Bevins included the Pangea Church in such a positive light in that they are a convergent church with a blending of Anabaptist, Episcopalian, and progressive evangelical theology as support for the positive aspects of neo-liturgical worship.⁵⁴ Bevins does recognize the possibility of spiritual malformation from liturgy embedded with theological distortions and underscores the importance of *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxy* or in simple terms right beliefs and right actions.⁵⁵ However, there is a clue to the socially charged eclectic nature of Pangea's theology and possibility of theological distortion in the following quote from the founder, Kurt Willem.

[We have adopted practices from] progressive forms of evangelicalism (not the sort on the news!): Easter Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism (lots of influence!), Wesleyanism, the missional church, emerging church, and so many more. We have a strong commitment to ecumenical relationships (to our theological left and right) and see ourselves in fidelity with all Christians who rally around the centrality of the bodily resurrection of Christ, along with the basic belief's expressed by the Apostles' Creed (whether or not they consider themselves "creedal").⁵⁶

Although the stated vision of an ecumenical neo-liturgical church that utilizes ancient and new worship liturgy and worship forms is admirable, it is difficult, as Bevins acknowledges, to see a practical way in which churches can merge diametrically dissimilar theologies and maintain the theological purity espoused by their ancient-future worship model.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Bevins, *Ever Ancient Ever New*, 132.

⁵⁵ Bevins, *Ever Ancient Ever New*, 73.

⁵⁶ Bevins, *Ever Ancient Ever New*, 132-133.

⁵⁷ Bevins, *Ever Ancient Ever New*, 133

Bevins alludes to the interviews and studies conducted by E. Byron Anderson that explored similar endeavors by United Methodists to do a new thing. Anderson documented an astounding example of unintentional neo-liturgical malformation that resulted in a skewed understanding of the sacramental liturgy of Word and Table is the case study of PUMC.⁵⁸ The governing ideal for the formation of PUMC is the Gen Xer's desire for theological unity, peace, and unconditional inclusion of marginalized seekers in the PUMC community by radical hospitality. The PUMC considers its community a "new thing" and describes its purpose as gathering:

for coffee around tables, sharing ancient and new stories and talking about issues that affect our lives and our relationships with God and one another. Then we gather around another table, and we remember our connection with God in the simple gifts of bread and drink through the story of Jesus sharing bread with his friends.⁵⁹

Anderson confirms that this description accurately describes what the PUMC does as a worshiping community. He shares that they use both non-biblical and biblical sources with a common theme. The preacher does not preach but offers a concluding conversation and invitation to the "liturgical center" where individuals who decide to participate serve themselves bread and wine.⁶⁰ The PUMC members believe that their new adaptation of the UMC communion liturgy is free of authoritarianism and provides total, unencumbered access to the Lord's Table. At PUMC everyone is free to construct their own meaning of the Table and select the level of participation that they desire (e.g. take and receive or not, light candles, place prayer requests in the baskets or not). Anderson notes that the PUMC community was only eighteen

⁵⁸ E. Byron Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity: Practicing Ourselves*, edited by Don E. Saliers (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 14-21.

⁵⁹ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 15.

⁶⁰ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 15.

months old at the time he conducted interviews and discloses that it could be considered premature to evaluate the efficacy of their new adaptation of ancient-future liturgical worship model. But he rightly observes that it is not too soon to note the governing ideal and focus of worship is hospitality and personal preference. When viewed against the ancient model of worship and the core teaching of the apostolic Christian faith it is impossible to locate the worship of PUMC as a balanced liturgy of Word and Table with right belief and right practice.

Even though it is true that the experimental liturgy of Word and Table is too new for its efficacy to be evaluated, it is possible to recognize that the United Methodist liturgy of the worshipping bodies that nurtured and shaped the spiritual formation of the pastor and leaders of the new initiative that has launched PUMC can be evaluated for efficacy. The PUMC pastor has been shaped by the interpreting lens of social justice and the premise that the authority positions in an established church are harmful and restrict access to the Lord's Table.⁶¹

Anderson demonstrates the power of liturgy to spiritually form congregants through the interviews from EUMC, a United Methodist Church that was established in 1966, with a long history of social activism through reconciling ministries, and weekly practice of celebrating communion.⁶² The most striking result of reciting the United Methodist liturgy but allowing members to appropriate the purpose of the celebration of the Lord's Supper is the emphasis placed upon hospitality and unity as a worshipping community. The weekly service ends with the Eucharist, a prayer for the church and the world, and ends with the congregation joining hands in a circle and singing *Shalom Chaverim*, an Israeli Folk Song.⁶³ There is an unmistakable shroud of

⁶¹ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 14-19.

⁶² Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 6-13.

⁶³ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 8.

ambiguous religious spiritualism which may be constructed and interpreted by the worship participants.

The following quotes demonstrates the efficacy of the sacramental theology and liturgical practices of EUMC to form its members: 1) “The sharing of the bread and cup are part of why the circle is there and why we make the circle;” 2) “The sharing of the bread and cup are part of the “Jesus story alive and how it translated this Sunday in our lives;” 3) [Eucharist is] “a sharing of the ways it has come together, all of humanity in the bread and wine;” 4) “It’s really in holy communion that the sense of being again a part of the community of faith, in every way...has been affirmed for me; 5) “I think from the beginning we sense the Lord’s Supper dramatized the grace of God in a unique way for us.”⁶⁴ The congregation has received an incomplete view of participation in the Lord’s Supper. The overarching theme presented in their communion liturgy and experience in community-as-a-whole is hospitality and the love of God and neighbor. But very few of the members of EUMC referred to the sacrificial love of God revealed in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

The English translation of *Shalom Chaverim* provided in *The United Methodist Hymnal* reads, “Farewell, dear friends, stay safe, dear friends, have peace, have peace, have peace. We’ll see you again, we’ll see you again, have peace, have peace.”⁶⁵ There is nothing in this folk song that refers to the atonement and call to live as the holy people of God. This congregation interprets peace as the absence of conflict and unilateral acceptance of all faith expressions within the membership and participants of EUMC. The purpose of this type of folk song is to

⁶⁴ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 12-13.

⁶⁵ *The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 667-669.

build community, much like school music programs and informal campfire gatherings that use *Michael Row the Boat Ashore*, and *Kum Ba Yah* to build comradery. These folk songs could be used effectively as a benediction if paired with an apostolic benediction and sending forth in which *Shalom* is understood as wholeness of God that is only possible through the acceptance of salvation in Jesus Christ.⁶⁶

The case studies and interviews presented by Bevins and Anderson demonstrate the way a church worships directs the way in which its members think, believe, construct a worldview, and ultimately order their lives. This is why liturgy is so powerful. Bevins suggests the adaptation and incorporation of Anglican liturgy and Roman Catholic liturgy into the worship of mainline denominations and non-denominational congregations has become a powerful neo-liturgical worship model. He also observes that spiritual disciplines such as Scripture reading, prayer, and Christian service are not only to be practiced in corporate worship but in individual worship. It is out of the works of piety, or devotional habits, which works of mercy, or expressions of loving service, flow to others.

The ancient church understood that hospitality extended to others arises from theologically sound proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Bevins suggests that the “historic fourfold order (Gathering, Hearing, Feeding, Sending) of liturgical worship fosters a posture of missions.”⁶⁷ This seems especially true of The Open Door ministry that serves homeless men and women and low-income people in downtown Montréal, Canada in an old Anglican church building. The leader, identified as Zack, testifies that he has been shaped by the liturgy of his

⁶⁶ In *The United Methodist Hymnal* there are several benedictions with the theme of peace that is grounded with apostolic teaching as well as an apostolic blessing that may be paired with them. See 664-673. Especially *The Apostolic Blessing* which is paired with “Shalom to You” and “Let Us Now Depart in Thy Peace.”

⁶⁷ Bevins, *Ever Ancient Ever New*, 176.

church and is continually renewed in worship by God's Spirit to continue the ministry to the poor as an expression of God's love.⁶⁸ But there are two niggling silent questions regarding the Anglican congregation that abandoned the church building and the members of Zack's church; 1) Why did the Anglicans abandon the ministry in downtown Montreal? 2) Why aren't there more Anglicans from Zack's home congregation feeling the same call to minister at The Open Door? We rejoice that Zack has answered the call to serve in downtown Montreal and that he is allowed to use an abandoned Anglican building, but once again his experience with God has many more dimensions than Anglican liturgical worship.

Finally, Bevins suggests that there must be balance between Word and Table and an understanding that "theology alone, experience alone, and tradition alone" will not result in Christ-like spiritual formation.⁶⁹ Bevins contends that genuine biblical discipleship is the result of the combination of liturgy working in tandem with good theology and experience of God in community that reinforces our faith and calls us to obedience.⁷⁰ The strength of Bevin's work is the holistic framework that is adaptable to diverse cultural contexts and the emphasis on utilizing worship liturgy that embeds the essential beliefs of the Christian Faith, meaningful worship practices, and sacramental Christian community.

Framing the Discussion of Worship through Language Expression

This researcher suggests that all churches, regardless of denominational distinctives and preferred worship styles, are liturgical in that the worship of the people of God, whether written, oral, or expressed

⁶⁸ Bevins, *Ever Ancient Ever New*, 181-182.

⁶⁹ Bevins, *Ever Ancient Ever New*, 206.

⁷⁰ Bevins, *Ever Ancient Ever New*, 206.

through sign-acts (e.g., Holy communion, baptism, folded hands in prayer, uplifted hands in praise, sacred scriptures etc.) is liturgy which may be understood to be the work of the people.⁷¹ Therefore, the worship of God involves the whole person (immaterial/material). A worshipping community is a social entity made up of participants who express their love and adoration for God by participating in worship rituals. The adherents of Christianity are members of both their religious culture and the social culture in which they are situated. Therefore, the core of Christian faith is socially expressed by participants in individual worship, corporate worship, and the mundane activities of life.

It follows then, that the language of worship must be meaningfully expressed through the “functions of language” which include “communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression, and emotional release.”⁷² How a congregation worships both expresses what the community believes and forms the worship participants through its liturgical content regardless of the liturgical form. Of tremendous importance for establishing the plausibility of the power of liturgy to form or malform worshipers is a discussion of the role of multi-disciplinary theological approaches that have contributed to the disconnect between orthodoxy and orthopraxy and malformed Christian identity prevalent in the religious landscape of the US and Canada Region.

Keeping with the theme of pilgrim seekers of every age and era who seek authenticity and community, it is possible to identify the contributions of Bernard Lonergan (17 Dec.1904-26

⁷¹ Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 29-30. Robert Webber outlines the way in which biblical worship involves signs and symbols that may be understood as “sign-acts” through which the story of God is proclaimed and enacted. Further, these sacred worship acts may be thought of as a means through which the saving action of God may be received. Scripture records that in Old Testament worship God speaks and acts through sacred actions performed in worship. This intersection may be understood as a point in which God’s saving presence and the praise and thanksgiving of sincere worshipers meet.

⁷² David Crystal and Robins, Robert Henry, “Language.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Last Updated April 7, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/language>.

Nov. 1988), Victor Turner (28 May 1920 – 18 Dec. 1983), and Arnold Van Gennep (23 Apr. 1873 – 1957) as foundational works as a form of academic wilderness wandering in that they opened the way for theological inquiry to be conducted alongside philosophy, anthropology, ethnography, folk lore, and the hard sciences. Fr. Bernard Lonergan, S.J. is best known for addressing fundamental questions in ethics, economics, philosophy, theology, and methodology in the natural and human sciences. Lonergan’s major work, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, is valued and utilized across disciplines to construct practical applications for the intersections of natural and human sciences.⁷³

In the same vein, Anthropologist Victor Turner utilized religious studies, anthropology, and ethnography to formulate four groundbreaking ideas of ritual process and social drama from his study of the Ndembu people of Zambia. Turner catalogued and identified the coding of rituals and social meanings, the therapeutic power over mind and body of a coded ritual system, the need for identification and ongoing analysis of the social drama or shared life of the community that results in a cultural climax determined by the community which is expressed by public ritual and symbols, and the idea of liminality or living beyond the reach of society and its restraints. In 1975, Turner published *Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Religion* in which he developed the intersection of ethnography, philosophy, and theology with metalinguistic knowledge or a blending of Turner’s “ethnophilosophy” and “ethnotheology” and that of the Ndembu people expressed through their shared life characterized by a liminal people living in *communitas*.⁷⁴ Turner applied his own blending of philosophy, theology, ethnography, and

⁷³ Saint Paul University, “Who is Bernard Lonergan?” from *Lonergan Centre* (Ottawa: Saint Paul University, 2015). https://ustpaul.ca/en/lonergan-centre-who-is-bernard-lonergan_480_279.htm.

⁷⁴ Royal Anthropological Institute, “Victor Turner, 1920-1983) from the *Anthropological Index Online*, December 13, 2023, <https://dev.therai.org.uk/archives-and-manuscripts/obituari>.

metalinguistics, including the use of symbol, sign, and ritual to the relationship between liminality and Christian traditions, such as catechism and baptism.

The idea of a liminal people who live betwixt and between society and have within their community a shared community is also present in the work of Arnold van Gennep, a French anthropologist, ethnographer, and folklorist. Gennep's major work *Les Rites de Passage* published in 1909, systematically compared cultural traditions and religious rituals that mark a transition in the lives of the members of each community. Gennep identified three tiers within the ritual observances within communities that each member of that community transitions. It is significant that Gennep identifies separation, transition, and incorporation as the three tiers of social status and interprets them utilizing natural symbols such as death and rebirth. Students of the Apostle Paul will quickly recognize the three tiers in Christian community in that Christians have passed from death to life with Christ in baptism and are now incorporated into the body of Christ (Ro. 6:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13). Likewise, students of Nowen and the works of the Desert Fathers and Mothers will recognize the list of contrasts offered between properties of liminality and a status system represented by a set of binary oppositions or discriminations.⁷⁵ Spiritual disciplines were structured to aid Christians to negotiate the journey of life as a series of transitions that lead to an ultimate transition to Christlikeness and the eternal destination of heaven.

There is no doubt that Lonergan, Turner, and Gennep were erudite in each of their academic disciplines and that their methodology made inter-disciplinary study possible. Nevertheless, their synchronistic blending of all religious thought brought about unintentional,

⁷⁵ Victor Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969), 366.

academic wilderness wandering or inter-disciplinary discussions conducted among theology, anthropology, historiography, ethnography, psychology, and sociology without adequate vocabulary and context. A similar obstacle occurs in cross-cultural communication when the intended message becomes distorted or lost entirely by the receiving culture. Theology constructed in the post-enlightenment world in which these academic voices spoke became a space where it was believed the modern mind was set free to be truly objective. The trickle-down result for the Christian community was a bold cultural mindset in which the church was seen as superfluous to modern life and God was reduced to an *idea* of the divine constructed by culture and human experience. In this philosophical framework, “all belief systems” are open to personal interpretation and pragmatic appropriation or may be completely rejected and abandoned.⁷⁶ post-enlightenment thinking gave rise to a pressing need for a meaningful way in which adherents of the Roman Catholic Church could experience God through accessible and contextually meaningful liturgy.

The work required to investigate the need for revision of liturgy and worship practices were realized through the work of Vatican II and scholarly contributions such as that of Mark Searle’s “Liturgy as Metaphor” and “Images and worship.” Searle combined the field of religion and literature by incorporating textual studies of sacred texts, linguistics, the humanities, and sciences. From his studies he identified, much like Turner did in his study of the Ndembu, recurring religious themes, images, and appreciation of art, music, and ceremony in the religious life of Christian community as well as other religious and secular culture. Searle keenly recognized the power of not only the verbal elements of worship such as praying, preaching,

⁷⁶ Root, *Faith Formation in a Secular Age*, 82-83. Andrew Root explores the implications of Charles Taylor’s philosophical conclusions based on the religious landscape of the United States and cultural shifts that are believed to have contributed to the “rise of the nones” among the young.

reading, and singing but all the non-verbal elements. This recognition of the service as-a-whole as a means of integrated spiritual formation capable of forming a community through participation highlighted a way in which interdisciplinary academic study could be effectively utilized to spiritually form adherents of the Roman Catholic Religion as well as all religious faith communities who worship together. Searle maintained that liturgy shapes the way in which a participant thinks, accepts theological beliefs, constructs a worldview, and is moved to act upon that imparted faith in the mundane activities of life.

Lonergan and the Opening for Multi-Disciplinary Theological Inquiry

It is significant that the reshaping of the way in which human beings construct a worldview and communicate religious and political views has been evident in the academic community for decades. Bernard Lonergan (17 Dec.1904-26 Nov. 1988), a Canadian Jesuit priest, philosopher, and theologian, recognized the necessity of making theological language intelligible across the divide manufactured by a false dichotomy between philosophy and theology, and religion and science. Lonergan noted the lack of integration had produced a “state of culture” in which, in general “People no longer accept or even consider a scholastic metaphysics. The consequence has been that they water down or reject the truths of their faith.”⁷⁷ Lonergan saw a disconnect between theology and religion that he believed had paved the way for

⁷⁷ Lonergan, *Philosophy of God, and Theology*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press,1973), 1-44, 56-57. For a discussion of the history that Lonergan proposes led to the necessity of differentiating between classicism and conceptualism and the understanding of systematics as the “effort of human understanding to gain...insight into revealed truth” see chapter 2, “The Functional Specialty Systematics.”

a separation between natural ethics and Christian ethics based on a false dichotomy between the natural philosophy of humanity and theological anthropology.⁷⁸

Lonergan's "transcendental method," proffered a way for "reintegration" through a "theological method" for a "single collaborative process" that made conversation between metaphysical and theological disciplines possible. Lonergan's method served as a catalyst for interdisciplinary investigation of the orthodoxy (doctrine accepted as correct) and orthopraxy (correct practice of accepted doctrine) of Christianity and world religions.⁷⁹ Lonergan observed "the development of philosophic and scientific systems profoundly affects a culture. But if it modifies the outlook of most of the members in the culture, still it does not do so by transforming them into systematic thinkers."⁸⁰

Primarily, Lonergan demonstrated that spiritual transformation of adherents of any religion occurs by religious experience rather than logic, reason, or reductionism. While reasoning and inquiry are necessary to process religious experience, such as Paul's didactic instruction to the Corinthians regarding the use of spiritual gifts, it is God who brings about true spiritual formation (1 Cor. 14:1-40). Lonergan eloquently stated, "what scripture commands, God's grace achieves...a love that is with all one's heart, and all one's soul and all one's mind and all one's strength."⁸¹

Lonergan demonstrated that there had been a shift in the way people constructed meaning. Where once Aristotle was studied closely so that Aristotelian thought could be utilized

⁷⁸ Lonergan, *Philosophy of God, and Theology*, 15.

⁷⁹ Lonergan, *Philosophy of God, and Theology*, 49.

⁸⁰ Lonergan, *Philosophy of God, and Theology*, 7-8, 46.

⁸¹ Lonergan, *Philosophy of God, and Theology*, 9-10.

a new culture of individualism championed self-defined objectivity believed to be free of a prescribed system of thought, the confines of rhetorical argument, and rules of logic. Robert Webber, an American theologian whose work was a driving influence of the Convergence Movement, also recognized a worship shift within the Christian Community which he contended was directly affected by a shift in thinking. He suggested that “New Agers” unwittingly embrace a “guru” type Jesus and utilize “religious techniques of meditation, prayer, and chanting...so the soul” can be liberated from the physical world and what appears to be a dismal future because of a theology without a full understanding of the incarnation which brings the hope of a renewed creation through redemption.⁸²

On the other end of the spectrum a “redemption theology” devoid of the “connection between creation, incarnation, and re-creation” molds a culture that unconsciously gravitates toward the gnostic heresy that “opposed belief in the incarnation and redemption of the whole world.”⁸³ The culturally distinct and often conflicting theologies that currently exist in the more than “forty-one thousand denominations” in the world reflect that worship takes place but often

⁸² Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God’s Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 35-36. The Convergence Movement (1960-1980) challenged all Christian communities of faith, regardless of denominational affiliation or worship tradition (e.g., liturgical, non-liturgical. Evangelical, Charismatic free worship) to set aside preconceived ideas, worship structure and style, and reimagine worship through a Christocentric lens and “structure that allows the Gospel to be remembered and enacted,” 235-236; *The Complete Library of Christian Worship Volume Five, The Services of the Christian Year*. Edited by Robert Webber (Nashville: Star Song Publishing Group, 1994), 150-151, 206-207, 259-261, 306-308, 327-329, 402-402. The Convergence Series provides “how-to” service orders for the seasons of the Christian Church Year that model blended worship (ancient-modern) with the creative use of service elements of all forms and styles.

⁸³ Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship*, 36.

without basic Christian doctrines, such as the incarnation, the Triune God, The Fall, Redemption, The Second Coming, and Recapitulation.⁸⁴

Victor Turner's Foundational Studies for the Discussion of Liminality, and Communitas

Victor Turner is remembered as a “symbolic anthropologist” who conducted “comparative investigations of ritual and cultural performance” that utilized comparative anthropology of ritual, symbol, and performance.⁸⁵ These multi-disciplinary studies produced “influential formulations on the ontological value of ritual symbolism, “liminality,” and culture, which led to his investigation of “universals in human performance and the fate of religion in a postindustrial culture.”⁸⁶ The most straightforward definition that may be constructed from his anthropological study of the Ndembu ritual is “condensation” which is understood to be the integration of several actions that forms a ritual symbol.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship*, 29-38. Recapitulation is the final fullness of the kingdom of God when all things will be recreated and brought back to the perfection. Sometimes this is referred to as the restoration of the Garden of Eden. This is a cosmic recreation of all that was lost in The Fall; Mary Fairchild, “How Many Christians Are In the World Today?” in *Learn Religions* (April 16, 2020) <https://www.learnreligions.com/christianity-statistics-700533>. This article is supported by data from Pew Research Center and The Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC) at Gordon-Conwell theological Seminary. A similar evaluation is implied in the statistical tables provided by Philip Jenkins in *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), List of Tables ix.

⁸⁵ Graham St. John, “Victor Turner” in *Oxford Bibliographies Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com>.

⁸⁶ Graham, “Introduction” of “Victor Turner” in *Oxford Bibliographies Online* <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0074.xml>.

⁸⁷ Bradshaw and Melloh, “Symbols in the Ndembu Rital: Three Properties of Ritual Symbols” in *Foundational Ritual Studies: A Reader for Student of Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 85. The Ndembu are a people of Zambia in south-central Africa. Victor Turner spent time living among the tribe and conducted interviews to document how the different members of the Ndembu people viewed the actions and rituals of their culture.

Turner defined ritual as “formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers” and delineated “symbol” as “the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties...and specific structure in a ritual context.”⁸⁸ The symbols that Turner observed and identified in the Ndembu Ritual were “objects, activities, relationships, events, gestures, and spatial units in a ritual situation.”⁸⁹ This delineation makes it possible to separate human sociological behavior from a natural physical act that flows from a physical bond (e.g. a mother feeding and caring for her child). This is especially important for recognizing the significance of the “milk tree” which is believed to be the *ivumu* the “womb” or “stomach” of “all mothers of the lineage.”⁹⁰

The milk tree is a sacred place where the Ndembu believe they originated and therefore is the place where ritual ceremonies, such as the circumcision of the male members, take place. The meanings ascribed to the milk tree are the foundations for the matriliney, which are the “principles on which the continuity of Ndembu society depends.”⁹¹ Through his work with the Ndembu community Turner identified the link between what a social group (community) believes (faith-orthodoxy) which is acted out in their ceremonial rituals that tells the stories of their faith (ritual actions and symbols—worship forms), which in turn guides and orders how they live in community with each other (actions-orthopraxy). This becomes a launching pad for the study of liturgy through an anthropological and sociological framework.

⁸⁸ Turner, *The Forrest of Symbols in Ndembu Ritual*, 9.

⁸⁹ Turner, *The Forrest of Symbols in Ndembu Ritual*, 19.

⁹⁰ Turner, *The Forest of Symbols in Ndembu Ritual*, 21.

⁹¹ Turner, *Forest of Symbols in Ndembu Ritual*, 21.

Arnold van Gennep's Phases of Separation, Limen, and Reaggregation

Turner built upon the work of Arnold van Gennep's exploration of human life and his finding that human life in any sociological context may be viewed as a successive journey of transitions that involve "rituals of separation, liminality, and incorporation."⁹² According to van Gennep, members of social groups pass through the three phases as they participate in *rites of passage* that are "culturally recognized."⁹³ A good example is that of a neophyte or novice who must separate or leave their "state" or position in their culture and enter a "limen" which is a type of "cultural space" in which the neophyte or novice is in transition with no social position.⁹⁴ In the tribal community the states of "separation" and "liminality" are often enacted in ritual customs such as having neophytes, novices, or initiates in puberty rites, appear in minimal clothing, or naked to demonstrate they have no standing or role.⁹⁵ The expected response to this separation is humility demonstrated through willing participation in the "initiation."⁹⁶ At the end of the initiation the participant will transition and be "reaggregated" or incorporated back into the social culture with their new identity, social status, and cultural role.⁹⁷

Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh provide some insight into the intersection of Arnold van Gennep phases of separation, limen, and reaggregation, and Turner's descriptions of separation,

⁹² Kertzer, David, "Introduction" and "Classification of Rites" in *The Rites of Passage* Second Edition by Arnold van Gennep with an Introduction by David I. Kertzer. Translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), vi-ix, xxiii-xxiv, 1-3.

⁹³ Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh, "Liminality and Communitas," in *Foundations in Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 74.

⁹⁴ Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh, "Liminality and Communitas," 74-75.

⁹⁵ Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh, "Liminality and Communitas," 75.

⁹⁶ Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh, "Liminality and Communitas," 75.

⁹⁷ Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh, "Liminality and Communitas," 75.

liminality, and incorporation with Christian pilgrimage and spiritual formation by identifying Christian pilgrims as an example of “threshold people” who live “betwixt and between” like participants in an initiation rite.⁹⁸ The emphasis upon life as a transitioning experience that is lived out in *communitas* may be viewed as “a communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders.”⁹⁹ Rather than status or social power prevalent in community structures and everyday living, *communitas* always have a “sacred component” that has been realized by living through the phases of transition that produces a completely new social identity.¹⁰⁰ Of grave importance is the characteristic of the new social identity and cultural role, which is humble fulfillment of their role with compassion for neophytes, novices, or puberty rite initiates that is presumed to have been gained through personal transition experience.

While the work of Arnold van Gnepp and Victor Turner proffered insight into human behavior and at the very least inferred support for the power of religion, faith, and sacred ritual to shape cultural identity, direct cultural norms, censure cultural taboos, and ultimately function as the basis for the principles and order of a society, it also paved the way for the minimalization of the religious tenets of all religions. The link between orthodoxy (faith or right belief) and orthopraxy (actions or embodied practice of right belief) that is observable in all religious rites (ceremonial worship forms) and social groups discovered by van Gnepp and Turner became a gateway by which many have justified the rejection of all metanarratives and world religions. Further, multi-disciplinary comparative study of world religions has led to syncretism,

⁹⁸ Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh, “Liminality and Communitas,” 74-75, 77-78.

⁹⁹ Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh, “Liminality and Communitas,” 76.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh, “Liminality and Communitas,” 78-80.

marginalization of all religions in current culture, and acceptance of all religious expressions as equally valid or equally false.

Current Expressions of Theological Academic Wilderness Wandering

The work of T.M. Thurman, an anthropologist who has spent her life exploring religion and religious experiences, is a perfect example of theological wilderness wandering made possible by multi-disciplinary comparative study of world religions. Luhrmann builds upon the work of van Gnepp and Turner to support her definition of rituals as the way in which God and gods become real to those who believe in them. While she is careful to state she is not suggesting that God or gods are not real, she also states that she herself does not have faith in the God of the Bible. She is comfortable comparing all Christian social groups with Druids and tribal groups led by a Chieftain. Further, Luhrmann contends that all religious systems are equally valid and efficacious for those who believe and practice them.¹⁰¹

The work of Simon E. Davies, an infographic artist, blogger, and author of novels based on world mythology, is a prime example of a current form of theological wilderness wandering that has developed from the blending of academic scholarship (e.g. World Religions, Anthropology, World History, Literature, Spiritualism, Psychology, etc.) and the rejection of all metanarratives. According to Davies, his infographic entitled *The Evolutionary Tree of Religion*

¹⁰¹ T.M. Luhrmann, *How God Becomes Real: Kindling the Presence of the Invisible Others* (Princeton, and Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2020), 25-44. Luhrmann's discussion of making paracosms and her comparison of devout Christian practices, such as prayer and faithful preaching of the Scriptures with shamanism are examples of the application of multi-disciplinary studies without adequate language true to each religion under study has led to a polytheistic syncretism that produces skewed perspective and subjective assertions that undergird the way in which current cultures of the world view gods, God, and religion.

(*Faith, Myths and Mysteries*) forms the “bedrock” of his work.¹⁰² Davies’ theories and historical reconstructions are endorsed and promoted by *World Religion News*. In this worldview there is no possibility that the religious claim of any of the religions had a supernatural origin. Rather, religions are the by-product of social development and human consciousness. He contends, as does Thurman, that all religions organically developed from the primitive ideologies of Animism and Shamanism.¹⁰³

Davies reduces all world religions, such as Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Wicca, and Scientology to social constructions without warrant for a religious claim of a supernatural origin. In this philosophical framework all religions may be rewritten and recreated by the humans who allegedly constructed them to express their consciousness of an inner divine.¹⁰⁴ Following the premise that what one believes to be true is lived through embodied ritual, whether secular or religious the entertainment industry has become one of the most effective means by which most Americans are spiritually shaped. The fascinating infographics of Davies and others like him function in tandem with the embedded cultural liturgy produced in the scripts of screen writers of sitcoms, dramas, sci-fi and other genres.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Simon E. Davies, “My Introductory Video to Mythopia,” *Mythopia*, (June 13, 2023). <https://patreon.com/Mythopia/about>. Simon Davies maintains a blog where members may pay a subscription to have access to maps, videos and articles that provide his current views on religion, mythology, and spirituality in human origins and human existence.

¹⁰³ Alison Lesley, “The Evolutionary Tree of Religion Map by Simon E. Davies,” *World Religion News* (October 9, 2014), <https://worldreligionnews.com/religion-news/Christianity/evolutionary-tree-religion-map-simon-e-davies/>.

¹⁰⁴ Lesley, “The Evolutionary tree of Religion Map.”

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “American Time Use Survey Summary,” *Economic New Release*, June 22, 2023, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.nr0.htm>.

Interestingly, Davies recently changed the name of his blog from *Human Odyssey* to *Mythopia* because over the years he has shifted his focus from an exploration of mythology from a “human vantage point” to the “divine characters of mythology, such as the gods, goddesses, monsters and demons.”¹⁰⁶ Davies has couched his current work in the form of a pilgrimage through sacred sites with “hallowed grounds” that are “spiritually meaningful to millions of people and inspire pilgrimages from all around the world.”¹⁰⁷ Davies contends the heart of this pilgrimage is a “journey into the landscape of consciousness” which allows human beings to recognize that “myth” is more than looking at the “mysteries of the cosmos” in that it is a “means of looking within.”¹⁰⁸

Like van Gnepp and Turner, Davies has appropriated work from anthropology, world religions, theology, sociology, and psychology. Davies bases most of his monomyth theory of “recurring themes” in world culture to the “common patterns” identified by psychologist Carl Jung as “archetypes” which he contended were representations of humanity’s “collective unconscious.”¹⁰⁹ Although fascinating to explore, Davies work exemplifies a human form of unintentional theological wilderness wandering that began long before he was born with the seminal work of Arnold van Gnepp (*The Rites of Passage* 1909) and Victor Turner (*Schism and Continuity in an African Society: A Study of Ndemu Life* 1957; *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969).

¹⁰⁶ Simon Davies, “Human Odyssey Has Now Become ‘Mythopia,’” (July 2, 2019), <https://www.patreon.com/posts/human-odyssey-28073493>.

¹⁰⁷ Gary Nguyen, “Human Odessey’ Sacred Sites of the World’ Map by Simon E. Davies” in *World Religion News* (August 4, 2017), <https://worldreligionnews.com/tag/simon-e-davies/>.

¹⁰⁸ Davies, “My Introductory Video to Mythopia.”

¹⁰⁹ Davies, “My Introductory Video to Mythopia.”

The decades of scholarly wilderness wandering which resulted in a scientific understanding of all religious ritual as a rite in which a social group participates contributed to the marginalization of the Church and loss of a scripturally sound Christian Identity. Some examples of the power of cultural liturgy expressed through embodied practice are Trek-A-Thon, Comic-Con, Society for Creative Anachronism, and NFL Supporter groups. The culture advocates for each person to “find your tribe” ¹¹⁰ which means find like-minded people to share life with. Americans spend the most time immersed in self-care and leisure activities such as viewing television programs and social media, playing games on their phone or game station, playing, or watching sports, eating out, and shopping. The pursuit of enjoying a good life with friends has been embedded in culture through sitcoms such as “The Bob Newhart Show” (1972-1978), “Cheers” (1978-1993), “Friends” (1994-2004), and “The Big Bang Theory” (2007-2019). The idea of a community where everyone is welcome is also expressed through the practice of fathering in coffee shops or local pubs. The marginalization of Christianity has been consistently embedded in the entertainment industry and skillfully introduced and nurtured in DC Comics every part of the USA Canada Region and the cultures of the world.

If the disciples of *Star-Trek*, *Anime*, *Marvel Comics*, *DC Universe*, and *Dr. Who* accept the philosophical and religious tenets embedded in them there is little place for the gospel message of Jesus Christ. In fact, these adherents of secular religion are open to polytheistic views from the ancient world, agnosticism, and atheism. The power of ritual to spiritually form human beings and direct their embodied actions is on full display in every culture of the world.

¹¹⁰ Jonathan Haidt, “Tribalism, Forbidden Base rates, and the Telos of Social Science,” *Psychological Inquiry*, (2020) 31:1, 53-56, DOI: [10.1080/1047840X.2020.1722602](https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2020.1722602).

Vatican II- A Historical Intervention in the Marginalization and Loss of Christian Identity

However, this is not the first time that the people of the world, including the Christian community of the world has replaced the worship of God and participation in church with leisure activities, personal pursuit of pleasure, and intentional departure from a Christian worldview guided by Scripture. A similar cultural shift occurred in the nations of the world after the World War II era in which there was significant loss of Christian identity and widespread disengagement with organized religion and especially the Roman Catholic Church. Pope John XXIII called for an ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church on January 25, 1959, that became known as Vatican II. The monumental task was carried out by preparatory commissions, appointed by the pope, who set an agenda and compiled decrees regarding the Church structure (e.g. hierarchy, role of bishops), Roman Catholic doctrines, (e.g. Divine Revelation, authority of Scripture, role of tradition, soteriology), Sacred Liturgy, and pastoral concerns for the image and pastoral role of the Church.¹¹¹

The goal of Vatican II was spiritual renewal for the church. One of the most important interventions that would push back against marginalization and loss of Christian identity was “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” which brought about liturgical reform that increased the laity participation in the mass and resulted in spiritual renewal and recovery of Christian identity for many Roman Catholics who had been confused and floundering but dutifully plodding as seeking pilgrims upon a famous path toward a religious site.¹¹²

¹¹¹ The Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “Second Vatican Council” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, February 22, 2024, (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 2024), <https://britannica.com/event/Second-Vatican-Council>.

¹¹² J. Frank Henderson, “Introduction to “The Pedagogical Function of Liturgy,” in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, edited by Anne Y. Koester and Barbara Searle (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004), 49-51.

Henderson states that Mark Searle recognized the “close relationship” between liturgy and ecclesiology.¹¹³ Prior to Vatican II, mass had been performed in Latin, regardless of the language of the people. Mass had also been laden with extraneous ceremony that was foreign to the context of the modern age.¹¹⁴ The reforms of Vatican II ushered in the freedom for sacred liturgy to be presented in the language of the people, adapted for meaningful use in their context, and was structured to include laity participation. Mark Searle recognized that the “potential” of liturgy to shape the Christian identity of the people of God was double-edged in that it was possible for liturgy to produce malformation instead of spiritual renewal that leads to Christ-like transformation.¹¹⁵

Mark Searle and Liturgical Renewal

Mark Searle contended that “liturgical renewal of the Church requires the development of a critical awareness of how the liturgical event is itself compromised in order that, at a second stage, the liturgy can serve as the focus of the Church’s transformation.”¹¹⁶ Simply stated, the main problem with liturgies is that human beings can construct them from a bias that is either so

¹¹³ Henderson, “The Pedagogical Function of Liturgy,” 49.

¹¹⁴ Henderson, “The Pedagogical Function of Liturgy,” 50; Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, 52.

¹¹⁵ Mark Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, edited by Anne Y. Koester and Barbara Searle (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004), 52-53.

¹¹⁶ Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, 67.

¹¹⁶ Henderson, “The Pedagogical Function of Liturgy,” 50; Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, 52.

¹¹⁶ Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, 52-53.

¹¹⁶ Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, 67.

heavenly that it is of no earthly good or so earthly (such as social justice as salvation) that it inadvertently denies the Lordship of Christ through the elevation of human agency as a means of salvation. Further, Searle rightly states that although the Church recognizes that the kingdom of God is near, it is important that the liturgies of the Church make it clear that the “kingdom of God is not to be identified with any particular form of social order or with any given political system.”¹¹⁷ It is this observation that may be the most helpful for Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness congregations who desire to honestly evaluate the way in which they are making disciples of Jesus Christ in that local tradition and national patriotism cannot be presented as the only right belief and correct embodiment of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Searle presented “Liturgy as Metaphor” and “Images and Worship” as two ways in which liturgy can serve as a means of grace through which participants understand the “root metaphor of the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus as the disclosure of God... [and celebrate] that mystery in a whole series of rites and ceremonies, in successive seasons of feast and fast, in a variety of liturgical traditions.”¹¹⁸ The ecumenical emphasis present in Searle’s proposition mirrors the thrust of Vatican II which sought to forge reconciliation between estranged Christians and disillusioned Roman Catholic Christians trying to reconcile their faith in the midst of suffering.

Like the Roman Catholic Christians who were suffering, there are many people in the neighborhoods near Nazarene churches who are suffering and are desperately trying to find a way to know God and experience the healing and restoration that the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims is possible. This social positioning provides Nazarene Churches a unique opportunity

¹¹⁷ Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, 2.

¹¹⁸ Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, 39.

to become healing presences in their communities. If Nazarene congregations are to be spiritually formed as a people of God who love their neighbor with the same fervor that they love themselves the liturgy and metaphors present in corporate worship and Bible studies must teach and encourage embodied practice of their love of God. The element of moving from a theoretical realm, in which everyone agrees that entirely sanctified people are to love God, each other, and their neighbors to the embodied practice of that right belief as the Holy Spirit leads in their personal lives and in the outreach ministries of Nazarene churches is critically needed if the people of God in Nazarene congregations are to effectively bridge the gap between holiness churches and their hurting neighbors.

It is also significant that Searle's emphasis upon using imagination to enter into the story of God as the people of God is almost identical to Robert Webber's challenge issued to Evangelical Renewalists in *Worship Old and New*.¹¹⁹ Both Webber and Searle are suggesting that all Christians should come together in what unites them rather than denominational distinctives that cause divisions. Further, both are embracing the *Revised Common Lectionary* as a means by which all Christians may structure worship that will tell God's story and catechize (or instruct) worshiping congregations through balanced Trinitarian, Christocentric worship.

Searle suggests that "worship is, above all, an act of the imagination" and that "the problems faced by religion in our culture and by liturgy in our churches spring largely from habits or literalism which have wasted our powers of imagination."¹²⁰ At first blush, this assertion seems to contradict the Christocentric lens that Searle advocated in "Liturgy as

¹¹⁹ Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 261-264. Robert Webber and the proponents of the Convergence Movement issued a challenge to all Evangelical denominations to develop blended worship.

¹²⁰ Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, 126.

Metaphor.” However, what he is highlighting is the God-given ability for human beings to interpret an image beyond the actual image, which is a copy rather than the original.¹²¹

Therefore, the images utilized in liturgy serve to reflect the original which we cannot see. For example, Colossians 1:15 states that Jesus is the *eikōn* or supreme expression of the Godhead that reflects the *aoratos*, or unseen God the Creator of all things.¹²²

In Searle’s positioning of liturgy as metaphor, images, and worship he situates imagination as a “lens through which we see the...patterns within which we think.”¹²³ It follows then that the way Christians worship shape the way in which they view themselves and the Church. This has tremendous implications for the Church Universal, which is comprised of *parepidēmoi*, or sojourners in a foreign land who travel by faith and not by sight (Heb.11:13; 2 Cor. 5:7). It lays the foundation for the prominent place of order, worship, and service that is present in the Wesleyan liturgical tradition that reminds Christians to continue-on to the *telos* of our faith by the grace of God, and the agency of the Holy Spirit who is transforming us from “glory to glory, to glory.” (Eph. 4:13; 2 Cor. 3:18).

While more research needs to be conducted within the regions of the Church of the Nazarene, the Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness understanding of the essentials of the Christian Faith and especially the doctrine of entire sanctification is in jeopardy. In proposing liturgy as a solution for the recovery of Christian identity in the post-enlightenment, post-Christian era in which the Church Universal must live, it is possible to overlook an important caveat, the

¹²¹ Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, 126.

¹²² “Text Analysis” Colossians 1:15 with hyperlinks to Strongs Concordance and parallel Greek” (Seattle: Bible Hub: 2004-2023), <https://biblehub.com/text/colossians/1-15htm>.

¹²³ Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, 127.

supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit when God's people gather into His house desiring to be made whole and transformed from "glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). Worshiping in the beauty of God's Holiness occurs when God's people pray, surrender to His Lordship, and enter into His gates with thanksgiving—embodied faith through worship practice that glorifies God. (Psalm 100:4).¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Ellis, *Holy Fire* Fell, 72. Bresee's "middle way" means not leaning too far to formalism, (strict liturgical form) or too far to emotionalism (charismatic) or fads. He states that the "primary concern" for worship is that the heart, mind, and soul of the worshiper are engaged in an experientially rich encounter with God. For Bresee, authentic worship "is the cry of the soul, deep, earnest, intense, loud...[since] it rises from every soul it is the out-bursting passion of every heart [breaking forth] like a pent-up storm," 72.

CHAPTER THREE

Learning from the Didaché: Reclaiming Christian Spiritual Formation and Discipleship

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Acts 2:42 NIV*

An Invitation to an Academic Pilgrimage through the Didaché

Consider this third chapter as a pilgrimage through an ancient Christian document that provides a window into the intentional discipleship of one of the earliest known Christian communities. The first task undertaken in this chapter is to locate the Didaché community within its historical context and significance to Christian Spiritual Formation and Discipleship. The second undertaking will be a scholarly investigation of the Didaché, its social milieu, and content. The final endeavor will be to learn from the Didaché by exploring the universality of the spiritual practices, apostolic instruction, and the power of spiritual formation that occurs through participation in Christian community-as-a-whole.

The Didaché Community, Historical Context, and Its significance to Christian Spiritual Formation and Discipleship

Didaché Community

While Jesus Christ fulfilled his God-given mission as the Messiah, he taught his disciples that he alone was “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). The Book of Acts records that the earliest Christians were known as followers of the “Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; Acts 22:4). These men and women continued in the “Way” even though it could mean imprisonment and martyrdom (Acts 8:1, 3-4; 22:4-5). These followers of the “Way” had become

like little children so that they could enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:3). They had chosen to live according to the “way of life” foretold by the prophets (Jer. 21:8; Did. 1.2-4.14), commanded by God (Deut. 36:6-9; Deut. 30:11-20), and made possible through the “holy vine of David” (Isa. 4:2; Jer. 23:5; Jer. 33:15-16; Zec 3:8; Zec. 6:12; John 15:1, 5; Did. 9.2).

The Didaché and The Way of Life

The first century Christian’s tremendous emphasis upon learning the “Way” echoes the call of Christ to learn from him (Matt. 11:29), disciple all nations (Matt. 28:19) and demonstrate love for him by keeping his commands (John 14:15). The Didaché gives testimony to the timeless message of the “way of life” taught by the Lord Jesus during his earthly ministry and by his apostles after his ascension (Acts 1:1-4; Acts 2:42). This call to learn of the “way of life” and choose to live according to the “way of life” is the heartbeat of the Didaché, which is anchored by the dual law of love affirmed and commanded by Jesus (Matthew 22:37-39; Did. 1.2). Loughlin observes that the training in the Didaché “begins with ethical instruction” because it presupposes the new believer is in relationship with God through Christ and has chosen to learn how to live according to the way of life.¹²⁵ The call to be a holy people who live in loving relationship first with God and then with neighbor provides the foundation for the core beliefs of the Christian faith that continues to march across the halls of time and proclaim life to every person, family, and nation (Did. 1.1-4.20; Jn 10:9; Matt 7:13; Matt. 12:20-21).

While many scholars, pastors, and laypersons have studied the Didaché since the complete copy of the manuscript was discovered in 1877, few have studied the importance of the

¹²⁵ Thomas, O’Loughlin, *The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 28-31.

“way of life” modeled by the Didaché community. The Didaché has been studied anthropologically, historiographically, sociologically, and through the lens of various religious studies, but these academic endeavors tend to ignore the “way of life” of the Didaché community through which Christian spirituality was expressed and Christian spiritual formation took place. Sheldrake notes that “Christian spirituality was expressed most strongly in the “way of life” of the community-as-a-whole...this is the feature of the early Christian spirituality that is least often considered.”¹²⁶ The exploration of what may be known about “the way of life” from the text of the Didaché and the way in which Christian spiritual formation and discipleship took place in the Didaché community is essential for bridging the gap between the ancient world of the Didaché and the current religious landscape of the Georgia District of the US and Canada Region.

The characteristics of the Didaché Christian community that will be identified in this chapter include obedience to the revealed Word of God which is demonstrated by public profession of faith and identity with Christ as risen Lord (Acts 2:41), individual piety (Acts 2:42-45), corporate worship (Acts 2:46a), Christian fellowship (Acts 2:46), and Christian compassion (Acts 2:45). This close study of the Didaché reveals an early Christian community that demonstrates the interdependence of both individual and corporate means of grace that nurtures a holy life-pattern in individual members, their families, and the community-as-a-whole. It is at this point that Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness congregations may learn from the Didaché community. The governing thesis of this chapter is the assertion that spiritual renewal can and does occur through intentional discipleship that functions as a form of spiritual direction that encourages holiness of heart and life within Christian community by engaging in spiritual

¹²⁶ Philip, Sheldrake, “Foundation: Scriptures and Early Church” in *A Brief History of Spirituality*, 1st Ed. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 12-39.

disciplines individually and corporately. Through spiritual disciplines members of our congregations move toward the *telos* of the Christian faith, which is to grow up into our Head, Jesus Christ, (Eph. 4:15-16). However, this type of transformative spiritual renewal that leads to the development of mature disciples is only possible if there is intentional discipleship present in every part of Christian community and applicable through means of grace that are both attainable and sustainable in the mundane (e.g., ordinary but necessary), or the fabric of the way in which Christian communities (local church bodies) do life together.

History of the Didache

Discovery and Identification of the Didaché

Greek Orthodox archbishop Philotheos Byrennios discovered **H** (Codex Hierosolymitanus) among a collection of Christian manuscripts in 1877, in the Greek Covenant of the Holy Sepulcher in Istanbul. The **H** manuscript bears the inscription “Leon, scribe and sinner” with the date June 11, 1056. Aaron Milavec notes that the **H** manuscript is “a well preserved, carefully written manuscript” and is the only known complete copy of the Didaché in Greek.¹²⁷ However, Robert Kraft identified the following manuscripts and documents that contain the teaching of the “Two Ways tradition” of the Didaché or a “closely related form of the Didache”: 1) **Proxy**, a fourth-century Greek Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1782;¹²⁸ 2) **Cop**, a fifth-

¹²⁴ Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translations, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), xiv.

¹²⁵ Robert Kraft. “The Didache or Teaching of the Apostles.” In *Barnabas and the Didache* in Volume Three of *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD., 1965, Updated Electronic Version 1995), <https://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rak//publics/didache/didache.htm#didtr>.

century fragment of a Coptic version; **Georg** nineteenth-century manuscript of a Georgian version; 3) **ApCo**, Greek *Apostolic Constitutions* derived from fourth-century Egypt; and 4) **Eth**, an Ethiopic version of the “Ecclesiastical Canons of the Apostles” with interpolations from an Ethiopic version of the Didaché “known from late manuscripts dated from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries.”¹²⁹ These manuscripts provide unmistakable evidence that some form of the Didaché was in use very early in Christian communities and was adapted to meet the needs of “missing piece” that gives a view to the way in which “the first generation of Christians viewed their faith within a living, orality-based context” which has “become an essential aspect of what scholarship now assumes in its approach to the Didache.”¹³⁰

Didaché is Sitz im Leben

However, due to the lack of internal evidence in the Didaché it is impossible to definitively date the **H** manuscript, identify a proprietary author, or discern the geographical location of the original Didaché community. Dating for the Didaché “extend from the mid-first century (e.g. Audet) to the early third century (Vokes 1938) or later...for the final form of the Didache”¹³¹ Zangenberg asserts that “the Didache seems to systematically escape all attempts to pin down its social and ideological context, define its place of writing, or help identify a region

¹¹⁶ Kraft, *Barnabas and the Didache*, “The Didache or Teaching of the Apostles,” 1.1.

¹¹⁷ Jonathan A. Draper, *The Didache in Modern Research* (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996), 340-363.

¹¹⁸ M. W. Homes, “The Didache” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*. eds. Ralph Martin and Peter Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 300-302.

where it might have originally have circulated.”¹³² What is obvious from the vast tome of Didache scholarship is that the Didache is *Sitz im Leben*, that is a “setting in life” and the manuscript was always *status transformandi*, or always in process of composition to “meet the instructional and practical needs of the community as it developed.”¹³³ The Didache was not authored by any one person but was authored with the “authority of a collective community to communicate Christian teaching and moral adhortation.”¹³⁴

Perhaps the adaptability of the Didaché material made it possible for the fluid⁶, contextualized transmission and meaningful reception in other Christian communities contributed to the multiple copies that remain without any official title. Huub van de Sandt and Jürgen K. Zangenberg have concluded that the original title of the Didaché is undiscoverable with any certainty because the earliest Greek manuscript, P. Oxy. XV. 1782, is fragmentary and has no title.¹³⁵ Milavec contends that the original manuscript did not have a title because what it was and how it was to be utilized was common knowledge.¹³⁶

¹¹⁹ Peter J. Tomson, “Transformation of Post-70 Judaism: Scholarly Reconstructions and Their Implications for Our Perception of Matthew, Didache, and James.” In *Matthew, James, and Didache: Three Related Documents in Their Jewish and Christian Settings*. eds. Hubertus Waltherus Maria van de Sandt and Jürgen, Zangenberg, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 43-44.

¹²⁰ Tomson, “Transformation of Post-70 Judaism,” 49.

¹²¹ Tomson, “Transformation of Post-70 Judaism,” 49.

¹²² Jürgen, Zangenberg, “Reconstructing the Social and Religious Milieu of the Didache: Observations and Possible Results.” In *Matthew, James, and Didache: Three Related Documents in Their Jewish and Christian Settings*, eds. by Huub van de Sandt and Jürgen K. Zangenberg (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 43-69.

¹²³ Jonathan A. Draper, “Weber, Theissen and ‘Wandering Charismatics’ in the Didache,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 4 (Winter 1998):541-76, <https://doi.org/10.1353/earl.1998.0070>.

Timeless Apostolic Teachings for Future Generations in the Christian Community

The two titles which were assigned to the **H** manuscript are: Διδαχὴ τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) and Διδαχὴ Κυρίου διὰ τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (Teaching of [the] Lord Through the Twelve Apostles for the Gentiles). The titles were drawn from the Didache text which provides “timeless apostolic teachings” for future generations in the Christian community.¹³⁷ They also underscore that the authority of the teaching transmitted by the Didaché is not from the author or his community but from Christ himself in that the Didaché is preserving and following the teaching of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. While we cannot know the circumstances and origin of the titles assigned to the Didaché we can recognize that it is possible that the Didaché document which we have today is an “evolved literature”¹³⁸ that was continually updated and most likely “represents a moment in time”¹³⁹ as Christian communities continued to grow and require contextual updates.

Social and Religious Milieu of the Didaché

Establishing the Social and Religious Milieu of the Didaché in Conversation with the Book of James and the Application of Wischmeyer’s Methodology

It would be impossible to explore the “way of life” transmitted in the Didaché without establishing the social and religious milieu of the Didaché. An exposition or critical explanation

¹²⁴ Kraft, *Barnabas and the Didache*, “The Didache or Teaching of the Apostles,” 1.1.

¹³⁸ Kraft, *Barnabas and the Didache*, “The Didache or Teaching of the Apostles,” 1.1.

¹³⁹ Tomson, “Transformation of Post-70 Judaism,” 43-44.

of the Didaché material without its context would be eisegesis, a reading into the text of preconceived ideas. Oda Wischmeyer identified a methodology for reconstructing the social and religious milieu of James which is helpful for ascertaining the social and religious milieu of the Didaché, which for our purposes in this paper will establish the context of the Didaché and the teaching transmitted by the text. Wischmeyer builds on the work of Hippolyte Taine's "theory of the sociology of art" as presented in *Philosophie de l'art*.¹⁴⁰ Taine's theory suggests that race, milieu, and moment are the motivations and underpinnings of any work of art.¹⁴¹ The delineation of race as an "inherited disposition or temperament that stubbornly persists over thousands of years" and milieu as the "circumstances or environment that modified the inherited racial disposition" are helpful for the task of establishing the broad strokes of the social and religious milieu of the Didaché as a first-century or early second-century, Christian community of Jewish believers within the Roman empire

If Wischmeyer's methodology for reconstructing the social and religious milieu of James is applied to the Didaché the "milieu parameters" that influenced the "author-editor"¹⁴² of the Didaché are: ideas of religion and ethics, values and behavior, and circumstances of life shared by the Didaché community.¹⁴³ David Chidester notes that the first-century Jews living in the Roman empire inherited an "Ancestral Religion [that] did not depend upon promises of personal

¹⁴⁰ Hippolyte Taine, *Philosophie de l'art 2 vols.*, (Paris: Hatchette), 1893. <https://achive.org/details/philosophiedela02taingoog/page/n6/mode/2up>.

¹⁴¹ Oda Wischmeyer. "Reconstructing the Social and Religious Milieu of James: Methods, Sources, and Possible Results." In *Matthew, James, and Didache: Three Related Documents in Their Jewish and Christian Settings*. eds. Hubertus Waltherus Maria van de Sandt and Jürgen, Zangenberg (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 33.

¹⁴² Kraft, *Barnabas and the Didache*, "The Didache or Teaching of the Apostles," 1.1.

¹³⁰ Wischmeyer, "Reconstructing the Social and Religious Milieu of James," 33.

salvation after death. It was a way of life that preserved “an ancient covenant with God...and established the terms and conditions for a life of piety and purity.”¹⁴⁴ Further, we know that the first-century Christians were often in conflict with the Greco-Roman culture in which the emperor had assumed the role of “*pontifex maximus*” the highest priestly office and “Roman sacrificial ritual was regarded as a civic duty.”¹⁴⁵ The shared values and behaviors of these first-century Messianic Jews and God-fearers are found in the Hebrew Torah text, which had been translated into the Greek text of the Septuagint, and the daily temple worship in Jerusalem. The “Torah contained the model for religious, ritual, and ethical life” and as such the religion of Jerusalem was found throughout the empire as “diaspora communities in Syria, Egypt, Rome, Asia Minor, Babylonian, and...in the East” were established.¹⁴⁶

Shared Religious and Social Influence of the Torah and Jewish Ancestry

The shared religious and social influence that was shaped by the Torah and the enduring influence of Jewish ancestry may be observed and substantiated through a close “analysis of the vocabulary” employed in the Didaché and the “way it addresses its readers.”¹⁴⁷ For instance, the readers of the Didaché are individually addressed, Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν θεόν (You shall love the God; Did. 1.2b) and intimately addressed as τέκνον μου, (my child, e.g. Did. 3.1; 3.3; 3.4; 3.5; 3.6; 4.1.). The Greek word “τέκνον” may refer to a child of either sex or may be understood

¹⁴⁴. David Chidester, *Christianity: A Global History* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2008), 4.

¹⁴⁵. Chidester, *Christianity: A Global History*, 5-6.

¹⁴⁶. Chidester, *Christianity: A Global History*, 6-7.

¹⁴⁷. Wischmeyer, “Reconstructing the Social and Religious Milieu of James,” 34.

figuratively in a sacred text as anyone who is totally dependent upon God the Father and living in joyful surrender and submission to His will.¹⁴⁸ The writer of the Didaché is writing metaphorically in that those being instructed by the Didachist are in an intimate relationship with him such as the mutual relationship between a parent who loves, corrects, and instructs a beloved child, or the relationship between the teachers from the Hebrew, Arabic, and Persian traditions who “nourished” the minds of their pupils and “molded their character.”¹⁴⁹ The author of the Didaché is also speaking Hebraistically in a metaphorical manner in that the readers are as children who are dependent upon the teacher to learn the “way of life” and who have a “desire to obey.”¹⁵⁰

Wischmeyer observed that the milieu that is deduced from textual clues may provide “indications of structures of hierarchies and leadership functions, indications of “parties” or “subgroups,” evidence of struggle within or among groups” as well as the presence of a “collective identity” and hints to the “author’s place in the scenario.”¹⁵¹ The text of the Didaché indicates the author is in communication with the leadership of the Didaché community and identifies a leadership comprised of apostles (ἀποστόλων; 11.3-11.6), prophets (προφητῶν; Did. 11.3, Did. 11.6-11.12), Didaché teachers (διδασκάλων; Did. 11.1; Did. 13.2; Did. 15.1-2), bishops (ἐπισκόπους; Did. 15.1) and deacons (διακόνους; Did. 15.1). There is a “collective

¹⁴⁸. Joseph Thayer. “5043. Τέκνον,” *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers 1995, Electronic Database. Seattle: BibleSoft, Inc 2002, 2003, 2006, 2011), <https://biblehub.com/thayers/>.

¹⁴⁹. Thayer 1995, “5043. Τέκνον,” *Greek Lexicon*.

¹⁵⁰. Thayer 1995, “5043. Τέκνον,” *Greek Lexicon*; Chabad, *Pirke Avos: Ethics of the Fathers in English and Hebrew* (Rahway: Artscroll Mesorah Publications, 1999), *Avot 1:6, Chabad*, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2165/jewish/Chapter-One.haidtm.

¹⁵¹. Wischmeyer, “Reconstructing the Social and Religious Milieu of James,” 34.

identity” in that this community is faithful to the “way of life” taught by their Master, Jesus (Did. 15.4).

The contrast between the “way of life” and the “way of death” is an exposition of two Hebrew Scriptures (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5) which Jesus paired using a “rabbinic interpretive method called *gezerah shavah*.”¹⁵² Utilizing this hermeneutical principle, Jesus combined Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:5 to identify the greatest of all commandments based on the shared Hebrew word *v’havta* (וְהָבַתָּ) which means “you shall love.”¹⁵³ Tony Jones observes that “everything else in the Didache” flows from the command to “love God” and to “love one’s neighbor as oneself.”¹⁵⁴

The group conducting the training of the Gentiles are insiders, either Jews by birth or devoted God-fearers committed to the “way of life” and to establishing communal standards and procedures for the Christian rituals of baptism (Did. 7.1-7.4) and the Eucharist (Did. 9.1-10.7). The non-Jewish people are a subgroup within the Didaché community (Did. 1.3). According to the Didaché, it is an instruction manual for training the τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, which are gentiles or non-Jews from the nations (Did. Title). There is also evidence of struggle with gentile groups from the culture that advocate lawbreaking and the “way of death” (Did. 5.1-6.1) as well as religious hypocrites which may refer to non-converted Jews who continue the Jewish religious rites, such as fasting (Did. 8.1; Matt. 6:16) and public prayer for personal recognition (Did. 8.2; Matt. 6:5).

¹⁵² Toby Janicki, *The Way of Life: The Rediscovered Teachings of the Twelve Jewish Apostles to the Gentiles. Didache: A New Translation and Messianic Jewish Commentary* (Marshfield: Vine of David Publishing, 2017), 57.

¹⁵³ Janicki, *The Way of Life*, 57; Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, <https://biblehub.com/bdb/>.

¹⁵⁴ Tony Jones, *The Teaching of the Twelve: Believing and Practicing the Primitive Christianity of the Ancient Didache Community* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2009), 59.

The unconverted and unbaptized are outside of the Didaché community and referred to as dogs (τοῖς κυσί), who may not participate in the eucharist (Did. 9.5).

The vocabulary of the Greek employed in the Didaché indicates a community who are engaged in Christian spiritual formation and missional discipleship. They are actively engaged in fulfilling the command of Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). The Greek word μαθητεύσατε means to disciple; It is a cognate of μαθητής, which is a disciple or learner, and transitively identifies who is to be disciplined.¹⁵⁵ The assigned title of the Didaché indicates that it is for the training of the non-Jewish believers who have become members of the community. The Greek phrase τοῖς ἔθνεσιν contained in the title of the Didaché may be translated, “the nations” or “the Gentiles” because both designations indicate people groups who are not Jewish.¹⁵⁶

There is consensus that the text of the Didaché was produced by a community of people who had a Jewish background based on the internal evidence in the text which employs “parallelistic couplets” that are also found in “Jewish Wisdom Literature, such as Proverbs and Sirach”¹⁵⁷ and the unmistakable references to the Decalogue and teachings from the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g. Did. 1.2; 2.2; Deut. 6:5; Ex. 20:13-16; Lev. 18:22; Lev. 20:13).

Aaron Milavec notes there are “mnemonic devices within the text which are most likely “residual oral-aural clues” and “rabbinic law” which would have been in existence before the Didaché was written.¹⁵⁸ However, there is disagreement whether the overall “Two Ways” device

¹⁴² Thayer, “3100, μαθητεύσατε,” *Greek Lexicon*.

¹⁴³ Thayer, “1484, ἔθνος,” *Greek Lexicon*.

¹⁴⁴ Kraft, *Barnabas and the Didache*, “Characteristics of the Two Ways Teaching,” 2.1.

and literary structure can be cited as irrefutable evidence that the writers were Jewish or Judeo-Christian because this theme and structure is “ancient.”¹⁵⁹ Kraft notes that the Qumran *Manual of Discipline* 3.18 ff. includes a similar “Two Ways” device that “was also in vogue in a predominantly Semitic-speaking Jewish community in pre-Christian times.”¹⁶⁰ Homes suggests the strongest “ancient testimony” to the Two Ways teaching most likely originated in Egypt¹⁶¹ but Varner argues convincingly that the Didache differs greatly from the Qumran material and points out that no antedated Jewish “two ways” document has ever been “produced.”¹⁶² What can be known from the text of the Didaché at the very least is its authors inherited a Jewish racial disposition that persisted and continued to influence the teaching and transmission of the teaching of the Lord (Did. 9.3-4) through the changing circumstances of the community (Did. 1.1-1.3; Deut. 30:15; Jer. 21:8; Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18).

Toby Janicki, a Messianic Jew and teacher of the Didaché¹⁶³ and Kraft, an early Didaché scholar, contend that the text of the Didaché must be understood in its context which included Semitic Judaism, Hellenistic Judaism, and Jewish approaches to types of religious material and its interpretation.¹⁶⁴ This appears to be a point of consensus of scholarship in that regardless of

¹⁴⁵ Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary*, ix.

¹⁵⁹ Kraft, *Barnabas and the Didache*, 2.1.

¹⁴⁷ Kraft, *Barnabas and the Didache*, 2.1.

¹⁶¹ M. W. Homes. “The Didache.” In *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, eds. by Ralph Martin and Peter Davids (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1997), 301.

¹⁶² William Varner, “The Didache’s Use of the Old and New Testaments,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* Vol. 16, no. 1 (Spring 2005), 136-38.

¹⁶³ Janicki, *The Way of Life*, 8, 16, 19, 20.

¹⁶⁴ Kraft, *Barnabas and The Didache*, “Glossary.”

the date or place in which Didaché scholars have attempted to locate the Didaché community, the internal evidence of the Didaché points to a Jewish-Christian community with insider knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g. Did. 14:3 and Mal. 1:11, 14; Did. 2:2 A1 and Ex. 20:13) and the teachings of Jesus (e. g. Did. 1:2b and Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:31), that was actively engaged in making disciples of the Lord Jesus in their immediate first-century or early second-century Greco-Roman context (Did. 9.3).

Content of the Didaché

The Didaché contains teachings drawn from Semitic Judaism, Hellenistic Judaism, and other Jewish approaches to types of religious material and its interpretation.¹⁶⁵ Semitic Judaism generally refers to ancient Hebrew or Aramaic-speaking and writing Jewish People, whereas Hellenistic Judaism refers to Greek-speaking Judaism no matter the location of the people group.¹⁶⁶ The various Jewish approaches to religious material in the Didaché are: 1) *Midrashic*, a running commentary on a text in which phrases of the text are quoted piece by piece throughout the commentary (e.g. Did. 1.2; Lev. 19:18); 2) *Targumic*, a paraphrase or reworking of a passage into a new form without utilizing actual quotes (e.g., Did. 1.3; Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27); 3) *Halakic*, material that addresses problems of religious law and legal interpretations (e.g., Did. 3.1-3.6); and *Haggadic*, any other material that is not halakic such as historical narratives or eschatological hopes (e.g., Did. 16:1-16.8).¹⁶⁷

¹⁵² Kraft, *Barnabas and The Didache*, "Glossary."

¹⁶⁶ Kraft, *Barnabas and The Didache*, "Glossary."

¹⁶⁷ Kraft, *Barnabas and The Didache*, "Glossary."

Two Ways Instruction Method: “Way of Life” and the “Way of Death”

The material of the Didaché divides into three sections as follows: 1) The Two Ways instruction “way of life” and the “way of death” (Did. 1.1-4.14; Did. 5.1-6.2); 2) An instruction manual for church order and practice (Did. 6.3-15.4); and 3) An apocalyptic section (Did. 16:1-8).¹⁶⁸ The Two Ways method of instruction is an outflow of Jewish tradition which understands the Decalogue to be a “summary of the Torah” and the “essence of the *Shma*” (Deut. 6:4-9; Deut. 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41).¹⁶⁹ In the Didaché, the last five commandments of the Decalogue and the *Shma* guide the instruction of the gentiles (Did. 1.1-1.2; 2.2-2.7) by combining the theme of Leviticus 19:18 (“You shall love your neighbor”) with material from the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26) to form an “ethical concentration of the Torah.”¹⁷⁰ Although the method is Jewish the teaching is Christian (e.g., Did.2.3-7; Mark 7:20-23; Did. 9.2-4). It is a presentation of how the Christian is to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. There can be no disconnect between saving faith in Jesus as the Messiah and living in the way of life that is ordered by love for God and love of neighbor.

Warnings and The Didachist’s Call to Holy Living

The second section issues a warning against false teachers (Did. 6.1) and an admonition to live as closely as possible according to the “yoke of the Lord” (Did. 6.2) which refers to the “teaching of Jesus” and the “central tenets of the Way of Life.” (Did. 1.3-4).¹⁷¹ A call to avoid

¹⁶⁸ Homes, “The Didache,” 300.

¹⁶⁹ Janicki, *The Way of Life*, 90-91.

¹⁷⁰ Janicki, *The Way of Life*, 93-95.

¹⁷¹ Janicki, *The Way of Life*, 237; Homes, “The Didache,” 301; Kraft, *Barnabas and the Didache*, “Evolved Literature,” 1.1.

eating food sacrificed to idols and idol worship concludes chapter 6 (Did. 6.3). Practical instructions for baptism (Did. 7.1-4), fasting (Did. 7.4-8.1), prayer (Did. 8.2-3), the Eucharist (Did. 9.1-10.7), practical concerns such as almsgiving and church order (Did. 11.1-15.4) follow the Didachist's call for holy living issued at the beginning of this section.

Synopsis of the Last Days and Urgent Call for Faithfulness in Holy Living Until Christ Returns

The Apocalyptic section outlines the need for faithfulness until the Lord returns (Did. 16.1) and offers a beautiful eschatological future when the Lord will come again (Did. 16.8). The readers of the Didaché are assured that the Lord's return and the completion of the kingdom has not come yet but that it is coming (Did. 16.1). There is a "synopsis of the last days" and a warning against false prophets and a deceiver who will claim to be "a son of God" (Did. 16.3-4) followed by a clarion call for steadfast discipleship through trial by fire that will come to the entire human race (Did. 16.5).¹⁷² The affirmation of "ordinary holiness" and the assurance that the faithful, whether dead or alive, will be with the Lord when he returns provided a long view for the Christian spirituality of the Didaché community that fueled the urgency for holy living in the present.¹⁷³

The Universality of the Spiritual Practices of the Didaché

The instructions for prayer and fasting in the Didache (Did. 8.1) indicate that the Didaché community ordered community life by a "seven-day week that measures its days by the passing of Shabbat" in keeping with the order of creation and the command to observe a day of

¹⁷². Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary*, 80.

¹⁷³. Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary*, 80.

rest and worship (Ex. 20:8; Gen. 2:2).¹⁷⁴ It is also significant that in observing the spiritual disciplines of fasting on Wednesday and Friday and the adoption of praying the Lord's Prayer at the three traditional Jewish times of prayer the Didaché redefined and affirmed them as uniquely Christian spiritual practices that were countercultural.¹⁷⁵

The Didaché provided individual instruction in the righteousness expected of every member of the Didaché community (Did. 1:1-6.3) and corporate instruction for the entire community (Did. 7:1-16.8). The loving intention of God for each person to enjoy the benefits of the "way of life" governs the relationships between members of the Didaché community and every aspect of community life (Did. 4.1-4.14; Ezek. 33:11).

Pattern of Christian Spiritual Formation in the Didaché

The pattern of Christian spiritual formation that may be discerned from the text of the Didaché is as follows: 1) A gentile receives instruction in the good news that Jesus is the Messiah, chooses to accept Jesus as Lord and is baptized (Did. 7.1-4); 2) Gentile converts receive a mentor and personal instruction and ongoing support through encouragement and accountability (Did. 4.1; Did. 15.2); 3) Gentile converts order their lives according to the "way of life" governed by the command of Jesus to love God and to love one's neighbor (Did. 1.2-1.2; Did. 4.3; Did. 4.13); 4) Gentile converts pray the Lord's Prayer three times a day (Did. 8.2-3) and fast on Wednesday and Friday (Did. 8.1); 5) The Didaché community, whether gentile or Jew, regularly gathers to pray, worship, and celebrate the eucharist which is led by the appointed overseer(s) (Did. 9.1-9.5; Did. 14.1; Did. 16.2; Did. 9.1; 10.7; 15.1); and 6) The leaders of each

¹⁷⁴. Janicki, *The Way of Life*, 308.

¹⁷⁵. Jankicki, *The Way of Life*, 308-316.

household are to train every member of their household in the “way of life” regardless of their age, sex, relationship, or position (Did. 4.9-4.11).

Universal Adaptability of the Didaché

The strength and universal applicability of the Didaché is the focused apostolic instruction that demonstrates the teaching of Jesus as the fulfillment of all the teaching of the prophets and the requirements of the law. While law-keeping is not the means of salvation, Jesus taught that keeping his commandments is the means through which genuine love for him is made visible (John 14:21). The intricate interplay between the moral and ethical demands of the Decalogue and the love of Jesus his disciples are to both abide in and exercise is an apostolic teaching that is transferrable to every context. The patterns of the Didache instruction may be adapted to meet the needs of any context but Christian spiritual formation that produces faithful disciples of Jesus Christ requires more than a discipleship process.

The Basic Patterns of the Didaché Existing in the Ministry Structure of the Church of the Nazarene

The basic patterns of Didaché instruction already exist in the ministry structure of the Church of the Nazarene. However, many Nazarenes do not recognize the value of intentional investment in spiritual disciplines and spiritual rhythms that are present in a balanced, Christocentric Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Church (See Appendix B: Process Graphic B.4). In the balanced Christocentric Local Church there will be a spiritual rhythm that is shared by the worshipping Christian community. The shared community life will be guided by the intentional practice of spiritual disciplines and understand them to be a means of grace that are given by

God to help Christians live in unity and grow in grace toward becoming mature disciples of Jesus Christ.

The entire life of the local church will be guided by the Holy Spirit as its members live the faith that they profess through works of piety (e.g. prayer, Bible study, worship, fasting, Lord's Supper) and works of mercy (e.g. outreach, benevolence, compassionate ministries, local, district and global missions). The members of the worshipping community experience the transforming work of God in every area of church life. If Nazarene pastors, lay leaders, and laity utilize the resources available through the Church of the Nazarene the balanced Christocentric local church models can become immersive Christian communities where its members experience Christian spiritual formation that results in the kind of transformation that took place in the gentiles of the Didaché community.

However, it must be acknowledged that most churches struggle to keep Christ at the center of their church community because every local church body has its own tightly held traditions and preconceived ideas that guide its collective unwritten expectations. While the phrases, "We have never done it that way before" or "that doesn't seem Nazarene," are not generally offered with malice or ill intent, they do signal a faith struggle and a disconnect with embodied practice of the Christian Faith. Many churches get stuck in a comfortable pattern in which church is relegated to one 50-minute corporate worship service. Even church board members may only participate in the life of the church by attending a board meeting and Sunday morning worship. The invitation to intentionally engage in both individual and corporate worship and spiritual disciplines that require mutual accountability can be met with a fear of failure or defensive rejection of the necessity of immersive participation in Christian community. Nevertheless, there is no way to dismiss the witness of the early Didaché community or escape

the uncomfortable truth that a balanced Christocentric local church body requires a community of faith in which there is no disconnect between the faith that is professed and the way the faith is made visible through the individual life patterns of its members and the corporate worship and practice of the community-as-a-whole.

CHAPTER FOUR

Church Survival and Spiritual Formation in the Canons of Hippolytus: Order, Worship, Service

“And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; Till we all come in the unity of the faith...unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” Ephesians 4:11-13

An Examination of Catechetical Instruction as Spiritual Formation

In Chapter Three the conclusion of the close study of the Didache supports the assertion that immersive participation in Christian community has been a means through which Christian identity is formed since the birth of the Church Universal on the day of Pentecost. The structure of the Didaché community was constructed for spiritual formation through countercultural discipleship for new Christians entering into the Christian Faith from the non-Jewish nations. A distinguishing feature of the Didaché is the ongoing revisions and adaptations made as the Christian community-as-a-whole grew and expanded beyond the Didaché community's geographic location. Though explosive church growth is exciting it can also be difficult for Christians within the community to live in harmony without losing sight of who God has created them to be in Christ.

In Chapter Four we continue our exploration of another ancient Church-Order document, The *Canons of Hippolytus*. Like the Didaché the *Cannons of Hippolytus* identified essential doctrines of the Christian Church, provided policies and procedures for administration and ordination, practical service orders and worship liturgies, and documented the expectation that Christians will engage in service to God, with other Christians, and for neighbors. In the *Cannons of Hippolytus*, a time-honored way of effective catechetical instruction as well as the

testimony of a constant growing and developing world-wide expression of the Church Universal is presented.

The first challenge of the close study of the *Canons of Hippolytus* is to explore the scriptural meanings of apostolic order, Christian worship, and Christian service and substantiate the authenticity and value of the *Canons of Hippolytus* for Christian spiritual formation in the post-enlightenment, and post-Christian social milieu in which the Church Universal must now make disciples of Jesus Christ. The second task negotiated is the importance placed upon Christian education that results in a theologically sound presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and effectual organization of Christian community in which members construct a culture proof Christian identity. The next phase of the metaphorical journey is a methodical walk through the catechetical instruction of the early church preserved in the *Canons of Hippolytus* and other adaptations of the text and creedal statements derived from sound doctrine.

The culmination of the walk through ancient Christian catechism is a view of the applicability of the call to discipleship through obedience to the Word and accountability in Christian community for everyone who is called Christian. Admittedly, this last point seems obvious because the language is often used and rarely contested in Christian circles. However, the received meaning of discipleship through obedience to the Word and accountability in Christian community is theologically diverse and socially constructed by the cultural forms of Christianity present in the nations of the world. The applicability of ancient Christian catechism is an integral element of recovery of Christocentric corporate worship that occurs not as an isolated event but as a means of spiritual formation that occurs within immersive Christian community. If Nazarenes in the Georgia District, USA Canada Region, and in fact all Christians from every denomination, are to become balanced Christocentric Churches where God is

glorified, Christ is lifted up, and the Holy Spirit powerfully draws people to God, then intentional Christian education that includes ongoing Christian catechism must be a central element of the immersive experience of our Christian communities.

Apostolic Order, Christian Worship, and Christian Service

Apostolic Teaching Transmitted through Ancient Church Order Literature

The Book of Acts records that Jesus gave “instructions” to the apostles “through the Holy Spirit” during his earthly ministry until his ascension and that after his passion he appeared as the risen Lord to “the apostles that he had chosen” and “gave them many convincing proofs that he was alive” (Acts 1:1-4). This introductory material in Acts, chapter one, may be viewed as the beginning of Church order and the *episkopé* in that Jesus chose the apostles, invested them with his own authority, and then commanded them to carry out his instructions. (Jude 1:17; Revelation 21:14).”¹⁷⁶ By the first century, the church unequivocally accepted the apostolic authority of the teaching of apostles as binding upon all Christians. Clement taught that “all Christianity rests on a common norm of doctrine and practice that was delivered to the church by the apostles” (Clement 42.4; 44.I-2). However, Christianity was organically developing in markedly diverse cultures that existed within the boundaries of the Roman Empire. As the individual Christian communities grew and began to contextualize the gospel, craft worship rituals, and establish local church traditions it became apparent that there was a need for Church-

¹⁷⁶ Hippolytus and Burton Scott Easton, *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, (Cambridge, England: University Press, 2014), 7.

orders, worship liturgy, and an initiation process to ensure faithfulness to apostolic teaching in the Church Universal.

Although there is continued debate among New Testament scholars, theologians, church historians, historiographers, archaeologists, and liturgists regarding the veracity of the “Church-order literature genre” that has been preserved and passed down through the ages there is consensus that it did exist as “living literature”¹⁷⁷ as early as the second century and reached its “fullest development” by the end of the fourth century.¹⁷⁸ The *Canons of Hippolytus* are an example of Church-order literature that claims to transmit apostolic practice of the “true faith” that has been handed down from the days of the apostles and therefore was believed to have direct authority of Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁹ This chapter will explore the ritual process of Christian catechesis preserved in the *Canons of Hippolytus* and demonstrate the transformative genius of a life-altering, immersive, spiritual formation process that faithfully preserved the Church Universal, and transmitted the gospel of Jesus Christ across the centuries amid church controversy, doctrinal heresies, social prejudice, political pressure, and intense religious persecution. Further, this chapter will demonstrate the applicability of the ancient form of Christian catechesis for Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness congregations in this present era and

¹⁷⁷John F. Baldwin, “Hippolytus and the Apostolic Tradition: Recent Research and Commentary,” *Theological Studies* Vol. 64 No. 3 (2003), 534. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056390306400303>; Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson, L. Edward Phillips, and Harold W. Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 13.

¹⁷⁸ Hippolytus and Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *On the Apostolic Tradition*. St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press “Popular Patristics” Series (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2015), 15; Hippolytus and Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus: Translated into English with Introduction and Notes*. Kindle (Library of Alexandria, 2020), 1, 7.

¹⁷⁹ Hippolytus and Stewart-Sykes, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 7, 15; Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 21.

beyond until Jesus comes again and catches up the Church Universal (Body of Christ) ...his Bride, to live forever with him.

Identification of Hippolytus and the Importance of the Ancient Hippolytean School

Hippolytus of Rome

There is no doubt that there was a presbyter of the Church of Rome who became the schismatic bishop of Rome named Hippolytus; Hippolytus is considered a saint, is numbered among the Christian martyrs, and still honored by the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁸⁰ Burton Scott Easton describes Hippolytus of Rome as an “enigmatic personality” who is also the author of “voluminous works” that have been preserved, studied, and translated into Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, Armenian and ...Old Slavic.”¹⁸¹ Bradshaw punctuates the difficulty in identifying Hippolytus himself when he states “Eusebius and Jerome describe him as a bishop but do not identify his diocese” which is further confused by the existence of testimony of others who identify Hippolytus as a “schismatic presbyter in the time of Novatian” and the existence of the hagiography of Hippolytus the martyr who wrote the “heresiological treatise *Philosophoumena* in a much later time period than the Church Order material in the *Apostolic Tradition* genre in which the *Canons of Hippolytus* were preserved.”¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ J. P. Kirsch, “Hippolytus,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline and History of the Catholic Church* (New York: R. Appleton, 1907), 360-362. <https://archive.org/details/07470918.7.emory.edu>.

¹⁸¹ Hippolytus and Easton. *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 16.

¹⁸² Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 5; Baldovin, “Hippolytus and the Apostolic Tradition: Recent Research and Commentary,” 524.

Ancient Hippolytean School

There has been intense debate and inquiry regarding the plausibility that Hippolytus of Rome is the sole author of the multitude of works attributed to him. John Baldovin suggests that the “title of *Apostolic Traditions* as well as the “corpus of biblical commentaries and anti-heretical treatises” cannot have been the work of one author.¹⁸³ Alistair Stewart-Sykes as well as Paul Bradshaw, Maxwell Johnson, Edward Phillips, and Harold Attridge agree and demonstrate through a close reading and textual study of the Hippolytean corpus that there are at least two different authors reflected in the text and theology of the *Apostolic Tradition* which has been preserved in the genre of Church Order literature.¹⁸⁴

There is nearly unanimous consensus that there was a Hippolytean community or ancient “Christian school” that followed the teaching of Hippolytus whose members authored works that were attributed to Hippolytus.¹⁸⁵ Allen Brent and Stewart-Sykes provide ample discussion of the “flexibility” of ancient titles and affirm that the Hippolytean corpus embodies the “characteristics” of an ancient school outlined by Culpepper in that ¹⁸⁶ the Hippolytean School lived in fellowship, celebrated their Christian faith, and passed down the “wisdom of their founder, and concern for discipleship as the outworking of philosophical wisdom.”¹⁸⁷ Therefore, it is not necessary to identify the identity of Hippolytus or provenance of the material to accept the veracity of the Hippolytean corpus. The most suggestive evidence for this view is

¹⁸³ Baldovin, “Hippolytus and the Apostolic Tradition: Recent Research and Commentary,” 520.

¹⁸⁴ Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary*, 5; Hippolytus and Stewart Sykes, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 7, 15.

¹⁸⁵ Hippolytus and Stewart-Sykes, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 49-50.

¹⁸⁶ Hippolytus and Stewart-Sykes, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 49.

¹⁸⁷ Hippolytus and Easton, *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 49.

the existence of a statue with the titles of works inscribed on the base attributed to Hippolytus. Among the titles listed on the base of the statue are the *Paschal Tables*, and *On Charismata* with *Apostolic Tradition* on the next line.¹⁸⁸

The *Paschal Tables* appear to be a theological statement of testimony to Jesus as the (πάσχα) Paschal Lamb of God and an attempt to fix the date to celebrate Easter during the time of Passover rather than on the Lord's Day which was designated as the Sunday following Passover.¹⁸⁹ This debate represents two equally valid positions regarding an appropriate time to "remember" Jesus until he comes again (1 Cor. 11:25). Most scholars agree that the Greek word χάρισμα refers to the "grace-gift" or divine "endowment" given by God to all who receive Christ as Savior to fulfill his will for the Church Universal.¹⁹⁰ The next line identifies the wisdom (ἡμῶν) ¹⁹¹ teaching (Prov. 8:22-31; Jn 1:1-2; Col. 1:17) of the Hippolytean School as the teaching handed down from the (ἀπόστολος) apostles (Acts 2:42) and appears to have been highly influential in the development of the later "Roman rites."¹⁹² The "Church-Orders" were practical manuals that were to guide each Christian community in the "inner life of the church and to equip them to fulfill their God-given task to make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁸⁸ Hippolytus and Steward-Sykes, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 26-27; Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* (Leiden/New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1995), 522-523; Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 110-111.

¹⁸⁹ B.D. Chilton, "Festivals and Holy Days: Jewish" in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Ed. By Craig Alan Evans, Stanley E. Porter, and Ginny Evans (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 376-377.

¹⁹⁰ Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 4-7; Thayer, Joseph H, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, <https://biblehub.com/thayers/>.

¹⁹¹ Brown, Francis, 1849-1916. *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Unabridged, Electronic Database (Seattle: Biblesoft, Inc, 2002, 2003, 2006), <https://biblehub.com/bdb/>.

¹⁹² Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 5; Hippolytus and Steward-Sykes, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 26-29; Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*.

Easton notes that Christians were to look to Jesus in all things but there were no specific “concrete” instructions from Jesus for “specific matters...rather, he taught “ultimate moral principles and left to individuals the task of applying the principles.”¹⁹³

The *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus of Rome appeared in the second century, but the interdependence of the texts in which exact quotes and similar material is shared among the Hippolytean corpus indicate the original source document existed in different forms throughout the Roman Empire at an earlier date.¹⁹⁴ The multiple layers of editing, interpolations and interdependence observed in the Church-order literature support the conclusion that these Church-orders were the ongoing work of the independent house churches or schools from the first century through the fourth century.¹⁹⁵

Easton notes that “local congregations” comprised of men and women who were “practically isolated from the rest of the world” were “left free to develop under the guidance of the Spirit” and encouraged to institute “customs” that were deemed beneficial by the local congregation.¹⁹⁶ Among the myriad of sources, utilized by the early Christian congregations the “Old Testament” was considered to be of greatest importance for ordering Christian community and necessary “legislative purposes.”¹⁹⁷ Easton observes that the “literal force of an Old Testament precept” might be recognized as “superseded” but a “Transferred sense might be

¹⁹³ Hippolytus and Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 1-2.

¹⁹⁴ Baldwin, “Hippolytus and the Apostolic Tradition: Recent Research and Commentary,” 522-523, 531.

¹⁹⁵ Hippolytus and Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 1; Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 108.

¹⁹⁶ Hippolytus and Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 2-3.

¹⁹⁷ Hippolytus and Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 3.

discovered that revived a rule for Christianity.”¹⁹⁸ Therefore, in the early Church there was an understanding of the “permanent value of ceremonial legislation” as well as the “obligation of the moral laws” which were treated as “absolute.”¹⁹⁹ This hermeneutic can be observed in the ordination requirements and the ceremonial traditions outlined in the *Canons of Hippolytus* which mirrors the “ceremonial legislation of the Pentateuch” and incorporates “Mosaic precepts” (e.g. Numbers 11:16-17, *Canons of Hippolytus* 4, ordination of a Presbyter)²⁰⁰

Permanent Value of Ceremonial Legislation and Ordination Hermeneutic Observable in the Church of the Nazarene Manual

Particularly important to the purpose of this dissertation is an example of the application of this hermeneutic in the updated language of the 2023 *Church of the Nazarene Manual* in “The Covenant of Christian Conduct”(Par.28; Par. 29) which applies the obligation of the moral laws to the current contexts of the global Church of the Nazarene.²⁰¹ Similarly, the understanding of the permanent value of ceremonial legislation in the early church is also present in the language of the note that precedes the sacramental liturgy provided by the General Assembly in Part VIII entitled “Sacraments and Rituals” which states “In order to edit or to make additions to any item in the Sacraments and Rituals section of the *Manual*, action by a General Assembly is required,” (Par. 700).²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Hippolytus and Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 3.

¹⁹⁹ Hippolytus and Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 3-4.

²⁰⁰ Hippolytus and Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 5; Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 63.

²⁰¹ *Manual*, 44-50.

²⁰² *Manual*, 261.

Another interesting parallel between Church Order literature that has been recognized by scholars to include the versions and translations of the *Apostolic Tradition* formerly known as the *Egyptian Church Orders* is the multiple versions of the *Manual*, which is an example of living literature that has been edited and revised as the Church of the Nazarene has developed and grown as a global evangelical denomination.²⁰³

Scholars have agreed that there are versions of the *Egyptians Church Orders* in four languages, all of which include the text of *The Canons of Hippolytus*.²⁰⁴ Bradshaw and Stewart-Sykes identify the Latin translation, Sahidic translation (Egyptian Coptic dialects), Bohairic translation (8 CE to present, chief liturgical language of Coptic Orthodox Church), Arabic translation (Semitic language of the Arabian Peninsula), and Ethiopic translation (South Semitic language of Ethiopia) as well as the versions of these translations that guided the order, worship, and service of their respective Christian communities.²⁰⁵ The versions of the text include the *Epitome of Apostolic Constitutions* 8 section entitled “Constitutions of the Holy Apostles concerning Ordinations through Hippolytus,” *Testamentum Domini*, and the *Cannons of Hippolytus*.²⁰⁶ The intent of the Church Order Literature was to unify the ceremonial practice of Christians across the diverse contexts of developing Christian communities and safeguard the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith.

²⁰³ Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 1.

²⁰⁴ Hippolytus and Stewart-Sykes, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 57.

²⁰⁵ Hippolytus and Stewart-Sykes, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 55-58; Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 6-9; Hippolytus and Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 10.

²⁰⁶ Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 6-11.

*Implications of Church Order Literature for the Church of the Nazarene Georgia District and USA
Canada Region Ministry Contexts*

The implied purpose of the Church Order Literature is once again directly relatable to the Georgia District and USA/Canada Region and its current declining membership and loss of Christian identity. The cultural landscape of the United States and Canada bears striking similarity to that of the Greco-Roman culture in which much of the early church communities existed in that there were inherited worldviews constructed from primary, secondary, and tertiary influences from multiple strata of pre-existing familial, religious, and political social mores, cultural norms, and taboos. The social mores, cultural norms, and taboos of the Greco-Roman culture were ingrained with polytheism and allegiance to the good of the culture and animosity towards any group that threatened the embodiment of the social mores and cultural norms of the dominant culture. The ceremonial legislation of the Church order Literature adapted for each local body of believers provided a way for the core of the Christian Faith to be preserved and practiced through embodied, theologically rich worship that was a countercultural way of life in every stratum of the receiving Christian context.

The Georgia District Landscape currently includes members and participants who have entered their local context with inherited worldviews that have been shaped by inherited familial, religious, and political social mores, cultural norms, and taboos. Often times the members and participants are unaware of their own inherited biases or the subtle shifts in thinking that global sharing of cultural influences has brought about. A prime example is the need for statements of the sanctity of human life (Par. 30.1-6), human sexuality and the prohibition of same-sex marriage and polygamy (Par. 31) in the *2023 Church of the Nazarene Manual*, which were challenged and hotly debated in the most recent General Assembly. Depending upon which of

the five regions of Georgia (Ridge and Valley, Appalachian, Blue Ridge, Piedmont, Coastal Plain) in which a Nazarene church was planted its current context was shaped by the history of that region, the familial, religious, political, social mores, and cultural norms inherited by its members in tandem with the wider state, national, and global influences. The danger is always syncretism that is believed to be correct belief, or the right teaching of the Nazarene Church and the core of the Christian Faith and the embodied practice of the belief as the measure and rule of right action or embodied ritual for worship and Christian community.

The Context of the Early Christians

Anti-Christian Social, Political, and Economic Context of the Ancient Christian Churches

It is important to note that the first three hundred years of the ancient church were perilous times for the early Christians. This is obvious in the provision made in the *Canons of Hippolytus* for the recognition of unbaptized catechumen who were “arrested” and put to death as “martyrs” who were “baptized” in their own blood.²⁰⁷ The earliest Christians were most often resident aliens” who were “subject to ... social, political, economic, and personal constraints.”²⁰⁸ However, even Roman citizens who became Christians faced serious legal challenges because Christians “refused to worship any god but their own” which branded them as “outsiders” who were deserving of the “death penalty” and made them easy targets for leaders to use as

²⁰⁷ Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 103.

²⁰⁸ Thomas Finn, “Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity: A Study of the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 3 no. 1 (1989), 69-89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44368406>.

“scapegoats for political tensions.”²⁰⁹ Since Christians were no longer considered Jews they were in “legal jeopardy through the end of the second century.”²¹⁰

Finn observes that the “survival of Roman Christianity” before the Edict of Milan (313 CE) depended on the ability of the Church to develop a way to shape converts so that they could survive “in the face of social and legal hostility.”²¹¹ Victor Turner identifies the early Christians as “Threshold People” who had a “liminal personae” in that they were “necessarily ambiguous” persons that lived “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, convention, and ceremonial.”²¹² Several non-theological pieces recognize the “rapid spread of Christianity”²¹³ as well as “early Christianity’s capacity to adapt to its surroundings,”²¹⁴ its “proletarian appeal,” and “its power to secure ancient people against loneliness, and engender a “radical sense of community” that escalated “Roman hostility.”²¹⁵

²⁰⁹ Finn, “Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity,” 70; Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Antistructure*, (Chicago: Aldine 1969), 85.

²¹⁰ Finn, “Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity,” 70.

²¹¹ Finn, “Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity,” 69.

²¹² Finn, “Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity,” 81.

²¹³ Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, 2nd ed. Rev., vol. 2 Trans. Hames Moffat (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1908), 467.

²¹⁴ Karl Kautsky, *Foundation of Christianity* Trans. Henry F. Mins (New York: Russell, 1959), 187-211.

²¹⁵ Finn, “Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity,” 69; John Gager, *The Rites of Passage*, Trans. Monica B. Visedom and Gabrielle A. Chaffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 144-148.

The Immersive Genuis: The Catechumenate Contained in *The Canons of Hippolytus*

Radical Break from Pagan Culture and Wholehearted Commitment to the Process of Christian Initiation and Willing Acceptance of Living as a Member of the Christian Community

The journey of a seeker or “hearer of the word” who desired to become a catechumen began with the *episteme*, or formal inquiry into the “motives, status, and occupation” of the person desiring to become a Christian (e.g. *Canons of Hippolytus* 10).²¹⁶ Only hearers who were willing to make a complete break from the larger culture were accepted into the catechumenate to begin the three-year “process of Christian initiation.”²¹⁷ However, there is also a provision for catechumen to be presented for baptism earlier if their life demonstrates genuine faith.²¹⁸ It is noteworthy that any person who had a vocation that was hostile to the gospel, required an individual to break the moral law of God, or that might become a threat to the gospel were not allowed to become catechumen unless they were willing to quit their vocation and wholeheartedly embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ and live faithfully as a member of the Christian community (*Canons of Hippolytus* 10, 11).²¹⁹ While there are no early texts prior to the fourth century with this level of inquiry it is significant that there are “similar practices” in other early Christian literature (e.g. Justin Martyr’s *First Apology* AD 155-157).²²⁰

²¹⁶ Finn, “Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity,” 72; Bradshaw, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 83-84.

²¹⁷ Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 84

²¹⁸ Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 97-98.

²¹⁹ Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 89-92.

²²⁰ Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 92.

Humble Submission of Catechumen to Instruction Through the Process of Catechesis Alongside Faithful Christian Leaders

After the acceptance into the catechumenate the process of *catechesis* began with three years of oral instruction. The purpose of catechesis was to impress the words of instruction so they would echo (*en-che*) in the minds of the catechumen even when the instructor was not present.²²¹ The process for the catechumenate's oral instruction began in the morning before going to work when the catechumens came to the church building or house to receive oral instruction with the faithful who were present to receive instruction with the catechumens.²²² The oral instruction was equated with "mana" that would "refashion" the catechumen and "reform the faithful."²²³ The text of the *Canon of Hippolytus* is filled with "biblical commentary, creedal and liturgical instruction, and moral exhortation" which appear to have been orally taught to the catechumen alongside the faithful. At the end of the oral instruction the "teacher of the day," who may have been a cleric or lay person, lays hands on the catechumen, prays for them, and then dismisses them (*Canons of Hippolytus* 18).²²⁴

Voluntary Rejection of Evil and Genuine Faith Made Visible by Holy Living in a Liminal Space

At this point the catechumen would undergo daily *exorcism*, the voluntary rejection of evil and the purposeful living of the Christian faith. Only catechumen who could give evidence of steadfast faith were declared *electi* and presented for baptism. The standard for evaluating the

²²¹ Finn, "Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity," 72 73.

²²² Finn, "Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity," 72 73.

²²³ Finn, "Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity," 74.

²²⁴ Finn, "Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity," 7273; Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 102.

catechumen's progress in the process was the way in which he or she was actually living. Catechumen were expected to honor widows, visit the sick, and do every kind of good work.²²⁵ The *electi* continued the process of *exorcism* through the season of Lent as baptismal preparation and were presented for baptism by their sponsors after they had passed the public examination of the purity of their motives and genuineness of their faith.²²⁶ While in the process of catechesis the catechumen are in liminal space, or in-between their culture and the Church. They live as wanderers or sojourners without a home; they exist in both but are not fully accepted in either one.²²⁷

Baptismal Ceremony, Public Profession of Faith in the Triune God, Anointing with Oil, and Immersion in Water, Recognition of Electi of the Church Universal and Participants in the Eucharist

The *Canons of Hippolytus* 18 through 21 provide instructions for the baptismal ceremony which requires a public profession of faith, further exorcism by the bishop, the anointing of oil by the presbyter, and immersion in water three times. Each time the *electi* are immersed they are asked to give witness to a creedal statement of faith; first in the name of the Father, then in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son, and lastly in the name of the Holy Spirit, our *Paraclete*, who is

²²⁵ Finn, "Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity," 7274; Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 108-111.

²²⁶ Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 108-109.

²²⁷ Finn, "Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity," 73.

divine Advocate, Teacher, Counselor, Helper, and Comforter (Rom. 8:34; Jn 14:16, 26; Jn. 16:13; Heb. 7:24-27).²²⁸

The culmination of the process of catechesis is the reception of the *electi* as baptized members of the Church Universal. From this point on the baptized members of the Church participate in the Eucharist, are numbered among the faithful, and receive the kiss of peace (*Canons of Hippolytus* 21). At this point, a total change of mind and life has taken place. The immersive process of the catechumenate ends with catechumens who have a “refashioned” and undivided heart” that is now able to “withstand” social pressure and legal danger.²²⁹

Transferable Wisdom for Every Christian Context

Rigorous Catechetical Process Leading to Christian Spiritual Formation within the Worshipping Christocentric Christian Community-as-a-Whole

The catechetical process of the early church was a means by which the participants experienced spiritual transformation. The historical record documents the veracity of a robust, rigorous catechetical process that occurs within the worshipping Christian community. The transferable wisdom that is transmittable in every Christian context is spiritual transformation that produces Christians who can stand regardless of social pressure, personal suffering, or intense persecution occurs within a Christian community of faith where the Holy Scriptures are read, and Jesus Christ is remembered as the Paschal Lamb of God, who lived, died, rose from the dead, and is coming again. Further, the emphasis placed upon the importance of true repentance

²²⁸ Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips, and Attridge, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary Hermeneia*, 115-119.

²²⁹ Finn, “Ritual Process and The Survival of Early Christianity,” 72, 74.

and voluntary rejection of evil (a timeless form of *exorcism*) be evident in the life-pattern of those who wish to join the Christian community is a necessary litmus test to prevent false teachers and those who wish to harm the Church Universal by infiltrating and subverting the Christian Faith.

While anyone may come and hear the gospel preached, only those who truly desire to become disciples of Christ may become a member of the Christian community. Dallas Willard eloquently argues for the need for the revival of the “ancient” process of “spiritual formation” that was made evident by the “putting off of the old self” and “putting on of the new self” (Eph. 4:22-24).²³⁰ He suggests nominal Christianity subverts the Christian community and produces immature disciples of a Christ idea rather than genuine Christians who are willing to abandon everything and suffer loss for Jesus Christ, the teacher who is both Savior and Lord (Acts 2:36).²³¹

Recent Attempts to Regain Non-Institutional Forms of Christian Community

There have been some modern attempts at regaining the non-institutional forms of Christian community that strive to reclaim the “Greco-Roman banquet context”²³² for their Christian meetings such as Fresh Expressions (Anglican and Methodist churches in England),²³³

²³⁰ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 108-109.

²³¹ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 110.

²³² Andrew Messmer, “Early Christian Liturgy: A Reconstruction of All Known Liturgical Components and Their Respective Order in Early Christian Liturgy,” *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* Vol. 4, no. 2 (December 2019), 264-265. <https://jbtsonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/JBTS-4.2-Article-7.pdf>.

²³³ Fresh Expressions. “Backstory: A Global Movement of Churches Following the Spirit” from the Fresh Expressions website. Updated 2022. <https://freshexpressions.com/our-history>.

Solomon's Porch Church (Founded by Pastor Doug Pagitt, evangelical pastor and social activist),²³⁴ and the Dinner Church Collective (founded by Verlon Fosner, and an initiative of Fresh Expressions US).²³⁵ While these ministries have made some inroads into the American culture they seem to lack the emphasis on spiritual formation that forms disciples of Jesus Christ who reject the love of the world and wholly commit themselves to obediently follow the teaching of Jesus and the way of the cross (Matt. 16:24-26; Jam. 4:4). While it is certainly true that the Church Universal cannot be limited to an institutional structure because It is the body of Christ (Col. 1:24; 1 Cor. 12:27), it is also true that the Church Universal cannot be limited to a house church or other forms of Christian gatherings.

The Christian spiritual formation reflected in the *Canons of Hippolytus* occurs within a local community, whether it is in a small communal gathering at a house church like Solomon's Porch, an informal gathering like Dinner Church, a Sunday school class in a mainline church, or a formal catechism class held in a historic church sanctuary. True Christian spiritual formation is the result of the faithful instruction that follows the leading of the Spirit of God that boldly teaches the fullness of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who was revealed as the way of salvation in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament that shapes hearers of the word into new Christian believers who are able to stand firm no matter where they live or what challenges or dangers they may face.

²³⁴ Solomon's Porch. "Our Community Vision" from the Solomon's Porch website. Updated 2022. <https://www.solomonsporchteaching.com/about>.

²³⁵ Verlon Fosner, "About Us" from the Dinner Church Collective Website. Updated 2022. <https://dinnerchurchcollective.net/about-us>.

Analyzing the Ancient Standards for Baptized Christians to the Observable Demographics and Standards of the Nazarene Congregations in the Georgia District and USA/Canada Region

The Nazarene congregations in the Georgia District have many members who would give their life for the faith that they profess, and most do give sacrificially of the resources that God has given them. However, as the discipleship reports reflect there are many church members and participants who attend worship sporadically, engage superficially with discipleship ministries and participate minimally in the life of the church through financial giving or service. Further, the demographics of the members of Nazarene Churches in the USA Canada Region reflect an aging population with very few members between the ages of 18 to 29 years of age. The current demographical landscape of Nazarene Churches appears to indicate a disconnect between the faith that is believed, proclaimed, and transmitted through the ministries of Nazarene Churches, and the faith and embodied practice that has been received by the descendants of Nazarene members.

Analyzing the Statistical Data of Selected Regions of the Global Church of the Nazarene

While the Global Church of the Nazarene Statistical Reports over the last ten years reflect steady growth as a denomination, most of the growth has occurred in two regions, Africa Region and Asia-Pacific Region. The same statistical data demonstrates four regions have significantly decreased in membership (Eurasia: -2.71%; Mesoamerica: -80%; South America: -3.60%; and USA/Canada: -3.11%).²³⁶ Scott Armstrong offers the following insight:

²³⁶ Scott Armstrong, Emily Armstrong, “13 Observations on the Church of the Nazarene’s 2021 Global Statistics,” Web log *Transform the Globe* (blog), Church of the Nazarene Mesoamerica Genesis, February 11, 2022, <https://transformtheglobe.com/2022/02/11/13-observations-on-the-church-of-the-nazarenes-2021-global-statistics/>.

Membership in the USA/Canada region continues to decline. While the overall Church has grown nearly 25% in the last ten years, and every other region has grown considerably, Nazarene membership in those two countries has gone down a whopping-10.76% in the same decade. The many reasons why the USA and Canada are hemorrhaging members can be saved for another article. Any and all proposed solutions need to come quickly and be listened to attentively by our leadership globally and in that region. Moreover, the reality of what is happening in this region should drive all Nazarenes to our knees in prayer!

It might be tempting to accept the declining engagement of young people in Nazarene Churches as a cultural development due to the number of people who decide to remain unaffiliated with organized churches or adherents of the Five Major world *Religions as the Religious Landscape Study* published by the Pew Research Center suggests. However, the same study documents the age demographic makeup of the adherents of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism reflect growth in the 18 to 29- years of age population group. The most striking and alarming statistical change present in the 18 to 29-year-old age group is the rise in the percentage of young people who are adherents of Islam (44%), Hinduism (34%), and Buddhism (34%), and Unaffiliated (35%)²³⁷ A secondary but startling concern is the percentage of the adherents of Christianity between the ages of 18 to 29-years-of-age which demonstrates a falling away from Roman Catholic (17%), Evangelical Protestant (17%), Mainline Protestant (16%), and Historically Black Protestant (20%), and an increase in participation in Orthodox Christianity (26%), Mormonism (22%), Jehovah's Witness (15%).²³⁸

It appears that the onslaught of cultural Christianity, Secularism, Atheism, Agnosticism, and Polytheism is in full effect within the Georgia District, USA /Canada Region, and the world just as it was in the ancient world. The world religions and cultic religious groups have

²³⁷ Pew Research, "Age Distribution," *Religious Landscape Study* 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/>.

²³⁸ Pew Research, "Age Distribution," 2023.

strenuous education programs required of every new convert coupled with accountability to a mentor, religious leader, and religious community. These religious and anti-religious groups require commitment, financial investment, and strict adherence to community beliefs, standards, and practice. In essence, the adherents must make a profession of faith in tandem with embodied practices that evidence that faith—the same catechetical-type covenant early Christian catechumenate willingly made.

Identifying the Inherited Catechetical Framework Present in the Church of the Nazarene Structure Through Immersive Participation in a Balance Christocentric Christian Community

The framework for this type of catechism is present in the Church of the Nazarene structure through immersive participation in a balanced Christocentric Christian community that includes: NMI, NYI, SDMI, Christian Education, Compassionate Ministries (local, district, global), Worship, and Fellowship etc., but the absence of an intentional discipleship pathway and the limited knowledge of and connection with the foundation of the first five-hundred years of the Christian Faith appears to have unwittingly produced wavering disciples that have been shaped by the culture far more than Christ through authentic Christian experience in an immersive Christocentric community.

The Timeless Genius of the Catechumenate Preserved in the Canons of Hippolytus That May Be Emulated in All Christian Contexts and Especially Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Churches Such as the Church of the Nazarene

Robert Webber observes the covenantal nature of the earliest Christian worship that is anchored in the Old Testament when it is read with a Christocentric lens. Remembering Christ

(*anemesis*) through symbol and sign (baptismal rite, Eucharist) reminds the Christians they have been made free from the bondage of sin, just as the Israelites were rescued and set free from their bondage in Egypt, they have been fashioned as a the people of God who are called to be a holy nation (1 Pet.3:9).²³⁹ The oral teaching of the catechumens reflected in the *Canons of Hippolytus* faithfully transmitted the core of the Christian faith through the reading of Scripture, teaching, and preaching (e.g. 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:2), creedal statements drawn from Scripture (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:4-5; 1 Tim. 3:15) and reenacted through rich symbols and signs when believers gathered to worship (e.g. Thanksgiving and/or prayer, 1 Tim. 4:3-5; Eucharistic meal: Bread and Cup (1 Cor. 11:17-34)).²⁴⁰ This is the timeless genius of the Catechumenate preserved in the *Canons of Hippolytus* that can be emulated in any Christian context and especially in the Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness congregations of the Georgia District; the call to discipleship through obedience to all that Christ commanded and accountability in Christian community not only for the ancient catechumens, but for all the faithful who are called Christians.

However, the worship of many of the congregations of the Georgia District selected for this dissertation research demonstrated limited reading of Scripture, and little or no inclusion of creedal statements drawn from Scripture, or the historic materials provided in the Nazarene Hymnal. While the sermons of the pastors do preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the song services proclaim truth and glorify God, most worship services had limited symbols and signs and virtually no participatory liturgy even when administering the sacraments. Sadly, there did not appear to be a commitment to preaching entire sanctification but a reticence because of the

²³⁹ Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship*, 27, 58-62.

²⁴⁰ Messmer, "Early Christian Liturgy," 269-271; Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 75-76.

theological diversity present in their local contexts. Likewise, the concept of accountability in Christian community for the established congregational members and leadership was limited or absent. It would seem that there is at the very least a need to revisit the way in which Nazarenes are being shaped by their experience in local churches and perfected as saints of who are members of the body of Christ called to the unity of the faith and the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).

CHAPTER FIVE

An Invitation to Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Christian Spirituality: Worshiping in the Beauty of Holiness

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:19-25 NIV

Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Christian Pilgrimage: **Recovering Corporate Worship as a Means of Spiritual Formation**

Introduction to Chapter Four: Remembering the Landscape of the Academic Pilgrimage Through Ancient Church Documents

The academic pilgrimage through ancient church documents that began in Chapter Three with the *Didache*, progressed through *Church Order Literature* and an exploration of ancient catechism in Chapter Four, continues in Chapter Five with a survey of the fastidious itinerary of the Bordeaux Pilgrim (333AD) and the impassioned diary of Egeria (approx.381-384 AD). The testimony of these wayfaring pilgrims preserved in these two documents provide an intimate look into the practice of fourth century Christian pilgrimage to holy sites and immersive participation in the continuous worship cycles of imaginative worship experienced by the

worshipping community of Cyril's Jerusalem. Their experience of metaphorical pilgrimage made possible through worship acts at holy sites and in corporate worship (Scripture, Prayer, Worship Space) may be viewed as a seminal pathway for creating a physical worship space where genuine worshipers of God regularly engage in metaphorical pilgrimage and experience allegorical union with Christ by the grace of God, through faith in Christ, and by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Christian Pilgrimage Analogous to the Earliest Known Christian Pilgrimages: A Call to Holiness Through Ongoing Consecration and Surrender to the Transforming Power of God

Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Christian pilgrimage may be understood to be analogous to the earliest known Christian pilgrimages. The deep desire of holiness people is to be a holy people who are living witnesses of God, who is holy. Nazarenes understand that without holiness no one will see God (Heb. 12:14). The call to holiness through ongoing consecration is from God and permeates the teaching of the apostles (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet.1:15). The transforming power of God is observable in the lives of God's people who understand that God is *קָדוֹשׁ* (*qadosh*) or separate from humanity and creation, and has no darkness, impurity, or sin in Him.²⁴¹ Therefore, Christians undertake a lifelong pilgrimage that becomes *ἁγιασμός* (*hagiasmos*) or lifelong process of advancing in holiness or sanctification through consecration.²⁴² The aim of the pilgrim is to live in unbroken communion with God and become ἅγιος (*holy*) or with a Christ-like

²⁴¹ Brown, Francis, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, "6918 קָדוֹשׁ," Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, 872 b.

²⁴² Thayer, "38 ἁγιασμός," Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, <https://biblehub.com/greek/38.htm>.

nature.²⁴³ The pursuit of entire sanctification, or holiness by immersive experience in a Christocentric Christian community that worships through imaginative Christocentric worship may be identified as an accessible means for Christian Spiritual Formation in Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness congregations.

The first task undertaken in Chapter Five is an overview of the historical landscape of fourth century Christian pilgrimage, the theological significance of Christocentric corporate worship, and the value of imaginative pilgrimage as an integral way in which Christian worship catechizes (teaches) and becomes a holy place for experiencing the grace of God (embodied practice and experience).

Introduction to the History of Fourth Century Christian Pilgrimage and Cyril's Jerusalem

The words and melody of “Wayfaring Stranger” strike a familiar chord in the hearts of people in crisis. The lyrics provide a glimpse of hope for the disillusioned minds of weary souls languishing in the brokenness of the human condition. The listener feels an instant comradery with the “poor wayfaring stranger” who is “traveling thru this world of woe.”²⁴⁴ The early Christians who saw the destruction of the temple in AD 70 surely felt the loss and woe of the physical world crashing around them as they were forced to take refuge in the mountains just as Jesus had predicted (Luke 21:20-24). Likewise, the Jerusalem Christians who returned to Jerusalem after the carnage to establish the Jerusalem Church and proclaim the name of Jesus among their Jewish and Roman neighbors saw “dark clouds” gather around them as they were

²⁴³ Thayer, “40 ἄγιος,” *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/40.htm>.

²⁴⁴ John Lomax, Alan Lomax, Charles Seeger, Ruth Crawford Seeger, “Wayfaring Stranger,” In *Folk Song U.S.A.: The 111 Best American Ballads* (New York: The New American Library Inc.;1975), 346-347.

scattered by Emperor Hadrian's military forces that razed the cherished city of Jerusalem in AD 135, supplanted their ancestral holy city with the Roman city of 'Aelia Capitolina,' and then banished "all circumcised persons."²⁴⁵ In every sense of the word, the early Jewish Christians and Gentile converts were foreigners and exiles, a scattered people without land or home (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:9-10).

It is no wonder that the ancient Church lifted its gaze heavenward to their eternal, spiritual Jerusalem. As *παρεπιδήμους*,²⁴⁶ exiles and sojourners in a foreign land, they looked forward to the day when they would reach their promised land and live in the 'heavenly Jerusalem' forever with God (Heb. 13:14; Phil. 3:20; Rev. 21:3-4). Walker notes that the "Book of Acts emphasizes the centrifugal thrust of the Christian message, leaving Jerusalem behind as the gospel of Jesus Christ goes out to the 'ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8).²⁴⁷ For the first three centuries, Christian worship and Church life held a "negative view of Jerusalem" that warned against "too much focus on religious places and reinforced the New Testament teaching that "true worship" is carried out through worshiping in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).²⁴⁸ Origen and Eusebius agreed and deepened the spiritualized interpretation of the geographical designations of "Zion" and "Jerusalem" contending that in the "Christian era" they should be understood as "the holy city of God, the heavenly one."²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Lomax et. al. "Wayfaring Stranger," In *Folk Song*, 346-347; Peter Walker, "Pilgrimage in the Early Church," in *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Craig Bartholomew and Fred Hughes (London/New York: Routledge Taylor and French Group, 2004), 75.

²⁴⁶ Thayer, "3927, *παρεπίδημος*," *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/3927.htm>

²⁴⁷ Walker, "Pilgrimage in the Early Church," 74.

²⁴⁸ Walker, "Pilgrimage in the Early Church," 73-75.

²⁴⁹ Walker, "Pilgrimage in the Early Church," 75-76.

This predominant negative view of Jerusalem might have continued unchallenged if it had not been for the creative genius and persuasive argumentation of Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem, who was appointed by Emperor Constantine to promote Jerusalem as a Christian ‘holy city.’²⁵⁰ Cyril made a distinction between the city of Jerusalem and the temple; He proposed that Isaiah’s prophetic visions for the future of Jerusalem applied not only to the heavenly Jerusalem but in a literal sense to the physical Jerusalem of the Christian era. This fourth century shift in Christian thought, which recognized the value of a physical Christian pilgrimage and its connection to spiritual renewal, became a source of debate that gave impetus to the “imaginative use of pilgrimage” in corporate worship.²⁵¹

Cyril’s Jerusalem as a Powerful Symbol of Christian Spiritual Formation as Fulfillment of Prophecy for the Restoration of Jerusalem and Recovery of Christocentric Corporate Worship as Continuing Fulfillment of God’s Raising Up a Mighty Army of Holy People

Bishop Cyril’s Jerusalem became a powerful symbol of Christian spiritual formation for Christian pilgrims who desired to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and understand the worth of the salvation they had received, by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ. Walker observed that in a sense, the “renaissance of the city, after 300 years of neglect” may be seen as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy for the restoration of Jerusalem (Isa, 2:1-2; 40:1-2).²⁵² In the same vein I suggest that the recovery of Christocentric corporate worship can be viewed as a

²⁵⁰ Walker, “Pilgrimage in the Early Church,” 77.

²⁵¹ Kenneth Cragg, “Jesus, Jerusalem, and Pilgrimage Today,” in *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Craig Bartholomew and Fred Hughes (London/New York: Routledge Taylor and French Group, 2004), 1.

²⁵² Walker, “Pilgrimage in the Early church,” 78.

continuing fulfillment of God's miraculous action of raising the "dry bones" to life and breathing life into them to raise up a *gadol Chayil* (גָּדוֹל חַיִּיל) a great, numerous army of God's holy people (Ezek. 37:9-13, 21-23; Jn. 3:8; 1 Jn. 1:7-9).²⁵³

Holiness of Heart and Life is Dependent Upon the Will and Action of God Who Provided the Covenantal Nature of Biblical Worship and Eschatological Hope Fulfilled Through Jesus Christ

There is an emphasis on the action of God who decrees he will establish an "everlasting covenant," place his "Spirit" within his people, dwell with, and make Israel holy when his "sanctuary" is among his people "forever" (Ezek. 37:7-10, 26-28). The result will be that the nations will know that the LORD is holy and is the source of holiness (Ezek. 11:19-20; 37:28). The final and perfect fulfillment of this prophecy is yet to come, but it will be realized in heaven (Rev. 11:11; 20:3-5). The beauty of this illustration of the power of God to raise the dead is its application to Christ as the one who fulfilled the "everlasting covenant" (Matt. 26:28) and by extension to the Christian who is raised from death to life with Christ (Eph. 2:6). Robert Webber cites the "covenantal nature of Biblical worship" which makes it possible for the church to be grafted into the eschatological hope of Israel revealed in the Old Testament and fulfilled through Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:15-18). The Church Universal (existing in heaven and on the earth) can be viewed as the fulfillment of the mighty army of Ezekiel's prophecy (Rev. 7:9-10, 13-17).²⁵⁴

²⁵³ For a discussion of Pauline allusions to the fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New Testament and references employed to support Trinitarian Christian theology and the forward focus of the early church see: M. Silva, "Old Testament in Paul" in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 630-642; For a detailed exposition of the Hebrew text of Ezekiel 37:9-13 see the Logos Word by Word exposition and commentary from *The English-Hebrew Reverse Interlinear Old Testament New International Version* by Michael S. Heiser, Randall Tan, and Scott Fleischman via Logos (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2013).

²⁵⁴ Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 17-33. Robert Webber provides a discussion of the Biblical themes of worship and covenant.

Corporate Worship as a Physical Pilgrimage to a Holy Place of Spiritual Formation Through Life-Changing Encounter with God and Ongoing Spiritual Formation

Following the implications of this analogy it is possible to view corporate worship as a physical pilgrimage that Christians undertake to a holy place to receive a fresh life-changing encounter with God. Such that it becomes a holy place of spiritual transformation when congregants experience a metaphorical Christian pilgrimage into Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). Through Christocentric worship Christians retrace the footsteps of Jesus and are ushered into the fullness of God's mighty acts of salvation revealed in Scripture and completed in Christ. It is in genuine, Christ-centered worship that wayfaring Christian pilgrims glimpse the glory of God in the holy place of corporate worship. Therefore, I suggest that corporate worship is an integral form of catechesis that shapes Christian identity through experiencing God in worship. The fervent devotion of the early Christian pilgrims stands as an enduring witness for twenty-first century Christians and underscores the critical need for recovering an understanding of the cruciality of corporate worship as a means of spiritual formation.

The Bordeaux Pilgrim's Christocentric eternal View

Walking in Sacred Places of Divine Encounter with a Christocentric Eternal View

The Bordeaux Pilgrim (333 AD) appears to have undertaken a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, with a similar understanding of sacred places as the Hebrew pilgrims, to see and experience the places where prophets had encountered God. He also shared the same quest for

knowledge and desire to walk in the footsteps of Jesus with Origen and Constantine's mother in that he pays close attention to the places where the disciples had walked with Jesus and where miracles had been performed during the earthly ministry of Jesus.²⁵⁵ We are fortunate to have this earliest known written account of "a pilgrim age extant" who was most likely a Christian and a "native of Guienne" preserved in the *Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem* (333 AD).²⁵⁶ Little else may be definitively said of the Bordeaux Pilgrim's identity but the Christocentric eternal view held by the Bordeaux Pilgrim demonstrates the suppositions and expositions of Gordon McConville, N.T. Wright, and Andrew Hill regarding the mindset and motivation of Christian pilgrims.

The most important takeaway from the Bordeaux Pilgrim that is pertinent to the stated aims of this chapter are the sacred places which he chose to make special comment on and the devotional importance he assigned to them. It is significant that the Bordeaux Pilgrim identified sites mentioned in the Bible where people saw the mighty power of God, the places where holy men and women of the Bible were born, and the places significant in the birth, earthly ministry, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. For instance, he makes specific mention of Ἡλίας (*Elias*, *Elijah*)²⁵⁷ who was an Israelite prophet born at Thisbe and references him as the one who offered a sacrifice on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:16-45).²⁵⁸ It should be noted that he is not worshiping the site but identifying specific places mentioned in the Old and New Testaments and

²⁵⁵ The Bordeaux Pilgrim, *Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem* translated by Aubrey Stewart and Annotated by Sir C.W. Wilson (London: Forgotten Books, 2015), v-vi.

²⁵⁶ The Bordeaux Pilgrim, *Itinerary*, v-vii.

²⁵⁷ Thayer, "2243, Ἡλίας," *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/2243.htm>.

²⁵⁸ Bordeaux Pilgrim, *Itinerary*, 16

then assigning appropriate respect for them. This same honor mindset is evident when he speaks of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Gerizim and his recognition of sites associated with the Jewish patriarchs Joseph (tomb) and Jacob (well). The focus is on their significance in the salvation history in that he immediately connects their significance with the New Testament testimony of the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well where the pilgrim states "our Lord Jesus Christ talked with her."²⁵⁹

The Bordeaux Pilgrim's descriptions in his itinerary demonstrates an eternal Christocentric view as he meticulously follows the path which "Christ" took during his passion and describes sites as they relate to the prophecy of the Christ, the earthly life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and the passion, resurrection, and finally the ascension of the Lord.²⁶⁰ The language of the Bordeaux Pilgrim is one of adoration when he speaks of Jesus. The habit of the Bordeaux Pilgrim to consistently reference Jesus Christ as "our Lord Jesus Christ," "Our Lord," or the "the Lord" gives credence to the consensus regarding the genuine spiritual devotion behind the fourth century shift toward Christian pilgrimage as a spiritual discipline for spiritual formation leading to a deeper union with God and richer understanding of salvation in Christ.

The Impassioned Witness of Egeria's Pilgrimage

A Pilgrimage for the Sake of Piety and Prayer: Love of God, Devotion to Lord Jesus, Obedience to the Holy Spirit, and Faithful Witness to the Church

The language of the impassioned witness of Egeria echoes the desire of the Apostle Paul to be identified with the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. Throughout her

²⁵⁹ Bordeaux Pilgrim, *Itinerary*, 18

²⁶⁰ Bordeaux Pilgrim, *Itinerary*, 23-25.

pilgrimage her devotion for Christ as a Christian pilgrim is reflected in her first-hand account. The worship liturgies that Egeria painstakingly recorded are preserved in *The Pilgrimage of Egeria (Itinerarium Egeriae)* which is the most complete surviving document of fourth-century pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Through her heartfelt descriptions of her worship encounters we have a view into the worship of Cyril's Jerusalem near the end of the fourth or early fifth century at the latest.²⁶¹ It is impossible to positively identify Egeria or her place of origin and social status past the obvious fact that "she was wealthy enough to afford a three-year journey with the full complement of traveling companions and necessary documents so that she was welcomed by local authorities and greeted by bishops."²⁶²

Like the Bordeaux Pilgrim, Egeria is interested in the "sacred happenings that unfolded" in the physical locations rather than the places themselves and consistently seeks out both Old Testament and New Testament places where God has worked miracles.²⁶³ Egeria discloses that she undertook her long journey "for the sake of piety" and testifies that she and her traveling companions visited the holy sites mentioned in Scripture "for the sake of prayer" (13.1-2; 17.1-2; 23.3, 10).²⁶⁴ Her desire to worship in the footsteps of Jesus and preserve the worship liturgies used in Jerusalem so that she and her Christian sisters can sojourn together through them in their local church are an example of imaginative pilgrimage undertaken through worship acts in

²⁶¹ Lester Ruth, Carries Steenwyk, John D. Witvliet, *Walking Where Jesus Walked Worship in Fourth-Century Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 47; George E. Gingras, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage* translated and notated by George E. Gingras (New York/Mahwah: The Newman Press, 1970), 1, 9, 11.

²⁶² Anne McGowan and Paul Bradshaw, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria: A New Translation of the Itinerarium Egeria with Introduction and Commentary* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press Academic, 2018), 12.

²⁶³ Mc Gowan and Bradshaw, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria*, 12, 15.

²⁶⁴ McGowan and Bradshaw, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria*, 50-52.

corporate worship (Scripture, Prayer, Worship Space) that becomes a means to create physical space for a metaphorical pilgrimage (allegorical union) with Christ.²⁶⁵

As I have demonstrated, the fourth-century pilgrim mindset as well as that of the early Church employed a Christocentric lens with a heavenward focus that viewed all of salvation history—what God has done, what God is doing, and what God has promised he will do. In Jerusalem worship and the holy sites of Palestine, Scripture, prayer, and thanksgiving for salvation through baptism and the celebration of the Eucharist guided worship. From Egeria's impassioned witness we can understand corporate worship as a place of transformation where one may walk into Scripture and experience the same miraculous power of God that moved the prophets of old and raised Jesus from the dead.

There is a sense in Egeria's Itinerary that she has glimpsed the reality that Christian Pilgrimage must be lived at home through sacrament and worship. The worship of Jerusalem was stational in that the congregation walked to the holy sites where Scripture was read, hymns/antiphons were sung, and the people prayed and ultimately celebrated the Eucharist.²⁶⁶ Worshipping through the Holy Sepulcher complex begins with the promise of salvation, winds through the darkness of Gethsemane and the poignant sight of the cross on Golgotha, and triumphantly ends with the good news of the empty tomb and risen Lord who is coming again.²⁶⁷ In the holy moment that believers glimpse the glorified Christ who is now enthroned they see the

²⁶⁵ McGown and Bradshaw, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria*, 52-54; Ruth, *Walking Where Jesus Walked*, 47.

²⁶⁶ Ruth et. al, *Walking Where Jesus Walked*, 21-23.

²⁶⁷ Ruth et. al, *Walking Where Jesus Walked*, 38-46.

glory of God anew and realize not only are they wayfaring pilgrims in this world but citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.²⁶⁸

Demonstrating the Connectional Pathway of Christian Pilgrimage
and Transformational Corporate Worship

Impassioned Devotion and Corporate Worship that Catechizes

The impassioned devotion of the early Christians who undertook the physical pilgrimages to gather in corporate worship to be transformed by the presence of the Living God has by-in-large been lost in the twenty-first century church landscape. Tragically, the corporate worship attendance of the USA/Canada Region of the United States, and the current tendency to discontinue prayer meetings, Sunday school, Caravans, and NYI appear to support a loss of wholehearted devotion to gather as the people of God to worship in his holiness. Consequently, the absence of corporate gathering inadvertently constructed a welcoming church culture for religious individualism, which has given rise to a form of consumer religion where self-seeking spiritualism forms self-satisfied religious consumers who reject the scriptural call for the body of Christ to gather in worship (Heb. 10:24-25).

In contrast, early Christian pilgrims sought to reconnect with and gain a deeper understanding of the faith in which they had believed through an intense physical pilgrimage and intentional gathering with Christians in the churches of each area in which they worshiped as a body of believers with “one faith, one Lord, and one baptism” (Eph. 4:5-6). One phenomenon

²⁶⁸ Andrew T. Lincoln, “Pilgrimage and the New Testament” In *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Craig Bartholomew and Fred Hughes (London/New York: Routledge Taylor and French Group, 2004), 29.

that appears to have originated from the physical pilgrimages to holy sites in Jerusalem, Palestine, and Syria was the use of Christian worship liturgy that enabled corporate worship to become a means of imaginative pilgrimage (metaphorical) through which the gathered corporate body journey into Christ and encounter the transforming grace of God. It is my conviction that the recovery of this early view of corporate worship and the intentionality of the crafting of vibrant corporate worship that catechizes (teaches core doctrines) through Spirit-led, impassioned, corporate worship gatherings is of vital importance for the Church Universal as well as the congregations of the Church of the Nazarene of the Georgia District in the USA/ Canada Region.

To demonstrate the pathway of physical pilgrimage to metaphorical pilgrimage that forms the foundational underpinnings of imaginative worship it is necessary to explore the historical background of Christian pilgrimage. The next endeavor will be to define the types of physical pilgrimages and briefly outline the reasons that might motivate a Christian to undertake a physical pilgrimage. The third step will be to present an examination of the theological support for embarking on physical pilgrimage, metaphorical pilgrimage, and imaginative pilgrimage. The final task will be to provide examples of corporate worship liturgy that the earliest Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem and the surrounding areas carried back to their places of origin where they were adapted and adopted into the corporate worship of local church bodies. In essence, every local church became a holy destination where devout Christian pilgrims regularly gathered to worship in the transforming presence of Almighty God.

Physical Pilgrimage to Holy Places and Christocentric View of Early Pilgrims

In the third and fourth centuries, Christian societies encouraged the undertaking of a physical Christian pilgrimage which might be made to a holy man, the tomb of a martyr or saint, or to a geographical destination considered to be holy, in the Holy Land or surrounding areas identified in scripture where miracles and acts of God's salvific actions occurred. These Christian pilgrimages fall into the following categories which are designated by the reason for the pilgrimage: therapeutic, contemplative, intellectual, or penitential. In each case the Christian pilgrim sets out on a sacred journey in which he or she will be able to "see and touch the sacred" or as N.T. Wright observes, "encounter God in a new way" that leads to spiritual transformation.²⁶⁹

There is a clear distinction between the types of pilgrimage which is easily observed in the use of two Greek verbs προσκυνήσω and τιμάω that appear in the New Testament scriptures, early Christian manuscripts, and the existing diaries of the earliest records of pilgrimages to holy places. The first verb is προσκυνήσω or its Latin equivalent *adorare* that are used in relation to visiting holy places. At these holy places a Christian gives appropriate reverence to the person or place that is being adored such as one would bow before a king or kiss hallowed ground.²⁷⁰ This reverence points one to worship God not the person or place. The second verb τιμάω or its Latin equivalent *honorare* is employed when referencing the cult of the martyr which indicates that the pilgrim gives honor that is due in proportion to the intrinsic value of the martyr or saint as a

²⁶⁹ Bouria Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred: The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press. 2005), 6; N.T. Wright, *The Way of the Lord: Christian Pilgrimage Today* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 12.

²⁷⁰ Thayer, "4352 προσκυνέω," *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/4352.htm>; "5091 τιμάω," *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/5091.htm>.

witness to the kingdom of God.²⁷¹ Philip Sheldrake provides further explanation of these expressions of devotion by Christian pilgrims when he notes that “holy men and women were tangible links between heaven and earth.”²⁷² This distinction allows “sensitivity to this sort of pilgrimage” in that once again the honor given to the holy witnesses of God’s salvific acts point the Christian pilgrim to follow the example set by those who faithfully lived and died as witnesses who now reside in heaven.²⁷³

Gordon McConville states “the idea of pilgrimage is rooted in the Old Testament, and Old Testament pilgrimage is rooted in the land of Israel”²⁷⁴ with Jerusalem as the “central place of pilgrimage.”²⁷⁵ The storied history of the Jews is tightly intertwined with the gift of the Promised Land that is to be realized at the end of their pilgrim journey which must be undertaken by faith in God (Gen. 12:1-8).²⁷⁶ The gift of the land is a tangible reminder that God has chosen the Israelites to live in covenant relationship with himself; Yahweh has blessed them, and is still with them. Devout Jews made annual physical pilgrimages three times a year to Jerusalem. McConville observes “the language of pilgrimage is present in Exodus 5:1 with the Hebrew word *hag* that may be translated “pilgrimage feast.” This same pilgrimage-feast language appears in Exodus 23:14-18, the Passover-Unleavened Bread, Deuteronomy 16:1-17, the Feast of Weeks,

²⁷¹ Thayer, “5091 τιμᾶω,” *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/5091.htm>.

²⁷² Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History*, 2nd Ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. 2013), 32-33.

²⁷³ Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred*, 6.

²⁷⁴ Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred*, 6.

²⁷⁵ Gordon, McConville, “Pilgrimage and ‘Place’: An Old Testament View,” in *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Craig Bartholomew and Fred Hughes (London/New York: Routledge Taylor and French Group, 2004), 17.

²⁷⁶ McConville, “Pilgrimage and Place,” 17.

and Leviticus 23, the Feast of Tabernacles. There is a strong attachment to a place and a specific memory of an event that serves as a remembrance of God's salvific acts that have been experienced and are known.²⁷⁷

Historical Place: Event-in-Place

Cragg notes that God revealed himself through the Exodus, which in the Judaic tradition is the historical event of the Exodus.²⁷⁸ Therefore, the historical place in which the event of the Exodus occurs is an example of an "event-in-place."²⁷⁹ The God who delivered the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt has a name. He revealed himself as "Yahweh": I am who I am."²⁸⁰ This is an example of a theology of place in that all events are physically and historically situated.

Following Cragg's exegesis we find that Yahweh is known in the historical event; the context of his name may be interpreted 'I will be there as there whom I will be' because it is a play on the "verb 'to be.'"²⁸¹ This interpretation underscores that the event of the Exodus became the 'place of the name' which required that the people trust God, then go to demonstrate their trust, which was a way to 'prove the name.'²⁸² God made his presence known through signs (Cloud/Pillar of Fire) and by his protection and provision (God fought for the Israelites against Pharaoh and his army/Provided Manna). These historical events that occurred in the physical world become

²⁷⁷ McConville, "Pilgrimage and Place," 17-23.

²⁷⁸ Cragg, "Jesus, Jerusalem, and Pilgrimage," 2.

²⁷⁹ Cragg, "Jesus, Jerusalem, and Pilgrimage," 2.

²⁸⁰ Cragg, "Jesus, Jerusalem, and Pilgrimage," 2.

²⁸¹ Cragg, "Jesus, Jerusalem, and Pilgrimage," 2.

²⁸² Cragg, "Jesus, Jerusalem, and Pilgrimage," 2.

sacred places where God's people encountered his presence and by extension, they became holy places and worthy destinations for physical pilgrimages by third and fourth century Christians.

Andrew Hill propounds that God's two opposing divine attributes of transcendence, ("self-existent and detached from creation") and immanence, ("near, present and indwelling everything he created") illustrate the "mystery" of the theology of place from the Hebrew perspective (Isa.57:15).²⁸³ Throughout the Old Testament we can observe that God himself chooses the places where through his divine attribute of immanence he overcomes the finite limitations of human beings and reveals his character and divine will at specific places in the physical world. Perhaps the strongest evidence of the way in which God chooses sacred places and demonstrates his presence with his people who are sojourning with him is the tabernacle, which was the first sanctuary built at God's command and then filled with the glory of God's indwelling presence. Charles Feinberg identifies this moveable tabernacle as "The dwelling of God with humanity" and identifies its function as a place of meeting that points to the "future eternal communion with God."²⁸⁴

²⁸³ Andrew Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise: Old Testament Worship for the New Testament Church* (Nashville: Star Song Publishing Group, 1993), 66.

²⁸⁴ Charles Feinberg, "The Tabernacle," in *The Biblical foundations of Christian Worship. Vol. I.* Edited by Robert E. Webber (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 118.

Theology of Pilgrimage and its Place in
Christian Spirituality and Corporate Worship

Metaphorical Pilgrimage Beyond the Metaphor of Christian Life as a Spiritual Journey

N.T. Wright offers the following observations that connect pilgrimage to sacred places with the metaphorical life journey or pilgrimage that Christians live, by the grace of God through faith in Christ (Gal. 2:20). Wright proposes that Christian pilgrimages take place in the “space and time in between the life of Jesus and God’s restoration of the whole creation.”²⁸⁵ Human beings living in the in-between innately desire to know who they are, where they come from, and where they are going. Humans return to their “roots” which may be found in the places where their first life experiences occurred.²⁸⁶ Andrew Hill provides a rationale for pilgrims who retrace God’s saving actions by traveling to the geographical locations of events and places recorded in Scripture where God revealed himself through miracles and signs when he states that “sacred sites” are generally associated with theophanies (divine manifestation initiated by God) and usually identified by landmarks (altars, stone pillars, stelae) built and placed to “commemorate the place of divine revelation.”²⁸⁷ This returning to a place is a form of pilgrimage that may be likened to the sacraments because like the sacraments of baptism and communion it “looks back, in great acts of remembrance, and on to the time of final redemption.”²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ N.T. Wright, *The Way of the Lord: Christian Pilgrimage Today* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 8.

²⁸⁶ Wright, *The Way of the Lord*, 17.

²⁸⁷ Hill, *Enter His Courts*, 67.

²⁸⁸ Wright, *The Way of the Lord*, 8-9.

Sacramental Pilgrimage

In agreement with Andrew Hill, N.T. Wright contends that looking to the future through the lens of “sacramental pilgrimage” creates a connection with the people of God and God’s saving action that surpasses the “allegory of spiritual journey as a Christian pilgrimage” by cementing the mighty acts of God’s salvation in Jesus Christ as the unfolding revelation of God’s plan for the entire cosmos.²⁸⁹ The places where God’s saving action occurred in the Old Testament carry a memory of Almighty God’s (אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי El Shaddai; Gen. 17:1) presence, just as places where the Lord walked, lived, and suffered carry a powerful memory of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who was and is forever Immanuel (עִמָּנוּאֵל, God with us; Isa. 7:14). There is an understanding of sacred place inherited from the first Hebrew pilgrims that sojourned with God through the wilderness that is beyond intellectual inquiry in that the places where God has met with his people are infused with an inexplicable presence of God that those who love and know him can spiritually recognize and experience.²⁹⁰

Philip Sheldrake states that “post-resurrection Christian communities” understood a disciple of Christ to be someone who not only “knows” the teaching of Christ and “follows” them by imitating the life of Jesus but as someone who is “united to Jesus” and participates in the union of Christ in the Godhead.²⁹¹ Christian spirituality includes “four major types of spirituality” (ascetical-monastic, mystical, active-practical, prophetic-critical) through which Christians seek to find answers for faithful living and identify practices and disciplines through

²⁸⁹ Wright, *The Way of the Lord*, 8-9; Hill, *Enter His Courts*, 64-80.

²⁹⁰ Wright, *The Way of the Lord*, 5-7, 17.

²⁹¹ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality*, 26.

which spiritual transformation and union with Christ can be achieved.²⁹² The way in which one views pilgrimage will be shaped by the religious tradition in which he or she has been discipled.

An ascetical- monastic will most likely seek out solitary places to pray, such as a monastery and practice self-denial as a way of life that leads to “spiritual growth” and “moral perfection.”²⁹³ A Christian mystic type will seek to experience the presence of God through contemplation and have a testimony of that experience that goes beyond intellectual knowledge and reasoning that conveys “spiritual illumination and connection to the depths of existence.”²⁹⁴ Active-practical Christian spiritualism places a premium on “finding God in the midst of everyday life.”²⁹⁵ Life becomes the means of spiritual formation for all Christians without the need to cloister oneself away or avoid the public sphere. Lastly, the prophetic-critical type of Christian spirituality leads to a fervent devotion to “social transformation and social justice as a spiritual task.”²⁹⁶ Sheldrake notes that the prophetic-critical type of Christian Spirituality is a newly recognized form that emerged in the twentieth century in response to social and political situations.²⁹⁷ These broad classifications of Christian spirituality demonstrate the different ways in which Christians regardless of their station in life, vocation, or religious training have responded to the pursuit of spiritual formation through spiritual disciplines which have often included pilgrimage since the late third century.

²⁹² Phillip Sheldrake, *Spirituality*, 16.

²⁹³ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality*, 16.

²⁹⁴ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality*, 16.

²⁹⁵ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality*, 16.

²⁹⁶ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality*, 16.

²⁹⁷ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality*, 16-17.

Christians Believers as the Temple of the Lord

Gregory of Nyssa opposed pilgrimage to Jerusalem on the grounds that the believer's soul is where the "Lord himself comes to dwell within."²⁹⁸ In this view the believer is a sacred space (ναός divine dwelling-place) where the Spirit of God dwells (1 Corinthians 6:19).²⁹⁹ Andrew Lincoln agrees with this early view of the Christian believer as the temple of the Lord and emphatically underscores there is no biblical mandate or requirement for Christians to make a physical pilgrimage to any holy city or holy place because there is "no sacred center of the Christian movement."³⁰⁰ Walker, Wright, and Cragg agree with the view that there is no command for Christians to undertake a literal, physical pilgrimage but leave room for the value of a physical pilgrimage as a form of sacramental remembering of the Lord Jesus and of connecting with the great cloud of witnesses that have come before (Hebrews 12:1).

Theological Warrant for Christian Pilgrimage

Steve Motyer provides a theological warrant for Christian pilgrimage based on four possible motivations for Paul's pilgrimage to Jerusalem that is recorded in the New Testament.³⁰¹ First he suggests Paul may have wanted to return to Jerusalem to express his empathy for the loss and suffering of Israel. Both N.T. Wright and Motyer acknowledge this deep desire to identify with other people of God who have suffered and who continue to suffer. Secondly, Paul appears

²⁹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, Ep.2.16; ET from Anna M. Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters*, (Leiden: Brill 2007), 121.

²⁹⁹ Thayer, "3485 ναός," *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/3485.htm>.

³⁰⁰ Lincoln, "Pilgrimage and the New Testament, 32.

³⁰¹ Steve Motyer, "Paul and Pilgrimage" in *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Craig Bartholomew and Fred Hughes (London/New York: Routledge Taylor and French Group, 2004), 65.

to have been moved by sincere desire to celebrate the Eucharist with his fellow Christians in Jerusalem. Thirdly, Paul demonstrated a desire to be a witness for the gospel of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. As a Christian pilgrim his pilgrimage became a way in which to be “identified” with the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the place where Jesus had suffered, died, and rose again.³⁰² Last of all, Paul engaged in prayer for the nations and a longing that Christ would be glorified, and the kingdom of God would be established upon the earth.

The debate between Walker, Wright, Cragg, Motyer and Lincoln bear similarity with the debate between Jerome and Vigilantius. Vigilantius contended that the “cult of the martyrs was a form of idolatry since its customs such as lighting candles on the tombs of the martyrs and holding vigils were adaptations of pagan cultic patterns, well known in pagan as well as Christian Rome” (Ep. 109.1-2: *Contra Vigilantium* 8 PL 23:346-47).³⁰³ In response, Jerome asked “Are Christians obliged not to perform the cult to God only because it appears identical to the cult of idols?” (*Contra Vigilantium* 7, PL 23:345).³⁰⁴ Jerome viewed the “cult of the martyrs” as a Christian adaptation of a Roman tradition that became a means by which Christians were exercising their faith in and through their culture and inherited religious tradition.

Andrew Lincoln takes issue with Walker and Wright because he contends there is no “theological justification in the New Testament” that would support the Christian practice of pilgrimage to holy sites like Jerusalem simply because they are deemed to be sacred.³⁰⁵ Lincoln strongly contends the practice of a physical pilgrimage is an adaptation of religious traditions

³⁰² Motyer, “Paul and Pilgrimage,” 65.

³⁰³ Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred*, 102.

³⁰⁴ Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred*, 102;

³⁰⁵ Lincoln, “Pilgrimage and the New Testament,” 42.

that may have “spiritual benefit” for some Christians as Wright and others contend.³⁰⁶

Nonetheless, the issue for Lincoln is the application of the theological implication of Pauline theology which is used to give credence to the practice of physical pilgrimage rather than the theological understanding of the metaphor of the Christian life as a spiritual journey.

Bouria Britton-Ashkelon provides a helpful insight from the fourth century debate regarding Christian pilgrimage and its function in the life of Christian tradition and Christian spirituality. Ashkelon proposes that the “debate on pilgrimage” that began toward the end of the fourth century was primarily a theological debate” that required “Christians in the East and West, in the cities and in remote deserts” to make a choice to reject the established pilgrimage “model of behavior” or “adopt it and view pilgrimage as a full-fledged religious obligation.”³⁰⁷

Fortunately, there was somewhat of a middle ground even in the fourth century which is where the current debate continues to land. There do not appear to be any Christian theologians that argue for the necessity of a physical pilgrimage for salvation or as a precursor for spiritual formation that leads to union with Christ. Rather, the debate continues regarding the application of the pilgrimage of Paul to Jerusalem and the theological understanding of the metaphor of the Christian life as a spiritual journey.

The Bridge from Fourth Century Pilgrimage to Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Church Worship Contexts: Every Local Church Can Become a Holy Site of Transformation

In the holy moments of Christocentric worship worshipers experience a glimpse of the glory of God shining through the way, the truth, and the Life—Jesus Christ the Lamb of God

³⁰⁶ Lincoln, “Pilgrimage and the New Testament,” 42.

³⁰⁷ Britton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred*, 5.

Who died, Jesus Christ the Lord of all Who has risen, and Jesus Christ the coming King Who is coming again! The presence of God divinely persuades each worshiping heart of the truth of God's mighty acts of salvation in Jesus Christ and is invited to surrender to the remaking of one's whole self by God whom he or she has come to trust.³⁰⁸ The mystery of many members (individual Christians) being united as one body of Christ (Church Universal in heaven and on the earth) is experienced in the physical gathering of God's people who are worshiping in the beauty of his holiness.

In this way corporate worship has become the means by which Christian pilgrims have moved through physical pilgrimage, by imaginative pilgrimage, through metaphorical pilgrimage which becomes a means for spiritual formation in corporate worship that "has been transformed Christologically."²⁴⁹ Just as Egeria could take the corporate worship liturgies to her sisters and lead them to the cross, every Christian and every local church can become a holy site where the transforming presence of God saves, sanctifies, and perpetually enables Christian pilgrims as they continue to following the footsteps of Jesus.

³⁰⁸ Wright, *The Way of the Lord*, 57.

²⁴⁹ Lincoln, "Pilgrimage and the New Testament," 32-33.

CHAPTER SIX

Visionary Adaptation of Ancient Christian Spiritual Formation in Christocentric Christian Community

“Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint, but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom’s instruction. Servants cannot be corrected by mere words; though they understand, they will not respond.” Proverbs 29:18-27

Theological Vision for Christian Spiritual Formation in

Christocentric Christian Community

Reviewing the Highlights of Ancient Christian Spiritual Formation in Christocentric Corporate Worship

In Chapter One the survey of the statistical data of the ministry landscape of the Georgia District and USA Canada Region of the Church of the Nazarene indicated a disconnect between what Nazarenes profess to believe and the way in which their testimony of entire sanctification is expressed in Christian community and local contexts. The decline in membership, worship and discipleship ministries attendance, financial giving, and engagement in service in the church and in the community signal a lack of healthy spiritual formation and a critical need for honest self-examination (2 Cor. 13:5). In Chapter Two the review of pertinent literature underscored the importance of intentional crafting of not only a Christocentric corporate worship service but a balanced Christocentric Local Church where immersive experience in Christian community provides ongoing Christian spiritual formation. The examination of unintentional academic wilderness wandering and the power of social mores, cultural norms, and mundane practices to spiritually form human beings and every facet of human culture revealed the pressing need for

proactive Christian education that equips believers with a reasoned faith and Christocentric worldview (1 Peter 3:15).

The Didaché, Litourgia, and Christian Spiritual Formation in Christocentric Community

The study of the Didaché in Chapter three underscored the premise that every church is liturgical because the way a community glorifies God through proclamation of the Word of God (e.g. preached, read, sung), prayer (individual and corporate, read responsively, sung, or delivered extemporaneously) and participating in the sacraments of baptism and The Lord's Supper with or without written liturgy is a form of *litourgia* or sacred ministering to the Lord, which is the work of God's people. Secondly, the close study of the early church supported that congregational worship and community practices must be true to the Christian Faith and intentionally guided by sound teaching through culturally appropriate language and forms. Further, the exploration of the Didaché and the Christian Spiritual formation that took place in the Didaché community for new gentile converts highlighted the careful instruction, caring nurture, and ongoing accountability that produced Christians who were able to stand against the pressures of an anti-Christian culture (Accts 2:42).

Cannons of Hyppolytus and Intentional Discipleship and Participation in Immersive Christocentric Community

In Chapter Four the *Cannons of Hyppolytus* revealed a cogent, intentional discipleship process for gentile converts, ordination pathway for leaders in the church, and worship liturgies for baptism and The Lord's Supper to help unify the emerging Christian Church. The most striking feature of the catechetical process is the willingness of catechumens and ordinands to lay

aside social status which required the rejection of any social mores and cultural teaching or practices that conflicted with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the commitment to humbly live in mutual subjection to other Christians even if it meant loss of social status, property, or life. Therefore, the study of the ongoing nurture in the immersive Christocentric Didaché community remains a model to be emulated by Christians in every age (Ephesians 4:11-13).

*Christocentric Worship as a Connectional Pathway for Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness
Congregations to Regain Immersive Experience in Christocentric Communitas*

In Chapter Five the study of pilgrimage and imaginative Christocentric worship from the fourth century was presented as a connectional pathway for Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness congregations to regain immersive experience in Christocentric community-as-a-whole. The spiritual pilgrimage undertaken by fourth century pilgrims may be likened to Christians who return each week to the corporate worship gathering to glorify God and be renewed in His life-giving, transforming presence. The mystery of the Christian Faith, (Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again) becomes evident in the life of the worshipping community that is ordered by the practice of spiritual disciplines as a means of grace both individually and corporately. The interplay between individual acts of piety and individual acts of mercy and corporate acts of piety and corporate acts of mercy is an ongoing expression of the Believers love for God and love for others.

The idea of *communitas* or dwelling together in unity as the sons and daughters of God, whose Head is Christ, is at the heart of Christian Spiritual Formation by immersive participation in Christocentric community made possible by mutual submission to God and one another. Throughout this dissertation Scripture has guided the call to examine the way in which the

community life of the Georgia District Nazarene Churches is spiritually forming their members and witnessing to their neighbors. In this last chapter, a visionary adaptation of ancient Christian Spiritual Formation in Christocentric Christian community is presented for the consideration of Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness churches in the Georgia District and USA/Canada Region. The theological vision cast by this dissertation is an invitation for the people of God in the Georgia District and USA/Canada Region of the Church of the Nazarene to engage in prayerful self-examination and fervent prayer for a miraculous move of God that results in true holiness of heart and life and fresh vision in the diverse contexts where they have been planted.

Visionary Adaptation of Ancient Christian Spiritual Formation Through Christocentric Christian Community in Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Congregations

At the basis of every Christian mentoring relationship is pure love for God that produces the *agape* or Christian love in believers that makes holy spiritual relationships and Christian community or *communitas* possible. The ability to work together in obedience to Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit begins with the recreated, sanctified heart that has been filled with God's love and is constantly renewed by the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit. The visionary adaptation of ancient Christian Spiritual Formation through Christocentric community presented in this dissertation for Wesleyan-Arminian-Holiness congregations is formed by three Scriptures.

The first is found in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, in the form of pithy wisdom sayings that underscore the importance of companionship for encouragement, collaborative industry (hard

work), safety and security, constructive criticism, and loving connection.³⁰⁹ Quite often board meetings and planning meetings can become toxic when church leaders disagree or when there are leaders with a misplaced sense of superiority and determination to control and implement a personal agenda. In churches poor leadership skills, harmful communication styles, and lack of Christian conferencing often lead to broken relationships at every level of Christian community when church leaders and laity attempt to fulfill their ministry calling without Christian fellowship, mutual accountability, and the love and encouragement of the body of Christ.

The second Scripture that frames the visionary adaptation of spiritual renewal through participation in Christian community is Luke 24:13-25 which describes the encounter of the two disciples as they were walking away from Jerusalem toward Emmaus (Lk. 24:13). The disciple's dialog discloses their bewildered and disillusioned state because they had witnessed the crucifixion and death of Jesus (Lk. 24:19-21). Their hope was crushed when the third day arrived. In their deepest selves it seemed that Jesus, the one they believed was the long-awaited Messiah was truly gone never to return.

When these two disciples encounter Jesus, he listens and then he offers a strong rebuke with the exclamation, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (Lk. 24:25). In true form, because Jesus is a loving Lord, he follows it with a question and an explanation (Lk. 24:26-27). At that point, Jesus was a welcome pilgrim that the two disciples traveled with in companionship—an honest sharing of pain, sorrow, and hope (Lk.

³⁰⁹ Matthew Henry, "Ecclesiastes 4:9-12" In *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Wherein Each Chapter Is Summed up in Its Contents: The Sacred Text Inserted at Large in Distinct Paragraphs; Each Paragraph Reduced to Its Proper Heads: the Sense given, and Largely Illustrated with Practical Remarks and Observations* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/mhc/ecclesiastes/4.htm>; E. H. Plumptre, "Ecclesiastes" in *Cambridge Bible for Schools and College* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1888), <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/ecclesiastes/4.htm>.

24:28-29). This vulnerable sharing of pain, sorrow, and hope is mostly absent from the established local church model.

Many times, church leaders and congregants feel they must mask mental anguish, emotional pain, or cherished hopes because of an unrealistic view of entire sanctification and fear of the loss of the respect and acceptance of their church family. The human condition includes pain and sorrow that will not be totally resolved until the glorious hope of heaven is realized. Until then Christocentric community becomes the place where entirely sanctified and new believers alike experience the enabling presence of God to trust in Christ as they journey together through the pain and sorrow of life with an unshakable hope that goes beyond the grave and stretches out for all eternity.

It is significant that the identity of Jesus was revealed during the Passover meal and then sealed with a miraculous disappearance before the pilgrim's eyes (Lk. 24:31). This interchange has a helpful pattern for the pastors and members of local churches in that first they listen, then ask questions, and then offer an appropriate response directed by Spirit of God. The revelation of Jesus through and in the means of grace shared in Christian community is always dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God (Jn 6:44; Eph. 2:9-10).

The third Scripture and final frame of spiritual renewal through immersive participation in Christian community is the gathering of believers who were waiting and expecting the gift that Jesus had promised (Acts 1:4-5; 2:1). The human agency features are: 1) they were gathered in Jerusalem, in obedience to Christ (Acts 1:4); 2) they were spiritually hungry; and 3) they were receptive to the Holy Spirit. The supernatural agency feature is God acted through the pouring out of His Spirit which enabled believers to miraculously share the gospel with all who were

listening and seeking God (Acts 2:4b; 5-12). In tandem with the supernatural inbreaking of God, is Peter's speech and the establishment of a Christian community that begin to live in unity.

The characteristics of this ancient Christian community include obedience to the revealed Word of God, which is demonstrated by public profession of faith and identity with Christ as risen Lord (Acts 2:41), individual piety (Acts 2:42-45), corporate worship (Acts 2:46a), Christian fellowship (Acts 2:46b), and Christian compassion (Acts 2:45). The ancient Christian community recorded in the second chapter of the Book of Acts demonstrates the interdependence of both individual and corporate spiritual disciplines as a means of grace that nurtures a holy life-pattern in individual members, their families, and the community-as-a-whole. It follows then that if Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness congregations are patterned after the earliest recorded witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ there will be continuing renewal through intentional discipleship that functions as a form of spiritual formation that encourages holiness of heart and life within a worshiping Christian community by engaging in spiritual disciplines individually and corporately.

In addition, through spiritual disciplines members of our congregations will move toward the *telos* of the Christian faith, which is to grow up into our Head, Jesus Christ, (Eph. 4:15-16). However, this type of transformative spiritual renewal that leads to the development of mature disciples is only possible if there is intentional discipleship experienced as a way of life through immersive participation in Christian community that is both attainable and sustainable in the mundane (e.g., ordinary but necessary), or the fabric of the way in which Christian communities (local church bodies) do life together.

Dissertation Research Purpose

Rationale for Mixed Research Methodology

The research conducted for this dissertation utilized both quantitative and qualitative research methods. A strictly quantitative method would garner statistical data but lack the story behind the numbers and fail to analyze unquantifiable factors such as existing theologies, ministry insights or challenges, or the personal testimonies of pastors, church leaders, and congregational members. A strictly qualitative method might highlight congregational stories, personal opinions, preferences, and experiences but overlook the way in which individual church leaders and congregations fit into the larger context of the USA/Canada region and wider culture. Further, an established congregation with a long history may have tightly held cherished traditions and blind spots with regard to the effectiveness of their ministry. Likewise, a new church plant might have positive immediate growth that is quantifiable but lack sufficient theological grounding and necessary tradition to provide immersive Christocentric community.

The Governing Dissertation Purpose

The mixed research method was necessary to analyze the ministry models present in the Georgia District. The purpose of this dissertation research may be outlined as follows: 1) to analyze the ministry models and their ministry impact to identify evidence of Christian Spiritual Formation or malformation; 2) to explore the possibility of statistical relationships between Christian discipleship, corporate worship, and church membership growth or decline; 3) to examine the community-as-a-whole of the ministry and document evidence of or absence of ancient Christian catechetical instruction through immersive experience in the community-as-a-

whole occurring in the existing church models observable in the selected research sample churches; and 4) to search for correlations between worship models, theological backgrounds, and evidence of catechetical instruction intimated by interview responses by pastors, worship leaders, and survey responses of church members and ministry participants.

Limitations

The quantifiable statistical data used for the research was gathered from the *108th Georgia District Assembly* (May 21-June 2, 2022) and *109th Georgia District Assembly* (May 31-June 1, 2023) reports and the 2023 research statistics provided by the Research Services tools and reports provided by The Global Ministry Center of the Church of the Nazarene. The data available through the Research Services and Georgia District Assembly reports are self-reported. There are slight discrepancies between reports and statistics that appear to be procedural error, such as a change in the method of reporting statistics from year to year; human error, such as a miscalculation of total membership or baptisms; or missing data either from a report or no report for a certain year or ministry category.

Secondly, the qualitative data was gathered through interviews and anonymous church surveys which were also gathered directly from pastors, worship leaders, church members, and ministry participants and are comprised of self-reported information. Lastly, the quantifiable sample size for the “Learning from the Church Member and Participant Survey” is a relatively small sample only 50/1313 or 3.808% congregational members and participants reported for 2023 weekly discipleship and corporate worship of the selected sample churches. Nevertheless, the overall ministry shape provided by the Georgia District ministry reports and the quantitative research statistics on file with The Global Ministry Center appear to adequately present the

Nazarene congregations and their ministry footprint in their geographical location and ministry contexts.

Further, the interview responses and participant surveys are qualitatively adequate to suggest that there are indications of spiritual formation that has taken place in Christian community through discipleship ministries, spiritual disciplines, and corporate worship. However, it must be noted that more qualitative and quantitative research with a larger sample would be needed to provide a more in-depth analysis and exploration of the ways in which Nazarenes are being spiritually formed, ministries shaped, and ministry impact affected by the Georgia District Nazarene worshiping community-as-a-whole through weekly discipleship ministries, spiritual disciplines, and corporate worship.

Dissertation Procedure One: Selecting the Research Sample

The ministry church sample size for this dissertation research is 23/93 or 24.731% of the total number of organized churches in the Georgia District according to the Church of the Nazarene Research Services database. The research sample includes 65/93 or 69.892% of the Caucasian Ministry Churches; 3/7 or 42.857% of the Black Ministry Churches, 1/3 or 33.333% of the Haitian Ministry Churches, and 3/10 or 30% of the Hispanic Ministry Churches in the ministry landscape of the Georgia District. The sample churches were grouped by their organization date and chosen to include representations from the diverse ministry contexts that comprise the ministry landscape of the Georgia District.

The first research criterion utilized to select the church ministry research sample was church membership size and included the churches with the largest membership, medium membership churches, and small membership churches. The second research criterion employed

to select the church ministry research sample was the age of the churches and included the oldest churches, and the youngest churches (including parent affiliated churches and new church plants). The final research criteria applied to select the church ministry research sample were statistical data that represented discipleship patterns and baptism.

Dissertation Procedure Two: Studying the Research Sample Churches

The sample church historical data and ministry footprint were reviewed utilizing published decadal data available from the Nazarene Research tool, and the *Georgia District Assembly Reports*. Secondly, the community-as-a-whole worship patterns, and the theological content and shape of corporate worship models evident in the selected sample churches were studied by watching randomly selected published announcements and services via social media and studying website content (Facebook, YouTube, Church Websites).

Dissertation Procedure Three: Interviewing Pastors, Lay Leaders, and Laity

After reviewing the historical data (Story of the Church when available), decadal statistics, and lifetime ministry statistics, the shape of the community-as-a-whole, and the theological content of the corporate worship models present in corporate worship services were observed by viewing randomly selected services via social media publications dating from January 2021 through October 2023. Then interviews were set up with selected pastors and worship leaders of the following sample churches: Churches A, B, C, D, E, F, I, K, L, M, O, U, and W (See Appendix I). Finally, an anonymous “Learning from the Church Participant Survey” was made available to the church leaders, congregations and participants of the sample churches and the data evaluated.

Dissertation Research Part One: Analyzing Georgia District Church Statistics

Established Local Church Ministry Model Present in the Blind Summary View of Selected GA District Churches

For this project the researcher identified the Established Local Church Model by its ministry shape which is dependent upon administrative leadership and places a high priority upon the corporate worship service, Sunday School, and Christian Fellowship for the spiritual formation of its members. The Established Local Church Model represented by the butterfly shaped Process Graphic 1 (Appendix B) is observable in the following churches in the research sample: Church A, Church B, Church F, Church H, Church I, Church K, Church N, Church P, Church Q, and Church S.

While this ministry shape can be an effective way in which catechetical instruction, or training in righteousness (scriptural holiness of heart and life), it places a heavy burden upon the theological content of the corporate worship service and the intentional worship and mission practices of the local church. The difficulty of the Established Local Church Model depicted by Process Graphic 1 is the malformation of the community-as-a-whole which has unintentionally occurred by a loss of intentional ordering of a Christocentric pattern of worship in every feature and element of the local church.

The secondary priority present in the model is denominational affiliation expressed through payment of district and global mission budgets (e.g. Campground, Evangelism, Compassionate Ministries, Alabaster, Christian Education etc.). This prioritization appears to be an imposed one because it is an inherited Church of the Nazarene structure and expectation of

every local church. It is miraculous that local churches have been so faithful to give even though there is a lack of engagement with the global church and NMI resources. This expectation is often pushed aside when there is a reduction of income due to aging members and declining membership. The worship patterns in the established churches do acknowledge the local church as a member of the Church Universal and encourage denominational missions but there doesn't appear to be a cohesive intentional catechetical element that creates a culture of joyful giving that is the result of experiencing the grace of God through saving and sanctifying grace of God that flows out to share the good news of scriptural holiness to our neighbors at home and in every nation.

The third level opportunities for the outward expression of the inward spiritual decisions and growth of members and participants present in this model are participation in small groups and opportunities for Christian service in the church. The fourth level opportunity present at the fringes of the Established Local Church Model is community outreach which is done "for" the community or "to" selected groups of people in the community rather than joining with community stakeholders and working in cooperation with community neighbors. For an established congregation to move toward the desired level of outward Christian discipleship requires pastors, church leaders, and congregations to experience cognitive dissonance, emotional disequilibrium, and visceral physical reactions. This type of spiritual maturity and outward movement can only result from honest self-examination of existing knowledge and beliefs, inner motivations, and intentions. This process begins when pastors, church leaders, and congregations are willing to trust God and surrender to the Lordship of Christ to overcome fear and doubt and negotiate ministry challenges in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

In the sample churches with characteristics of the Established Church Model there is evidence of past strategic planning in that there are mission and vision statements, some form of social media presence, organized age groups, small groups, and one or more local compassionate ministries. However, there is extraordinarily little evidence of a corporate Christian discernment process that has resulted in consensus that has been implemented successfully for developing the church congregation as a worshipping Christocentric Christian community-as-a-whole. The limited congregational acceptance and support for small groups that require commitment and consistent investment is evident in the lack of participation reflected in the NDI ministry decadal reports of the sample churches.

Several interview responses from pastors, congregants, and participants indicated that very few people consistently participate in Sunday School, small groups, or NMI programs. The prevalence of administrative hierarchical directing the established membership rather than Christocentric congregational leadership in conversation and egalitarian *communitas* present in the ancient church described in Acts 2 is demonstrated by the declining membership and participation in worship and negligible engagement in congregational development and community outreach. The most often reported reasons for continuing their local church contextualization of the Established Church Ministry Model were that it was inherited and is the accepted way in which things are done in their context.

A comparison of an Established Church Ministry Model that has an overemphasis on Administration and dependence upon a large Corporate Worship Service and the theorized Balanced Christocentric Established Church Ministry Model, identifies the absence of intentional pathways for the development and nurture of new church plants or PAC ministries. This absence of ministry reproduction may possibly account for membership decline and loss of engagement

as the members of the congregation age. If each gathering is an entry point where new church plants or PAC ministries might be sponsored and nurtured the excitement and ministry fruitfulness (spiritual nurture, maturity, and ongoing reproductive growth) of an established church could be likened to the joy and purpose that parents and grandparents experience when children are born. It is also possible that an established church that has never planted a new church or sponsored a PAC ministry might be grieving in the same way that family members with no living relatives grieve because there is no one to continue their legacy as a holy people of God.

Positive Correlations Between Immersive Christocentric Christian-Community-as-a-Whole, Christocentric Corporate Worship, and Participation in Christian Discipleship Ministries Indicated in Some Churches with an Established Church Model

However, there are some bright spots in the following churches with an Established Church Ministry Model: The decadal statistics of Church H demonstrates innovative leadership during the pandemic launched an online meeting space for their congregation as a worshipping Christocentric Christian-community-as-a-whole that invites their neighbors to travel the uncharted waters of life caused by fear, pain, and loss. The pastoral leaders share the ministry and teaching load so that there are opportunities to participate in prayer and devotional groups everyday either in-person or in the online media ministry. Immersive participation in the life of this established church consistently points believers to Christ and offers practical ministry opportunities to live in the way of Christ.

Nonetheless, there is some concern for the theological content of the children's programming which utilizes a spiritual formation program written from a reformed theological

perspective (TULIP). It is difficult to conceive of a way to reconcile the Calvinistic presentation of the core doctrines of the faith with faithful teaching of the Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness understanding of free will, original sin, prevenient grace, regeneration, justification, and sanctification.³¹⁰ Another secondary concern that warrants further study is an apparent absence of service opportunities for the congregation to tangibly be present in ministry with rather than to their community neighbors. Church H is blessed to have the budget to employ a qualified pastoral ministry staff to shepherd age-group ministries but there does not appear to be a pathway for leadership development that invites members to engage in innovative leadership and enable growth past the current structure.

Nevertheless, the decadal discipleship attendance change indicates a 21.62% positive trend despite a -24.12% decline in worship attendance. Further, the corporate worship service is Christocentric and seeker sensitive in that every worship element is introduced by intentionally crafted statements that are a form of catechetical instruction that is both didactic (teaches *orthodoxy*) and hortatory (encourages *praxis*) for all members of the worshiping congregation whether they are established in the faith or hearing the good news of God's salvation for the first time.

Parent Affiliated Church (PAC) Developmental Ministry Model Present in the Blind Summary View of Selected GA District Churches

The working description of a Parent Affiliated Church Developmental Ministry Model represented by the circular shaped Process Graphic 2 (Appendix B) used for the purpose of this dissertation research characterizes a PAC as a worshiping Christian community-as-a-whole that

³¹⁰ Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*, Vol. 2, (London: Forgotten Books, 1823), 361-380. Watson provides a discussion of the Reformed position in conversation with the Wesleyan-Arminian position.

offers an invitation to anyone who would come and see what God is doing, hear what God can do, and join with the PAC community in the journey of faith through participation in the immersive way of doing life with Jesus as the center. The Parent Affiliated Church may be seen as the spiritual baby of an established church in that they are launched from the congregation of an established church and often share worship space with their parent church or receive financial support from their affiliated church. The most striking characteristics of a parent affiliated church is the balance that exists between the spiritual disciplines that provide the ministry shape of the PAC model and the egalitarian ideal given flesh by the open invitation and Christian hospitality extended in each worship element of the Christian-community-as-a-whole.

Observable Positive Correlations between (PAC) Parent Affiliated Church Ministry Models and Participation in the Life of the Parent Church and Movement toward a Balanced Christocentric Christian Community-as-a-Whole

The Parent Affiliated Ministry Model is observable in the following developing churches in the research sample: Church U, and Church V. The positive correlations implied by the decadal statistics of their parent churches indicate that they function as a form of Christian spiritual formation. For instance, the contextual adaptation of the Fosner's Dinner Church model employed by Church U has resulted in the PAC church membership participating in the parent Church with an established church ministry model (See. Appendix A Fig. 9.a, Fig. 9.b).

The PAC ministry led to the establishment of a small group who began a journey of healing and renewal through the Christian hospitality extended in the context of a Fellowship Meal and Corporate Worship coupled with opportunities to engage in the spiritual disciplines of prayer (thanksgiving, praise, lament, repentance, intercession), Scripture (reading, reflection,

study, application), and provided an immersive experience in a worshiping Christocentric community-as-a-whole. The curriculum utilized for the parent church and the parent affiliated church was drawn from General Superintendent David Busic's *Way Truth Life* and utilized the pastor's resource for alignment across the age groups.³¹¹ The experiential Devotional Worship was guided by a Dinner Church Fellowship Liturgy, or written worship guide to equip the worshipers to honor and glorify God through *litourgia*, a service or ministry to the Lord, that was designed and written by the pastor utilizing a blend of ancient and contemporary materials (see Appendix C, Fig. 1).

The New Church Start Ministry Model Present in the Blind Summary View of Selected GA District Churches

In this dissertation research a New Church Start Ministry Model offers a structure in which community outreach and Christian fellowship serve as a pathway of entrance into the worshiping Christocentric community-as-a-whole. Like the balanced interplay of Christian Fellowship, Small Groups, Community Outreach, and Corporate Worship observed in the Parent Affiliated Ministry Model, spiritual formation occurs in the New Church Start Ministry Model as participating members do life together.

The New Church Start Ministry Model represented by the circular Process Graphic 3 (Appendix B) is observable in the following churches in the research sample: Church V, Church W, Church T, Church F, and Church O. In each of these churches the balance of the spiritual disciplines is present, and the overarching message is that following Jesus is a way of life not religious obligation imposed by denominational affiliation. The pictures of church fellowship

³¹¹ David A. Busic, *Way, Truth, Life Discipleship as a Journey of Grace* (Kansas City: The Foundry Publishing, 2021).

and community events capture the beauty of God's people worshiping in holiness as the family of God in all of life. The small group prayer and Bible studies naturally flow into a balanced Christocentric worshiping community-as-a-whole that loves to gather for corporate worship that honors and glorifies God the Father, through Jesus Christ the Son, in the powerful transforming presence of God the Holy Spirit.

A Demonstration of the Correlation of Balanced Christocentric Worshiping Community-as-a-Whole and a Positive Trend in Corporate Worship Participation

The available statistical data for Church O demonstrates a positive-growth trend from its beginning in which membership, participation in discipleship and participation in corporate worship grew in nearly identical increments. However, during the three-year interval there was a tremendous spike in corporate worship attendance supported by an established congregation and consistent participation in discipleship.

The leadership of the churches with a NewChurch Start Ministry Model that demonstrate significant growth over a three-year period shared the following ministry habits: 1) Everything that is included in corporate worship honors and glorifies God. The whole service is a spiritual offering of praise to God by the people of God who honor and adore Him; 2) The lead pastors pray together and come to consensus on the theme for the quarter which is then presented to the worship leaders, lay ministers, and ministry directors. There is ongoing prayer, evaluation, and attention to the leading of the Holy Spirit among the leadership every month; 3) While anyone may attend and participate in the life of the community it is expected that those who desire to be baptized and become full members of the church complete a three-year cycle of catechetical

instruction; and 4) There is continuing professional development, ongoing personal development and intentional spiritual formation, and purposeful Christian conferencing.

The Balanced Christocentric Local Church Ministry Model with Immersive Christian Community-as-a-Whole Present in the Blind Summary View of Selected GA District Churches

The Balanced Christocentric Local Church Ministry Model with Immersive Christian Community-as-a-Whole can be likened to mature, sanctified believers. Like mature, sanctified believers it is impossible to maintain a balanced ministry model apart from obedient surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit. If there is a move away from dependence upon God to reliance upon human resources the balanced ministry model will be malformed and impede Christocentric worship, Christian spiritual formation, and fruitful ministry. The Balanced Christocentric Local Church Ministry Model is represented by the circular shaped Process Graphic 4 (Appendix B) and is observable in the following churches in the research sample: Church D, Church G, Church J, Church L, Church N,

It is especially exciting to see Christocentric worship and intentional spiritual formation woven into the corporate worship and vibrant churches shining as the love of God in action as Christian communities who are living the faith that they profess. Fruitfulness may be detected in large membership churches, medium-sized membership churches, and small membership churches in the ministry shape and theological content of their corporate worship, which I strongly suggest is a contextual living liturgy intentionally designed to honor and glorify God.

The statistical decadal change of Church D indicates a 5.17% positive trend in church membership in tandem with -17.82% decline in worship attendance and -32.74% decline in participation in discipleship ministries. However, the ministry shape and annual statistical data

show erratic cycles of participation in discipleship ministries across the lifespan of this church. Further, Church D is comprised of membership from a merger of two established churches. Considering the challenges faced by churches in the Pandemic in 2019 and a recent merging of congregation maintaining a positive full membership trend is evidence of the sustaining presence of God upon this church and its leadership. The ministry shape of this church can be identified as a Balanced Christocentric Worship Ministry Model because of the purposeful leadership that is respectfully shepherding the congregation. The ministry announcements depict a balanced use of spiritual disciplines that serves as immersive experience in Christian community-as-a-whole in tandem with Christocentric worship that honors and glorifies God. It is too early to determine what the outcome of the balanced Christocentric ministry model present in Church will be. But if new leaders are formed through immersive experience in balanced Christocentric Christian community-as-a-whole with ongoing spiritual formation in Christocentric worship it is possible that Church D may become a parent church for new ministries as the Holy Spirit of God leads.

Perhaps one of the most developed examples of a Balanced Christocentric Local Church Ministry Model is Church J. Although the decadal statistical data records a -8.00 full membership change the data also records a positive growth trend of a 48.65% increase in worship attendance and a 43.96% increase in discipleship ministries attendance (See Appendix A Fig. 10.a, Fig. 10.b). A distinctive of this Balanced Christocentric Local Church Ministry Model is its sensitivity to the international context in which the church is located. The social media and online media experiences are unapologetically Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness doctrines presented in the humble posture of Christ himself. There is balance in the life of the church that demonstrates the love of God and love of neighbor. Although it is impossible to predict the outcome of the parent affiliated church that Church J has launched it is plausible to expect that

there will be continued fruitfulness, and a pattern of balanced Christocentric worshipping communities will be formed within the nurturing of the established parent church.

Dissertation Research Part Two: Analyzing Interview and Survey Data

Interviews: Pastors, Worship Leaders, and Lay Leaders

The pastors, worship leaders, and laity who serve as ministry leaders that were available for interviews demonstrated a great love for God and the congregations that they serve. The interviews lasted for an average of ninety minutes. The participants were asked the same questions and invited to share ministry experiences, challenges, and greatest ministry joys. The pastors indicated that the corporate expressions of spiritual disciplines such as prayer, passing of the peace of Christ, the public reading of Scripture, and administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are among the worship elements that are feeding their souls.

Senior pastors with graduate level training or with course of study equivalent to at least a bachelor's degree in ministry indicated knowledge of the *Revised Common Lectionary* and expressed an appreciation for the value of corporate worship planning. These participants also expressed a large view of the Church Universal and shared egalitarian ministry vision and goals for teaching Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness doctrine within their ministry contexts. An identified barrier to the transmission of Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness doctrine, such as entire sanctification and polity and the ordination of women is assimilated theological teaching from Reformed Tradition (TULIP) and denominational distinctives from Calvinistic traditions.

The ordained and licensed ministers shared the following two images of the local church: 1) the local church as an extended family because the people are the Church and 2) the local church is a body of believers and members of the Body of Christ and the Church Universal. They

also shared a united view of the purpose of local church is to be engaged in building the kingdom of God and an understanding of an autonomy of the local church that is guided by the established Nazarene doctrine and polity.

The Participants with less than a bachelor's degree in ministry, ministry training from non-Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness denominations, or non-ministry degrees did not assign significant value to catechetical instruction or recognize worship planning done in tandem as a ministry team as necessary for the worship in their local context. Further, the imagery shared by these participants was more spiritualized as the Body of Christ whose mission is to love God and love neighbor. The kingdom building imagery was not a predominant view expressed by these participants. However, they do assign the responsibility for training the congregation and commissioning pastors and missionaries to ordained clergy and church leaders.

Only one group of ministers and lay leaders were aware of an intentional discipleship process or pathway in place. The three-step discipleship plan described by these ministers is remarkably similar to the ancient catechetical instruction preserved in the early church orders that were developed from ancient Christian communities. This same group of ministers and lay leaders indicated that prayer and Christian conferencing is a normative feature of their worship planning and ministries of their churches and new church plants. The lead pastors are involved in the worship planning and guide the meetings. However, the process is egalitarian in that everyone has a voice at the table and is encouraged to use their gifts, talents, and skillset.

The remainder of the participants stated that there was not an intentional discipleship process or pathway in place but indicated that it is a goal of their churches to develop one. Interestingly, these pastors also disclosed that their main contribution to worship planning is their sermon theme or title. Only one pastor indicated that he planned the worship service order and

assisted in the selection of hymns. In addition, there was little corporate prayer or Christian conferencing involved in worship planning or unified corporate prayer and sharing in the process of strategic planning for larger churches. There was evidence of an opening and closing prayer for staff meetings, planning meetings, and department meetings but only four of the churches have an intentional investment in prayerful spiritual discernment and planning that comes out of corporate consensus reached by the confirmation of the leading of the Holy Spirit.

A strength of the pastors and lay leaders evident in their interview responses is their sacramental theology demonstrated in their reverence for the sacraments and deeply held conviction that the sacraments of baptism and communion are holy and meaningful for the congregation. Several pastors shared that they experience continued push back from some leaders and congregants who do not recognize the value of observing the Lord's Supper at least once-a-month and on holy days in the Christian Year, such as Christmas and Easter.

The interview participants have varying views of the way in which their church impacts their community. Some view compassionate ministries, such financial assistance for energy bills, food pantry and feeding ministries, and clothes closets as pathways for making inroads in the community while others feel that they have a high financial cost with insignificant impact and return in the long run. However, there were many churches who have a testimony of the ways in which these ministries have been an entry point into the life of the church community for those who received help from them. A particularly prolific compassionate ministry model has recently added a service component to their mid-week fellowship meal and Bible study in which they leave their building and go into the community to serve and minister to the homeless. Another especially important observation made by a participant is the value of meeting a present need in

the neighborhood in which churches are located (e.g. clothes closet in a context with a disproportionately large amount of homelessness).

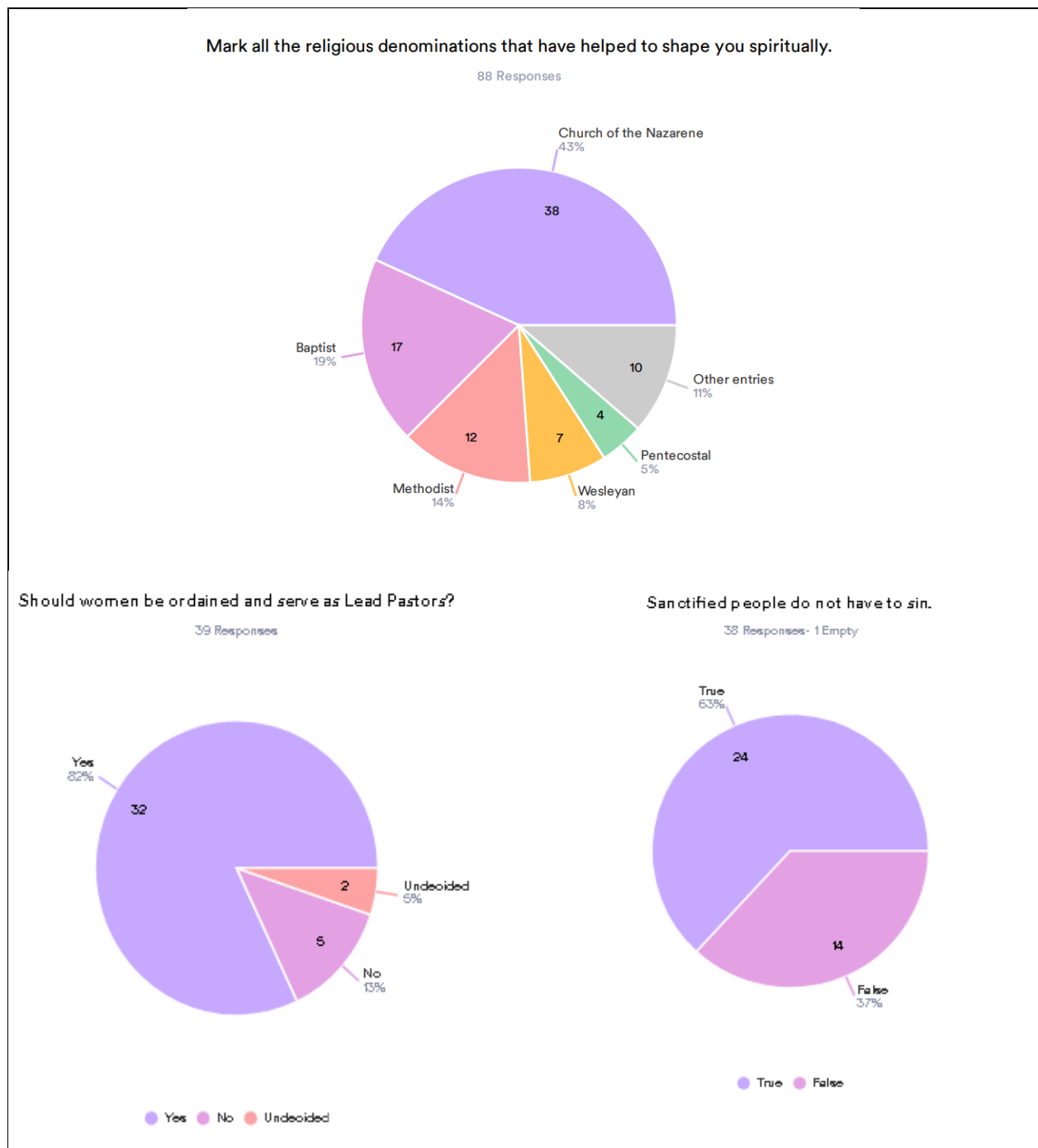
The pastors, worship leaders, and lay leaders acknowledge that corporate worship has the potential to spiritually form worshipers but approximately half of them appear to dismiss the importance of corporate prayer and intentional investment in worship planning done in Christian conferencing by the pastors, worship leaders, and lay leaders. In the same vein, there was agreement that the content of preaching and corporate worship elements and teaching that occurs in small groups has tremendous power to shape the *orthodoxy* and direct the *orthopraxis* of the people of God and seeker participants who participate in the life of their church. But there was little evidence of careful explication of the content of worship elements (e.g. lyrics of the music used in worship), and acceptance of an inherited worship order and worship elements without theological examination (e.g. hymn medleys that are engaging but leave out essential theological teaching/incomplete story, malformed passing of the peace and sharing of prayer requests that become intrusive, or function like gossip, or exclusion of the public reading of Scripture etc.), which presents a tension between stated worship theology and its importance and the actual way in which pastors, worship leaders, and lay leaders invest in worship preparation and ministry practice.

Finally, there were no indications from the pastors, worship leaders, and lay leaders that those responsible for planning and leading worship have access to resources for personal development, scheduled time away for spiritual retreat, or regular opportunities for ministry training in the ministry field in which they are serving. A prominent opinion expressed by participants was God will divinely make everything work out if everyone's heart is right. This statement seems to ignore the divine-human partnership that is an important feature of Wesleyan-

Arminian Holiness teaching. It is laudable to have faith in the miraculous work of God because we do know that God can and often does work in miraculous ways regardless of human agency. But an especially important caveat of having everyone in one accord, with a right heart, is the corporate meeting together and practice of prayer, searching the Scriptures, and worshiping and working in Christocentric unity as the Holy Spirit leads (Acts 4:23-31; 1 Cor. 10; Heb. 10:25).

Survey Data Suggests the Possibility of a Correlation Between Theological Predispositions Gained in Corporate Worship and Religious Experience in Christian Community

The Learning from the Church Member and Participant Survey was completed anonymously by members and participants of the churches in the dissertation survey sample. The participants who indicated that they had diverse religious experience that included Reformed (TULIP) background were more likely to reject the doctrine of entire sanctification and hold the belief that all people must and do continue to sin in thought, word, and deed. For example, participants whose first theological training was received in Presbyterian or Baptist Churches were more likely to reject the ordination of women and object to ordained women clergy serving as Lead Pastors. The two graphics on the next page demonstrate this correlation across the participant survey sample comprised of 25 women, 8 men, and 1 participant who chose not to identity his or her sex or age. The sample participant ages are as follows: 8% Ages 12-24; 11% Ages 25-34; 21% Ages 45-54; 24% Ages 55-64; 26% Ages 65-74; 11% Aged 75 or older.



The survey participants were asked to respond to the following two survey questions: 1) Should women be ordained and serve as Lead Pastors? 2) Nazarenes understand that sanctified people do not have to sin. The participant response indicated that 82% agree with the Nazarene teaching of the ordination of women, 13% disagreed, and 5% were undecided. In a similar

division regarding the doctrine of entire sanctification 63% agree that sanctified Christians do not have to sin and 37% of respondents believe that sanctified believers cannot keep from sinning. There is at the very least an indication that the survey participants have been shaped by the teaching (doctrine and polity) and worship practices of the churches in which they have participated.

Another striking point that is worthy of further study is a disconnect between memorization of doctrine, and appropriation of denominational themes and objective and the application and implementation of them in established Nazarene congregations. When survey participants were asked to select the core values of the Church of the Nazarene, 38% selected “We are a Christian People;” 31% selected “We are a Holiness People;” 30% selected “We are a Missional People;” and 1% selected “None of the Above.” These percentages demonstrate that some memorization of doctrine and appropriation of denominational themes is present in the survey participants. It would seem likely that at least 38% of the respondents would apply the missional imperative to the purpose of the local church but when asked to indicate the purpose of the local church the percentages indicate a disconnect between understanding and affirming core values and the actual application and implementation of them in the life and ministry of the local church community-as-a-whole. The survey participants indicated that the purpose of the local church is to: 24% Preach; 26% Teach; 24% Nurture; 32% Commission; 1% Serve the Community; 1% Invite the Lost; and 1% Fellowship, Worship, and More.

There are also some indications in the survey data that the Nazarene churches who are engaged in missional activities in the local community are influencing their members through participation. When the survey participants were asked “How does your church show the love of Christ to your community?” they identified missional activities and connected them with their

identity as Nazarenes who are engaged in service out of their love of God and love of neighbor. The survey participants identified the following ministries of their local church as ways in which the love of God is made known in their local contexts, 39% Food Ministry, 29% Financial Assistance, 25% Work and Witness, and 8% Clothes Closet.

While it is not possible to definitively state that the “Learning from the Church Survey” dissertation research is proof of the trends and correlations present in the data, it does demonstrate that there is need for more research to be conducted in the Nazarene churches located in the Georgia District and USA/Canada Region because the religious landscape and ministry trends present in the Georgia District are not restricted to Georgia but are prevalent within the USA/Canada Region. It is also reasonable to note that the statistical information gathered from the Georgia District Survey is in line with research data that has been collected using larger samples of evangelical churches.³¹² The combined force of the peer-reviewed research of Alan Roxburgh, Fred Romanuk, Thom Rainer, and Alan Hirsch and this dissertation research support the supposition that every church is liturgical and is engaged in catechetical instruction and spiritual direction through the doctrine and practices present in way in which its members experience life in its community-as-a-whole.³¹³

Lastly, the evidence of spiritual formation of congregants and the theological content and ministry shape of the church communities in which they participate presented in this dissertation research indicates that there is a critical need for honest examination and evaluation of: 1) How

³¹² Pew Research Center, *Religious Landscape Study: Age*, August 2016. <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/age-distribution/>; Thom S. Rainer, Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*, (Brentwood: B&H Publishing, 2011).

³¹³ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006); Alan J. Roxburgh, Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church To Reach A Changing World*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006); Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making: Skills For Leading in Times of Transition*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

pastors, worship leaders, and lay leaders are preaching, teaching, and modeling Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness doctrine; 2) The theological content of corporate worship and the Christian Education programs present in the Nazarene churches of the Georgia District; 3) The ways in which healthy spiritual formation or unhealthy spiritual malformation is occurring in the members and congregations of the Nazarene Churches of the Georgia District; and 4) The ways in which pastors, worship leaders, lay leaders, and laity may be resourced to develop and nourish Christocentric balanced local churches.

Dissertation Research Part Three: Revitalization of Nazarene Churches
Through Intentional Embedding of Ancient Christian Spiritual Formation
in Christocentric Christian Community

Recognizing the Value of an Established Nazarene Church

The history of the established Nazarene Churches in the Georgia District ministry landscape is a wonderful testimony of the goodness of God and his blessing upon the faithfulness of the saints of God who founded them by his grace, through faith, in loving obedience to their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Every established Nazarene Church provides a stable ministry structure spiritually gifted for making disciples of Jesus Christ. For a moment, think of each established church as a living creation, or spiritual house made of living stones, with a divine design made for reproductive fruitfulness (1 Pet. 2:5). In this respect regardless of the age of an established church it has been brought into existence to be a visible sign of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, like a city on a hill (Matt. 5:14). The divine design made into the DNA of the many members of the living organism is the ability to live in loving communion with God, life-

giving relationship with each other, and in Christ-like service in the world in such a genuine, transparent way that light of Christ shines brightly for all to see.

The divine design of a local church may be veiled by structural flaws constructed by ignorance, fallacies, cultural mores, human error, or rebellious sin patterns. Sometimes the light of a local church is obscured by barriers erected by prejudice, elitism, or fear of the unknown. Nonetheless, the divine design and foundation remains because the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ himself as the cornerstone (1 Cor. 11; Eph 2:20). It is this important truth about every established church that can be lost and overlooked by God's people; No human agency—not a plan, process, or doctrine and polity can grow the people of God into the spiritual house where God's Spirit lives (Eph. 2:21-22). The only way to overcome the spiritual darkness that veils the light of God is through the power of God which is available in tandem to every member and the congregation through spiritual practices that include prayer and fasting (Eph. 6:10, 18).

Utilizing Embedded Corporate Worship Service of Established Churches for Spiritual Formation in the Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Theological Framework

In an established church the corporate worship service will most likely be the corporate worship opportunity in which most of the congregation will be present. If the established church congregation has experienced ministry decline that has persisted even though many different discipleship plans, strategic planning and rebranding initiatives, and church renewal programs have been implemented the congregation may be discouraged, tired, and resigned to accept continued decline. From this position, an established church often adopts a survival mentality that unintentionally focuses on what they can provide and do. The shift happens so subtly that

the pastor, worship leader, lay leaders, and congregation are unaware that a survival and scarcity mindset is a signal that their trust has shifted from God to their own resources. The same may be true of the local church community and the worship opportunities offered or discontinued in its context such that even the content of corporate worship is ordered to please and comfort the congregation rather than worship elements through which God's people bring a sacrificial offering of praise to honor and glorify God.

That is not to say that extemporaneous Nazarene worship does not have holy moments when God is glorified but too often undirected corporate worship, that is without a particular aim or purpose, results in fragmentary worship that falls short of communicating the mystery of the Christian faith—*Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again*. Dr. Jesse C. Middendorf, a general superintendent emeritus in the Church of the Nazarene suggests that ritual in Nazarene corporate worship that is embedded with core doctrines of the faith and participatory rituals function as pastoral care through which the Holy Spirit of God brings about spiritual formation in the congregation.³¹⁴ Middendorf reminds pastors that life-changing events that occur in the lives of the members of a church and in the life of the local church community whether they are joyous highs, ambiguous plateaus, miserable lows, or seasons of grief and suffering in the aftermath of catastrophic events are important moments of opportunity for spiritual formation. Such is the opportunity for the pastor who is called to shepherd an established local church in which its divine design is veiled by a community life that is out-of-balance and walled off from its changing context.

Pastors have the responsibility to shepherd God's people through preaching and teaching the Word of God, administering the sacraments, and developing and equipping worship leaders,

³¹⁴ Jesse C. Middendorf, *The Church Rituals Handbook* 2nd Ed. (Kansas City: Beacon Hiss Press, 1997, 2009), 249-253.

lay leaders, and laity through spiritual direction offered in the life of the worshiping community-as-a-whole. This is a servant leader role. While some may consider the pastor’s involvement in worship planning and church programming an unwanted intrusion or power play, the pastoral authority is a God-given one held in balance by the impossibility of any person fulfilling the servant leader role apart from the self-sacrificing love of Christ and supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. It is the pastor’s responsibility to point the congregation back to the source of our life— Creator God who has revealed Himself as one God in three equal, distinct Persons, (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit). In an established church embedding core doctrines of the Christian Faith through imaginative Christocentric worship order and worship elements become a holy space for the practice of spiritual disciplines.

The Palm and Passion Sunday Service Order and Easter Sunday Service order provided below demonstrate a viable way in which an established church worship order can be an effective Christocentric presentation of the story of God’s Salvation in Jesus Christ that may be considered as a pattern of worship that is a form of Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Liturgy.

Passion/Palm Sunday Service Order

Gathering Worship Video “Save Us – Jesus Triumphal Entry (Play About 4 minutes before service) https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=176&v=FFSdMJPZWCM	Remembering God’s Mighty Acts of Salvation
Welcome & Announcements	
Opening Prayer	Invocation
Call to Worship (<i>Responsive Reading based on Ps.136; Matt. 21:9</i>) O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! God’s steadfast love endures forever! Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest heaven! The Lord is our God. He has given us light; Great is our God, and we give thanks to the Lord.	Worshipping/Glorifying God the Father

Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna! Save Us, O God. Hosanna! God's steadfast love endures forever.	
Song of Praise: "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna" <i>Sing to the Lord</i> No. 217 [Waving of Palm Leaves during the song]	Remembering/ Reenacting God the Son
Old Testament Lesson: <i>Isaiah 50:4-9a</i>	Prophetic Word God the Holy Spirit
Song of Testimony: "God Will Make a Way" https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=7&v=RsMAXhc0QTs	Promise of God
Epistle Lesson: <i>Philippians 2:5-11</i> <i>Hypostatic Union-Jesus is fully God and fully human</i> <i>The Chalcedonian Definition of A.D. 451</i>	Ancient Creed God the Son
Affirmation of Faith: "Partakers of Christ" <i>Sing to the Lord</i> No. 151	Modern Creed God's Mighty Acts of Salvation God's Provision & Promise
Gospel Lesson: <i>Luke 22:14-23:56</i> Reader's Theater Public Reading of Scripture	Remembrance Past/Present/Future
Choir Special with Congregation joining on the Last Verse "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord"	Remembering/Reenacting Passion of Christ
Prayer Time [Praises, Prayer Requests] Pastoral Prayer/Congregational Prayer "The Lord's Prayer"	Response to Word Prayer
Offertory Prayer/Offering/Doxology <i>Sing to the Lord</i> No. 6 Thanksgiving & Song of Praise	Response to Word
Sermon: Resurrection Series: "Trusting in God" <i>Philippians 2:5-11; Isaiah 50:4-9a</i>	Proclamation Preaching
Closing Song: "Victory in Jesus" <i>Sing to the Lord</i> No. 352	Response to Word
Benediction & Sending Forth Pastor: As you go from here, remember this: the same Spirit of God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, also lives in you, breathing new life and freedom into your hearts and minds. So, go from here with joy and confidence, knowing that God Is at work within you. People: We go in peace to love and serve the Lord! Amen.	Response to Word

The music for this service was selected for its theological content. There is no worship element or worship segment that is not important to the Christocentric Imaginative Worship that is a form of metaphorical Christian pilgrimage that the congregation takes together as allegorical pilgrims on the way to their inherited heavenly city. The eternal perspective and heavenly focus

become a sacred place in which the worshiping people of God are transformed, renewed, healed, and strengthen for their continued journey as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The preparation undertaken by the pastor, worship leader, musicians, lay leaders, and laity is a means for the leaders to practice spiritual disciplines. The ongoing process of corporate spiritual discernment is essential to shepherding the congregation through the process of growth and change.

The following Easter Sunday service will feel comfortable for most congregations of established churches who have a tradition of presenting Easter Cantatas and Easter programs.

Easter Sunday Service Order

Easter Sunday Service Order	
Gathering/Welcome/Announcements Opening Prayer Invocation Proclamation Scripture Reader: Luke 24:1-12 Worship Litany for Easter Reader 1: We thought Jesus was dead. Reader 2: We thought the cross was the end. Reader 3: We thought that when the stone rolled over the tomb, that was it. But this is it: People: the dead are living; the cross is empty; the stone is rolled away, and one word describes it all: Alleluia! ALL: Jesus is risen!	Public Scripture Reading Remembering/Reenacting God's Mighty Acts of Salvation Response to the Word <i>Christus Victor</i>
Song of Praise: "Christ Arose" <i>Sing to the Lord</i> No. 258	
Scripture Reader: John 20:1-18 Proclamation Reader 1: We thought Jesus had spoken for the last time. Reader 2: We thought the powerful enemies of Christ had won. Reader 3: We thought when Jesus cried out it was over...that was it. But this is it: People: the word breathes; the powers are defeated; the final cry was only the beginning, and one word says it all: Alleluia! ALL: Jesus is risen!	Public Scripture Reading Remembering/Reenacting God's Mighty Acts of Salvation Response to the Word <i>Resurrection</i>
Song of Praise: "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" <i>Sing to the Lord</i> No. 260	
Scripture Reader: Acts 10:34-43 Proclamation	Public Scripture Reading

<p>Reader 1: We thought the story was finished. Reader 2: We thought the hope had ended. Reader 3: We thought that when the tomb was sealed, that was it. But this is it: People: the story has just begun; the hope is newly born; the tomb is empty, and one word says it all: Alleluia! ALL: Jesus is risen!</p>	<p>Remembering/Reenacting</p> <p>God's Mighty Acts of Salvation</p> <p>Response to the Word</p> <p><i>Enthronement</i></p>
<p>Song of Praise: "Crown Him with Many Crowns" <i>Sing to the Lord</i> No. 272 (Verses 1, 2, 4)</p>	
<p>Scripture Reader: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26 Proclamation Reader 1: This is the news: ALL: Jesus is risen! Reader 2: This is the moment ALL: Jesus is alive! Response to the Word Reader 3: This is the mystery of the gospel ALL: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!</p>	<p>Public Scripture Reading</p> <p>Ancient Creed</p> <p>God's Mighty Acts of Salvation</p> <p><i>Affirmation of Faith</i></p>
<p>Affirmation of Faith "Partakers of Christ" <i>Sing to the Lord</i> No. 151</p>	
<p>Song of Praise: "He Lives" (Verses 1 thru 3) <i>Sing to the Lord</i> No. 262</p>	<p><i>Salvation</i> Remembering</p>
<p>Offertory Prayer/Offering/Doxology with Alleluias <i>Sing to the Lord</i> No. 6 God the Father/God the Son/God the Holy Spirit</p>	<p>Response to Word</p> <p>Praise & Thanksgiving</p>
<p>Scripture Reader: <i>Isaiah 65:17-25</i> Ancient-Future/Prophetic Promise Completed Kingdom of God</p>	<p>Public Scripture Reading</p> <p>Prophetic Promise</p>
<p>Song of Testimony: "God Will Make a Way" Past/Present/Future Promise to Us</p>	<p>Response to Word</p>
<p>Praises and Prayer Requests Prayer Time [Pastoral & Congregational with Lord's Prayer]</p>	<p>Response to Word</p> <p>Prayer</p>
<p>Resurrection Series: "Believing in Christ" <i>1 Cor. 15:19-26; Lk. 24:1-12; Jn 20:1-18; Acts 10:34-43</i></p>	<p>Proclamation</p> <p>Preaching</p>
<p>Song of Praise: "Mighty to Save"</p>	<p>Response to Word</p>
<p>Benediction and Sending Forth <i>(Based on 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and Acts 10:39-43)</i> Remember the Good News that we have received and proclaimed this day—the Good News in which we stand and through which we are being saved. We will remember and hold tightly to the truth we proclaim with joy! Christ died for our sins, just as the scriptures said that he would. But the story doesn't end in death. Christ was raised on the third day, just as it was promised! We are witnesses to this Good News,</p>	

and God commands that we do not keep this news to ourselves!

We will testify to all that Christ is Lord!

Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed!

Alleluia! Amen!

(Written by Amy Loving posted in *The Worship Closet*)

Available from <https://re-worship.blogspot.com>

The basic five-fold pattern of worship reflected in these two services is patterned after the Jewish synagogue worship which was inherited and adapted by the ancient Christian church and contextualized, adapted, and then adopted by local churches and Christian traditions as they emerged. The five-fold worship pattern is complimentary to the sermon focused worship order and worship music driven services inherited by many churches in the Georgia District. There is no need to dismantle the established worship order of an established church to embed theologically rich worship elements and spiritual disciplines. Rather, pastors can broaden the existing worship pattern to a five-fold worship pattern using corporate prayer, the public reading of Scripture, and intentional invitation extended to the leaders and congregation to practice Christian discipleship as a way of life.

The research data of this study suggest the worship services of the Nazarene Churches in the Georgia District do follow at least a three-fold worship pattern and can easily adopt the five-fold worship pattern in this way: 1) Gather for the purpose of worshiping God; 2) Proclaim the Word as a Congregation; 3) Respond to the Word of God; 4) Remember & Giving Thanks for the Gift of Salvation—(Ritual Remembering-Lord's Supper/Table or Metaphorical Table/Preaching of the Word); 5) Benediction and Sending Forth. The proposition is for intentional shepherding of the worship elements in each worship segment through prayerful selection of theologically rich service elements that are appropriate to the congregational context, so they function effectively for Scripturally sound proclamation of the Word through participatory worship in

which the congregation encounters the powerful transforming presence of God as they honor and glorify Him.

The introduction of spiritual disciplines into the worship of an established congregation must begin with practicing them with the leaders of the congregation through prayer, Scripture reading, and the spiritual discipline of searching the Scriptures and engaging in honest, respectful dialogue and corporate spiritual discernment to arrive at a mutual understanding of the leading of the Holy Spirit for the worship and ministry shape for the established local church. The purpose of the church doesn't change but the way in which the Holy Spirit may call the church to fulfill the purpose in each era will require diverse ways of living as a community-as-a-whole.

As Scriptures are searched and the pastor, worship leader, musicians, lay leaders, and members of the congregation practice the spiritual disciplines the natural progression will move toward Christian service within the walls of the church and then outside the walls of the church through local Christian mission. The veil of darkness will be lifted and the barriers to Christian mission will be broken down by worship that honors and glorifies God and transforming encounters with God's grace. Some members will have lifechanging encounters in which there will be immediate, miraculous change but most often it will take prayerful, consistent commitment over many months, or even years, for the desired transformation to a balanced Christocentric established local church to be realized. The wonderful news is that God's grace is sufficient for the journey and the worship in the beauty of holiness that will occur within the congregation as members of the Body of Christ encounter the sanctifying grace of God will be worth the sacrificial investment into the kingdom of God.

Utilizing the Established Church Model for Spiritual Formation in Immersive Christian Community-as-a-Whole

Using the analogy of the local church as a living organism with many interdependent members we can think of the established local church structure as the physical means (metaphorical body) by which the many interdependent members of the local community of faith live as witnesses of the power of God to save, restore, transform, enable, and shield believers until the day Jesus Christ come again. As we have learned from our pilgrimage through ancient church documents and the scholarly contributions of Bernard Lonergan and Victor Turner, Christian community has always existed in a state of liminality because Christians are a threshold people who live on the fringes of their cultures. The members of a Christian community do life together as the family of God. In a sense, the members of an established local church community have experienced a rite-of-passage through baptism and incorporation into the local church body.

Every established local church has both written and unwritten social expectations and established local traditions. This same local church also has Scriptural imperatives for how its members are to live as the local body of believers who are an expression of the Body of Christ. The term applied to a community of believers who live in unity as the Body of Christ is *communitas*.³¹⁵ The mark of genuine Christian *communitas* is summed up by the following teaching of the Lord Jesus, “A new command I give you; Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love

³¹⁵ The researcher’s understanding of Christian community-as-a-whole doing life together in *communitas* has been shaped by the work of Alan Hirsch. Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 25. However, the research and Nazarene models presented in this dissertation are original and have been constructed using Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness theology in agreement with the doctrine and polity of the Church of the Nazarene in the current *Manual*.

one another” (Jn. 13:34-35). Although this command appears to be straightforward when the ways in which the members of the community-as-a-whole live and work together as a community are critically examined for Christ-like expression of *communitas* the Holy Spirit of God reveals the places in which there are dark veils and barriers that obscure, hinder, or disrupt the ability of its members to love one another.

I am not suggesting that guided liturgy alone has any power to correct malformations in established local church communities. But I am suggesting that intentional use of spiritual disciplines in every corporate gathering and ministry of the local church does serve as a means of grace through which the Holy Spirit rebukes, corrects, and brings about Christ-like transformation—on an individual level and in the corporate body. As with the addition of spiritual disciplines in the corporate worship service any changes in the life of the established local church community will begin with prayer and intentional teaching that begins with a corporate spiritual discernment process that will lead to sanctifying the Christian fellowship and Christian education ministries of the church.

It may feel foreign to Nazarenes to engage in guided spiritual exercises for social discernment, but I believe that Elizabeth Liebert, a Sister of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, provides a theologically sound adaptation of the Social Discernment Cycle and the Pastoral Circle that are applicable for experiential teaching and use of spiritual disciplines in Nazarene churches.³¹⁶ Liebert offers a keen insight with the following observation:

Oppression is maintained not simply by a series of unjust actions. Indeed, the insidiousness of oppression of all kinds is that it transcends individual actors. Personal actions to repair a damaged relationship, while laudatory, do not get the root of systemic oppression. Rooting out systemic oppression, as well as making lasting systemic change that enhances positive elements, requires action upon the

³¹⁶ Elizabeth Liebert, *The Soul of Discernment: A Spiritual Practice for Communities and Institutions*, First Edition (Louisville: Westminster, 2015), 6-10.

whole system. Once we move from personal to systemic analysis, we realize why so many of our well-intended actions either make no difference in the system or invite perverse reactions from the system, making a bad situation worse.³¹⁷

In an established church sometimes the unintentional results of well-intended actions have caused harm to its members and the community. As I have talked with pastors, worship leaders, musicians, lay leaders, church members and participants, and church neighbors, the most shared experience was church hurt. The second was resignation to the way things has always been and discouragement in the face of changing and uncertain times, aging leadership, declining membership, limited resources, and lack of commitment and participation in corporate worship. The third response to an invitation to self-examination and corporate prayer is offense and self-preservation. Liebert's way of making decisions through discernment employs spiritual disciplines just as the bands and classes were taught to engage in Christian conferencing as a means of grace.³¹⁸

I suggest that to make space for congregations to engage in meaningful dialogue and discern the leading of the Holy Spirit the practical model offered by Liebert is compatible with the doctrine and polity of the Church of the Nazarene and an accessible way to engage in the soul work that is needed in the churches before any Spirit-led strategic planning can take place. I propose the following steps for discernment can be adapted from Liebert's work and utilized in established Nazarene churches: 1) Remember God and His promises and Trust Him (Scripture [Bible], Tradition [Church History, *Manual-doctrine*], Reason [Informed best practices, practical application], Experience, [Testimony of the Saints, *Manual-doctrine and polity*] → 2) Humbly surrender your will and be open to God's leading; → 3) Research the situation and available

³¹⁷ Liebert, *The Soul of Discernment*, 9.

³¹⁸ Liebert, *The Soul of Discernment*, 24.

options; → 4) Pray for a way forward from an informed position; →5) Form a tentative strategy [Possibly through a Strategic Planning Process]; →6) Pray for confirmation from God that this is His will for this time [Consensus requires time]; →7) Implement the plan; →8) Evaluate and begin the process over.³¹⁹

The pastor is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the Christian education opportunities within the local church community. He or she is to work with the church board and lay leaders to ensure that scripturally sound and developmentally appropriate Christian education is built into the community-as-a-whole. Some pathways available in an established local church where spiritual direction effect change and sanctify community structures already in place are: 1) To teach a pastor's Sunday School class; 2) Build leadership development training into church board meetings; 3) Plan Christian education opportunities for Advent and Lent; 4) Utilize mid-week gatherings for small group studies; and 5) Dedicate Sunday evenings for Prayer, Praise, and Christian instruction (See Examples of Experiential Worship Liturgies: Appendix C5 Teaching with Spiritual Disciplines; Appendix D Ash Wednesday Liturgy; Appendix E: Dinner Church Liturgy; Appendix F Corporate Prayer Liturgies).

It is obvious that the responsibility of overseeing the Christian education in the life of an established local church community-as-a-whole is too large to be undertaken alone. Fortunately, it is not necessary to personally write every material that is utilized or teach every class that is needed. There are some excellent resources available from *The Foundry Publishing* company and from the Nazarene Resources accessible from the Church of the Nazarene website. A part of the process for Christian education and leadership development is to connect local leadership with district leadership and participate in District training and District worship opportunities.

³¹⁹ Liebert, *The Soul of Discernment*, 25.

Another integral piece for helping the community-as-a-whole to realize its place in the Church of the Nazarene and by extension the Church Universal is participating in the Global expressions of Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness accessible through the testimonies and training provided by Church of the Nazarene for use in local churches.

Sometimes it is necessary to break down a resource into smaller sessions depending on the spiritual knowledge and spiritual maturity of the participating members. An excellent resource that the Pastor of Church U (Appendix A. Fig. 17.b) adapted and used for teaching on Sunday evening is *Way Truth Life* by General Superintendent Rev. Dr. David A. Busic. This Pastor shared that while teaching the Sunday evening Bible study it became apparent that there were participants who were not familiar with the Scripture references in *Way Truth Life* and revealed that introspection and personal application of Scripture was not comfortable for many of the participants—even life-long Nazarenes. This example demonstrates an unintentional disconnect between agreeing with a time-honored principle in theory and responding to the grace of God that reveals a need for repentance and a change of mind, heart, and life.

The pastor of Church U, which is a Parent Affiliated Church of Church I utilized the *Way Truth Life pastor's resource* materials to design a corporate worship experience utilizing spiritual disciplines. Which demonstrates it is possible to adapt every corporate gathering so that it becomes sanctified as an opportunity for Christian education experienced through immersive spiritual formation in Christian community. To demonstrate the possibility of adapting a corporate gathering to become a means of immersive spiritual formation in Christian community an example of the reimagining of a mid-week gathering through an adaptation of Fosner's Dinner Church³²⁰ for small church Fellowship Meal gatherings in Southwest Georgia has been

³²⁰ Vernon Fosner, *Welcome to Dinner Church*, (Franklin: Seedbed Publishing, 2017).

provided in Appendix E. The shape of the service is a Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness expression of Chapter IX. First Meditation in *Introduction to the Devout Life* by Francis DeSales.³²¹

The Devotional Liturgy is designed for small group gatherings of twenty-five people or less and can be adapted for any corporate gathering. The exercise begins with a Welcome and Gathering time that allows participants to come apart from the hustle and bustle of life. The pastoral scenes and beauty of creation presented by the suggested music video by Tim Janis reminds the participants that God has given us a beautiful world and invites participants to take time to rest in His presence. The Welcome and Gathering time is followed by an Opening Prayer that functions as Preparation and Considerations. The corporate prayer is a means by which each participant and the gathered community-as-a-whole humbly place themselves in the presence of God. After the Opening Prayer participants sing a song of preparation in which the gathered worshipers are led to consider creation and the place of human beings in it. The consideration is a means by which each participant and the community-as-a-whole recognize our need of God and His great grace. The immersive corporate worship action of singing with the suggested worship video of “Reckless Love of God” produced by Bethel Music and led by Cory Asbury” becomes experiential worship through the corporate practice of spiritual disciplines as the worshiping people of God humbly bow before God, thank Him for his love and offer of salvation in Jesus.

The spiritual discipline of the public reading and hearing of Scripture through listening to a dramatized version of Psalm 51 in this segment is a way in which the participants are led to reflect and encounter the presence of God and make time and space to listen and respond, or in

³²¹ Francis De Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life* in *Library of Spiritual Works for English Catholics*. (Grand Rapids: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Digital Library, 2023), https://ccel.org/ccel/desales/devout_life/devout_life.iii.ix.html.

the language of St. Francis De Sales prostrate or lay ourselves before the Lord. This segment affects the worship participants and moves them toward a resolution or decision time. The decision time introduces the spiritual practice of reflection as the participants are invited to close their eyes and sit quietly while the instrumental music plays. The suggested selection is “God, I Look to You” produced by Bethel Music and performed by Jacob Agendia. The instrumentation soothes, beckons, and aids the worshipers in the meditative segment of resolution and decision response.

After the resolution and decision segment the participants are encouraged to write a prayer or draw a graphic to God in the same way that the writer of Psalm 51 cried out. This time can be as brief or extended as needed. If the group is new to this type of spiritual exercise this segment can be omitted or a corporate prayer could be provided.

The next segment is a sung prayer. The suggested song for this prayer is the acoustic version of “Lord, I Need You” by Matt Maher. The song is prayerfully sung corporately but in the spiritual discipline of corporate prayer each participant is making a faith statement and decision. This act of spiritual worship leads to the Conclusion. The Conclusion is a time for sharing prayer requests and extemporaneous prayer for the requests. This time of prayer is closed with everyone praying “The Lord’s Prayer.” This Conclusion moves to the Benediction and Sending Forth which services as a commission and sending out with the simple phrase, “We go in peace to love and serve the Lord! Amen.

This service is only one way in which spiritual disciplines might be incorporated into the worshiping community-as-a-whole and broaden or reimagine corporate gatherings. The beauty of the living organisms with divine design is the Holy Spirit will lead the development of living

litourgia as the people of God pray and begin to intentionally guide the worship and gatherings of their local corporate body.

Recognizing the Importance of the Sacraments as a Means of Grace for the Expression of Lament, Forgiveness, and Restoration for Becoming Balanced Christocentric Local Churches

There are no perfect expressions of a balanced Christocentric Local Church Body because the human beings who are the members that make up the local church body are imperfect human beings plagued with human frailty and in constant need of the transforming grace of God. Consequently, that means the people of God will need to practice repentance and forgiveness (Eph. 4:32-5:2; Col. 3:13-14). But it is unlikely that a discouraged established congregation will be moved by scathing rebukes or emotional appeals from angry social activists that often resemble the temper tantrum of a spoiled adolescent. A testimony from St. Francis might serve as a mediating bridge between the generations in the Church Universal and across the ever-widening chasm wrought by cultural Christianity in the name of social religion and theological diversity.

When St. Francis decided to seriously “follow Christ and the Gospel” he began to dress in “tatters” which made him appear as a “madman.”³²² In desperation his father, a wealthy cloth merchant, had Francis appear before the Bishop. In the heat of the proceeding Francis stripped off his clothes and flung them into the arms of his father and declared “From this moment forth I am no longer Francis, son of Peter di Bernardone, but Francis child of God!”³²³ As he reflected upon his behavior toward his father, his neighbors, the Bishop and the church he realized his

³²² Carlo Carretto, *I, Francis*, Eleventh Printing (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), 11.

³²³ Carretto, *I, Francis*, 11.

fervor for truth and justice was noble and right but his actions were cruel. Upon reflection St. Francis realized that he had been “young” and his understanding of “poverty was still in its early stages—what you call ‘social justice.’”³²⁴ As St. Francis matured in his understanding of poverty, he realized that “True poverty went to the bottom of things and touched the spirit... That meant that not all the poor were equal. That there were those who were poor in spirit, and there were those who were just poor.”³²⁵

It would be wise to acknowledge most faithful church members do recognize the need for social action and long to make a difference for the Lord but cannot agree with an underling political agenda that is often in conflict with the core of the Christian Faith and intent on destroying the nuclear family and dismantling the church. It is possible that this is the most difficult reality of understanding and living into the doctrine of Christian holiness and entire sanctification. Wouldn't it be wonderful if entirely sanctified believers were instantly transformed into mature, Christ-like people? The following excerpt from the “Christian Holiness and Entire Sanctification” section of the *Manual* is helpful for understanding the way in which sacramental practice and the intentional immersive experience through the practice of spiritual disciplines in Christian community becomes a means for an established local church community to accept the need for ongoing lament, forgiveness, and restoration.

We believe that there is a marked distinction between a pure heart and a mature character. The former is obtained in an instant, the result of entire sanctification; the latter is the result of growth in grace.

We believe that the grace of entire sanctification includes the divine impulse to grow in grace as a Christlike disciple. However, this impulse must be consciously nurtured, and careful attention given to the requisites and process of spiritual development and improvement in Christlikeness of character and

³²⁴ Carretto, *I, Francis*, 11.

³²⁵ Carretto, *I, Francis*, 18-19

personality. Without such purposeful endeavor, one's witness may be impaired and the grace itself frustrated and ultimately lost.

Participating in the means of grace, especially the fellowship, disciplines, and sacraments of the Church, believers grow in grace and in wholehearted love to God and neighbor (*Manual* 10.1).

The incredibly sad reality is every human being and the human condition from the earliest age was marred by the ravages of sin. Subsequently, every family, people group, and nation has suffered and still suffers corruption, pain, suffering, and death. The term that has been used to describe human beings in recent years is broken. Even a cursory review of the horrific atrocities that have occurred in every age and in every civilization, is enough to move one's heart to cry out to God in distress with the Psalmist, "Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, LORD kept a record of sins, Lord who could stand?" (Ps. 130:3). It is this solemn act of remembering the human need of the miraculous intervention of God that occurs in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Nonetheless, when the rituals are stripped of their theological grounding and intended purpose to redirect worshipers to the love of God and the way of salvation that has been made by God's grace, through faith in Christ, and by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit then participants are free to construct meaning and purpose based on their personal preference and blind biases [e.g. cultural Christianity, syncretism]. In effect, rituals constructed by human experience alone have the power to make idols and the doctrines of demons real and construct an unholy space for sensual spiritual experiences that blind the ritual participant to the deception of the enemy and degradation of sin (1 Tim. 4:1; Rom. 1:18-23).

The well-intentioned desire to preserve freedom and spontaneity in worship has led to an unintentional marginalization of the administration of the sacraments in many Nazarene Churches. Unfortunately, the minimal engagement with theologically sound liturgy when

administering the sacraments has resulted in skewed understanding of the sacramental theology and ritual of baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is not unusual for members of Nazarene churches in the deep south to articulate a Calvinist understanding of baptism as a Believer's baptism and describe the Lord's Supper as a memorial rather than a sacrament. Often the rituals of baptism and the Lord's Supper are sandwiched in between other service elements or tacked onto the end of a service and performed quickly with little reading of Scripture, an inadequate time of preparation, and limited opportunity for response.

It is the proposition of this researcher that this minimal engagement and lack of instruction in sacramental theology and ritual purpose has contributed to the false dichotomy between the "public world of everyday life" and the "inner spiritual life" which has resulted in a culture where sound doctrine is proclaimed but not actually made visible through Christlike service in the church and loving action in the community.³²⁶ The minimal engagement with sacramental theology and experiential participation in theologically sound rituals allows for the individualistic construction of a pluralistic personal faith that embraces pluralism, relativism and individualized implementations of a personally contrived faith. It is in within this framework that a contradictory life pattern has been modeled by the community of faith over the last century that has included racism, sexism, paternalism, nepotism, segregation, and sanctimonious condemnation of other Christians, American culture, and the poor of the community stemming from ignorance and arrogance while claiming to be ministers of reconciliation.

The tragic realization that sanctified believers have been guilty of harsh religiosity from ignorance of the hypocritical witness of the church through unintentional assimilation of cultural Christianity is a wakeup call. When core doctrines of the faith are employed as weapons to

³²⁶ J.A. Lang, "An Evaluation of a Discipleship Process Addressing Christian's Inner Life Issues," (*Christian Education Journal*, 3rd Series 12 no. 2, Fall 2015), 266.

condemn the lost and comfort the church a separation of *orthodoxy* (right belief) from *orthopraxy* (correct embodied practice) has occurred. It is a jarring revelation that the people of God, who have experienced the power of God to save and entirely sanctify, have the capacity and in the past have at times unwittingly adopted a posture of superiority signals it is time for corporate lament by the community-as-a-whole. It is my belief that administering the sacraments so that members of established churches participate in the immersive corporate worship guided by theologically sound Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness liturgy, such as “The Sacrament of The Lord’s Supper Rite Two” in *The Church Rituals Handbook*,³²⁷ will make space for holy encounters with the Lord, who alone can and will bring about a renewal of the minds and hearts of His people and revival that results in the restoration of vibrant corporate worship, vital ministry models, and fruitful mission impact in their contexts.

A Parting Vision for Worshiping in the Beauty of Holiness

The following statements are generic composite responses that were gleaned from the dissertation research interviews and surveys. One of my fellow pastors stated that Christian discipleship is not a systematic program or Christian education program. Another Christian colleague observed that worship must be more than attending a weekly Bible study and a fifty-five-minute worship service on Sunday. A parishioner and church lay leader observed that people in the community take free stuff but aren’t really interested in coming to church and wondered if the resources allotted for community outreach were justified. A community stakeholder observed that it is easy to tell when churches really love God and their neighbor because of the way they are always praying for and helping the community. A member who was reached through the food ministry of her church testified that the peace of God that she felt when she pulled up under the

³²⁷ Middendorf, *The Church Rituals Handbook*, 49-56.

shelter to receive the food box for her family in a time of need, assured her that God loved her and that the church was where she belonged. Every one of these comments illustrate how messy working with people is. They also point to the miraculous work of God that is done in the local church—even one that is in the process of transition, in need of Christocentric balance, with imperfect people constantly in need of ongoing transformation.

This dissertation research invites the wonderful people of the Georgia District Nazarene Churches to hold onto the core of the Christian faith but be willing to prayerfully engage in critical evaluation of the theological content of worship and the evidence of spiritual formation that is occurring in our churches. Secondly, Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness when fully realized is a form of Christian spirituality that involves the whole person and requires that there be no disconnect between what one believes and what one does. Thirdly, the recognition that cultural Christianity and cognitive biases easily beset worship that has no intentional design is a gift from God so that the people of God can be restored and enjoy the full benefits of entire sanctification. Fourthly, the process of spiritual discernment that begins the path toward restoration and the establishment of a Balanced Christocentric Local Church will require God-given holy boldness that is only possible through trust in God and intentional practice of spiritual disciplines—especially prayer and fasting and participation in Christocentric corporate worship and Christian service

Finally, Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Christian Spirituality is more than a spiritual type chosen for compatibility with personality, emotional comfort, or ecstatic spiritual experience. Like the earliest Christian witnesses recorded in Scripture, Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Christian Spirituality is a way of life that is practiced through God-given means of grace in genuine Christian *communitas*, when members' lifestyle and community practices are

characterized by undivided love for God and sacrificial love for neighbor. This is what it means to perpetually worship in the beauty of holiness, which is the fulfilment of the law and the sacrificial act of worship freely given by entirely sanctified people made possible by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:14; Ro. 12:1).

APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCH

Example 1: Georgia District Churches organized between 1900 – 1929

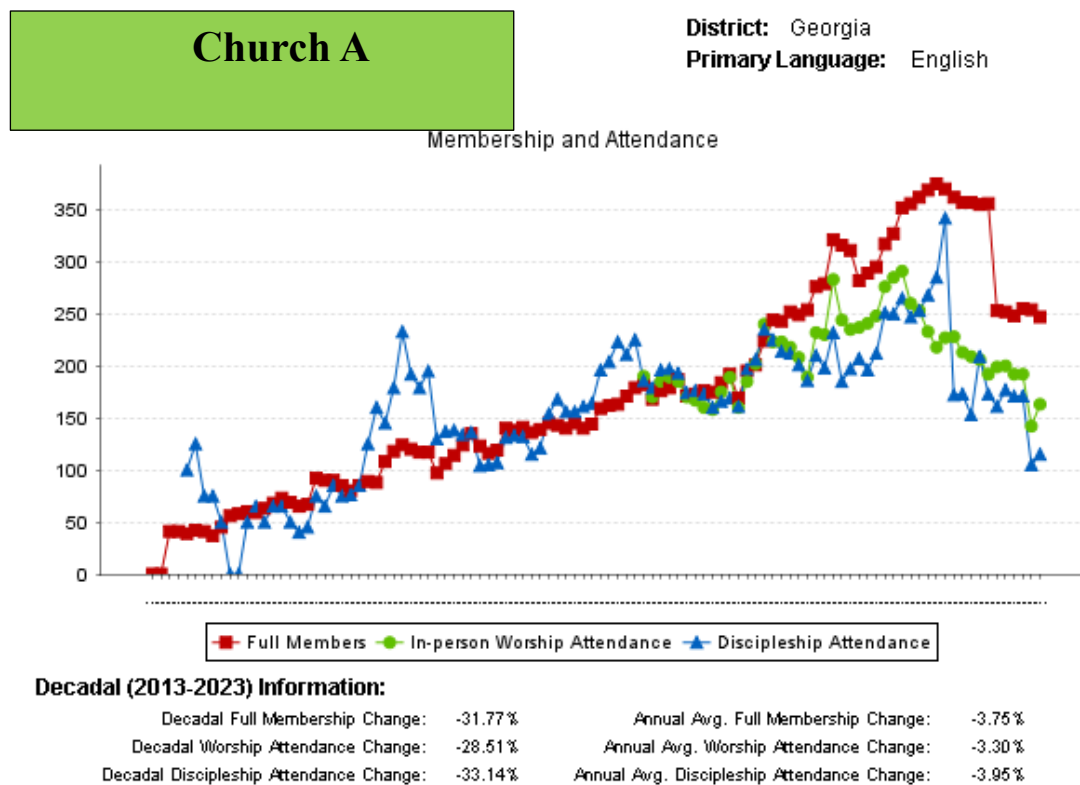
Figure 1.a

Church A									
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship Attendance SS Small Groups		Conversions	Baptisms
2011	27	375	218	N/A	444	250	70	27	4
2019	4	253	192	N/A	332	177	24	4	5
2020	5	252	192	N/A	269	161	0	12	2
2022	0	255	142	N/A	269	105	0	5	0
2023	1	247	163	15	269	115		1	12
Decadal Change		-31.77%	-28.51%			31.34-%			

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began.

Figure 1.b

Statistical Summary Report



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 2: Georgia District Churches organized between 1900 – 1929

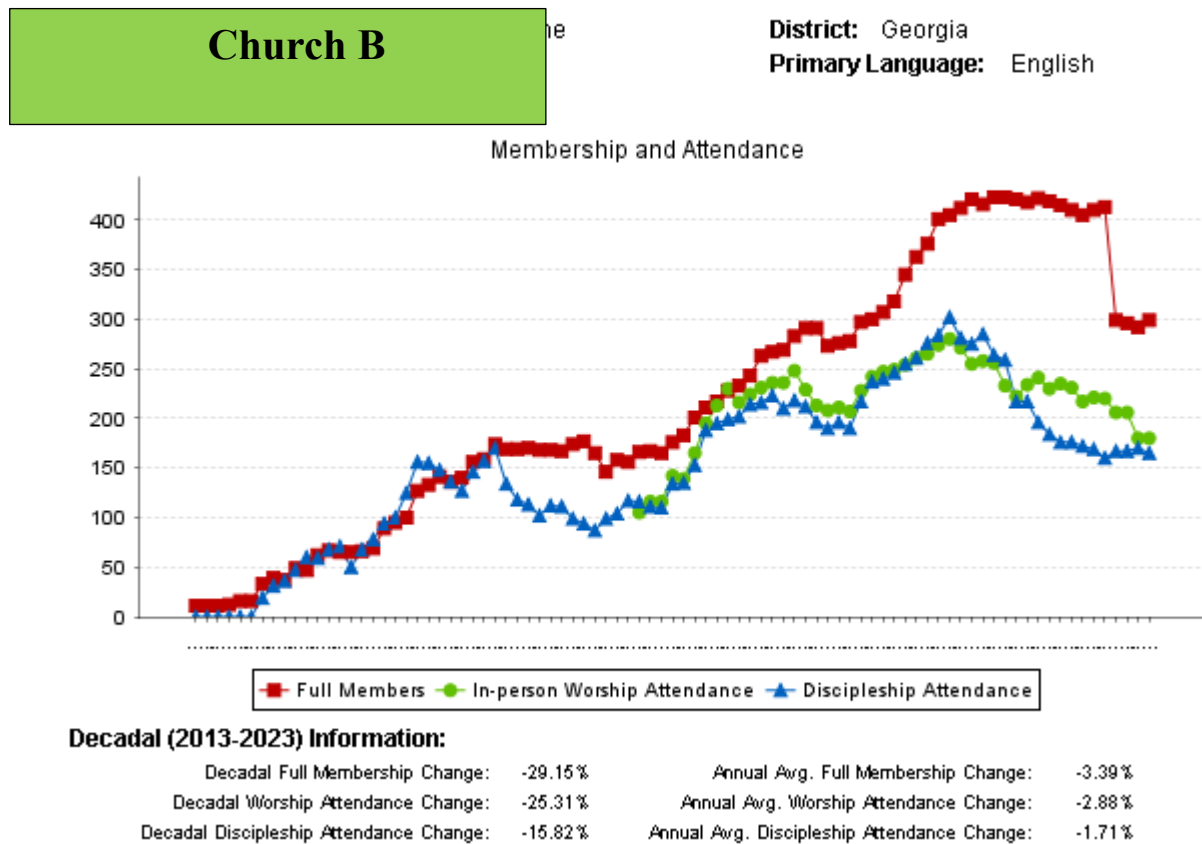
Figure 2.a

Church B								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2010	6	423	233	No Data	381	272	15	2
2019	10	413	221	No Data	262	160	23	14
2020	0	299	201	No Data	296	167	32	12
2022	0	292	180	No Data	271	170	3	0
2023	3	299	180	29	220	165	14	10
Decadal Change		-29.15%	-25.31%			-15.82%		

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began.

Figure 2.b

Statistical Summary Report



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 3: Georgia District Churches organized between 1900 – 1929

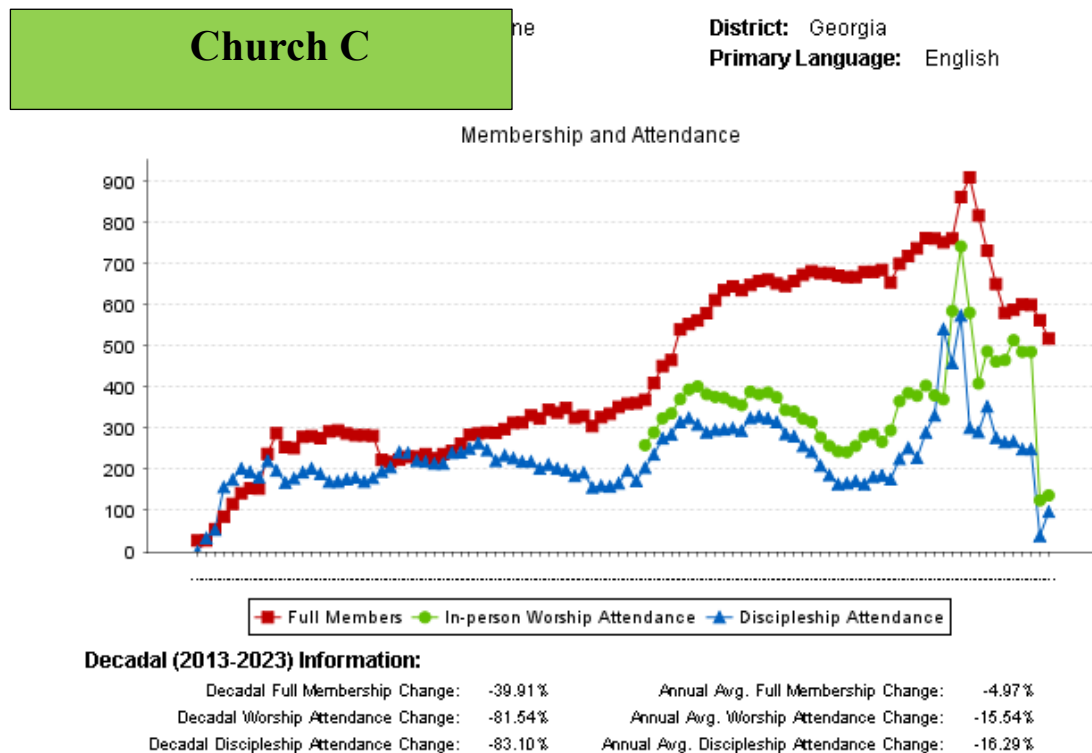
Figure 3.a

Church C								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2013	114	862	742	N/A	1,150	574	1,275	32
2014	57	910	581	No Data	522	301	330	15
2019	12	588	514	No Data	372	268	42	12
2020	20	601	486	No Data	360	249	32	6
2022	0	563	125	No Data	360	38	0	0
2023	7	518	137	25	118	97	3	4
Decadal Change		-39.91%	-81.54%			-83.10%		

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported prior to 2019. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive trend.

Figure 3.b

Statistical Summary Report



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

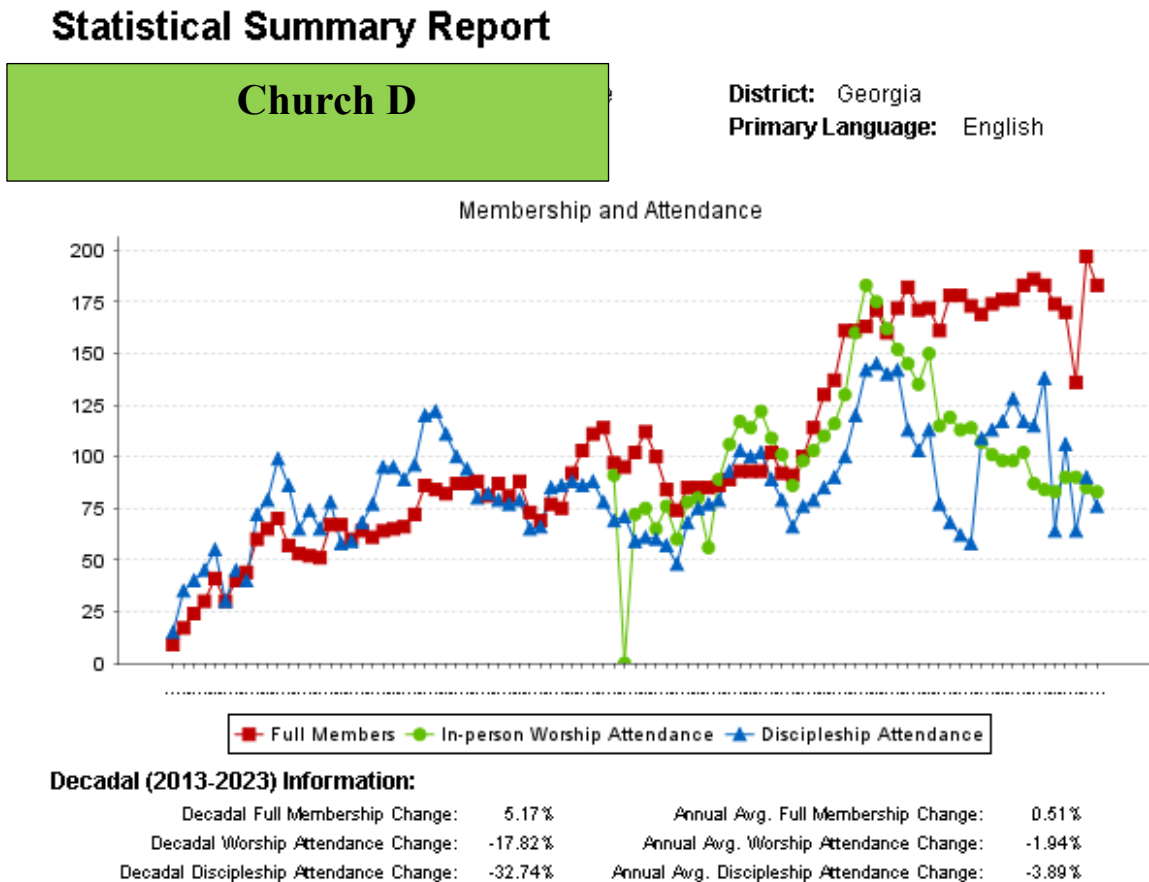
Example 4: Georgia District Churches organized between 1930 – 1959

Figure 4.a

Church D								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2002	2	171	162	No Data	360	140	2	0
2001	15	163	183	No Data	350	142	0	14
2019	0	174	83	No Data	184	64	0	0
2022	3	197	85	No Data	261	90	2	1
2023	2	183	88	5	256	76	2	4
Decadal Change		5.17%	-17.82%			-32.74%		

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported prior to 2019. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive trend.

Figure 4.b



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 5: Georgia District Churches organized between 1930 – 1959

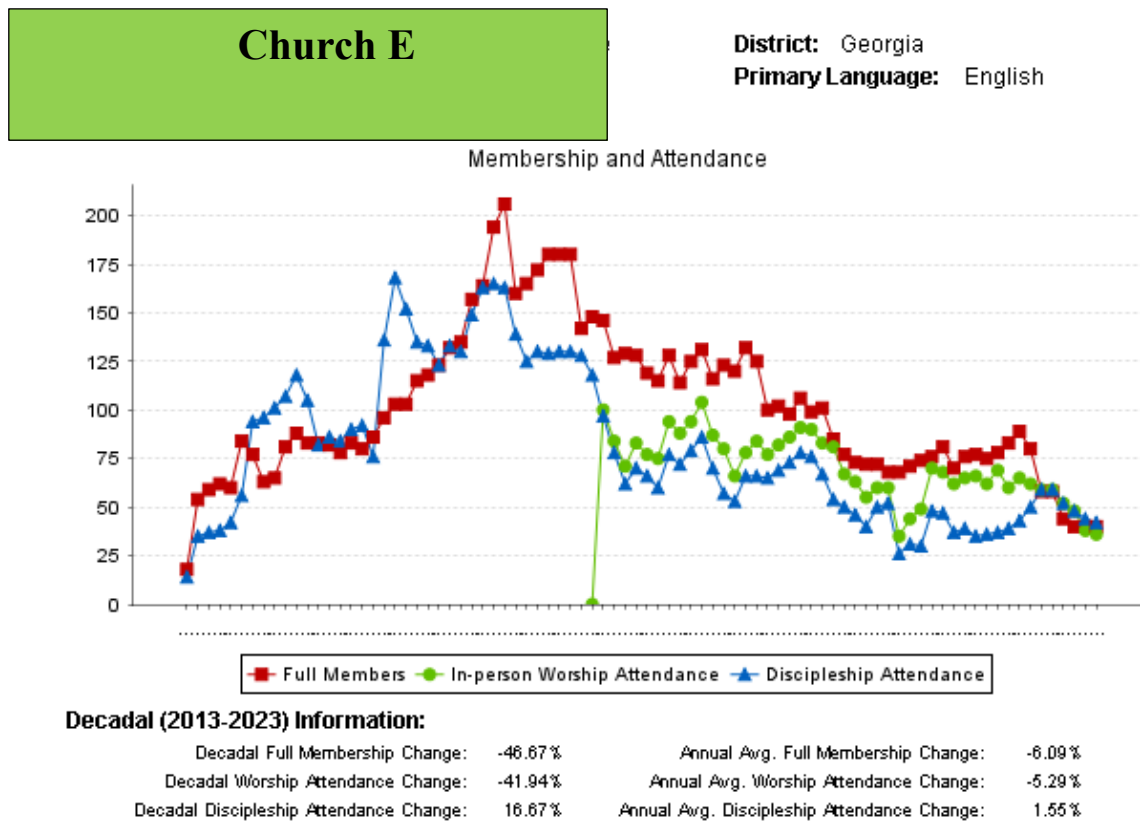
Figure 5.a

Church E								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
1969	15	206	No Data	N/A	335	163	0	0
1999	2	85	81	N/A	111	54	0	0
2019	0	58	59	No Data	75	59	2	3
2022	2	40	38	No Data	60	44	2	0
2023	1	40	36	5	60	42	2	1
Decadal Change		-46.67%	-41.94%			16.67%		

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported prior to 2019. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive trend.

Figure 5.b

Statistical Summary Report



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 6: Georgia District Churches organized between 1930 – 1959

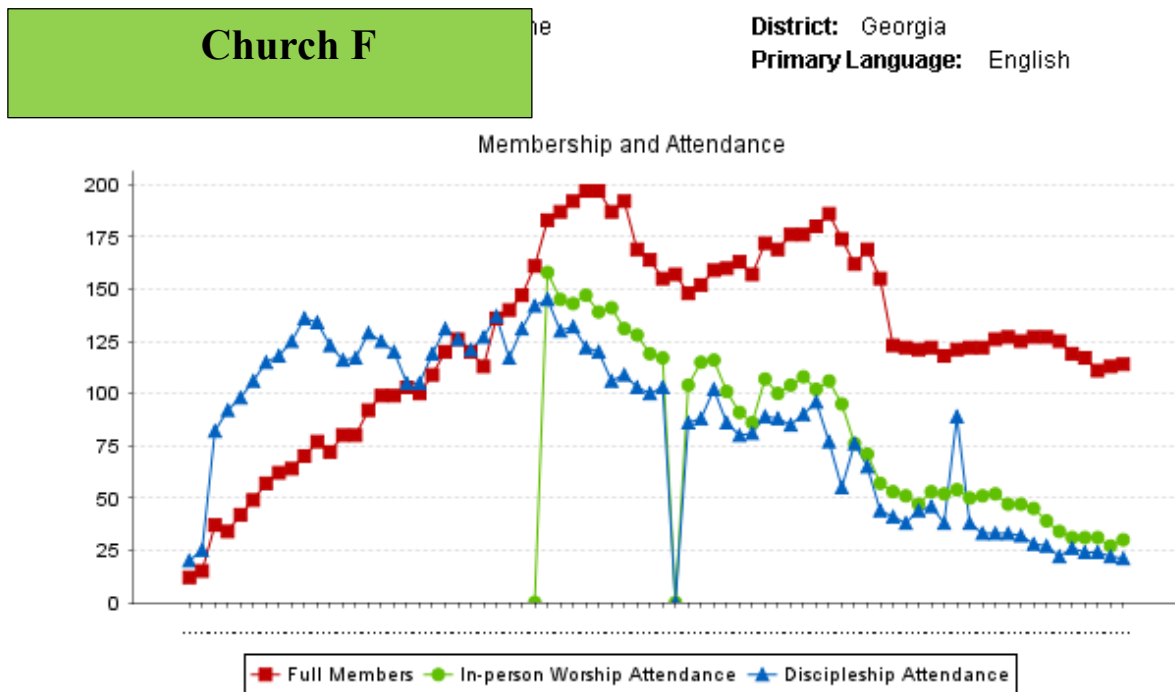
Figure 6.a

Church F								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
1978	11	183	158	N/A	300	145	0	0
2001	0	174	95	N/A	82	55	0	0
2019	0	119	31	39	41	26	0	0
2022	1	113	27	N/A	26	22	0	0
2023	2	114	30	39	29	21	2	0
Decadal Change		-9.52%	-42.31%			-36.36%		

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported prior to 2019. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive trend.

Figure 6.b

Statistical Summary Report



Decadal (2013-2023) Information:

Decadal Full Membership Change:	-9.52%	Annual Avg. Full Membership Change:	-1.00%
Decadal Worship Attendance Change:	-42.31%	Annual Avg. Worship Attendance Change:	-5.35%
Decadal Discipleship Attendance Change:	-36.36%	Annual Avg. Discipleship Attendance Change:	-4.42%

APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

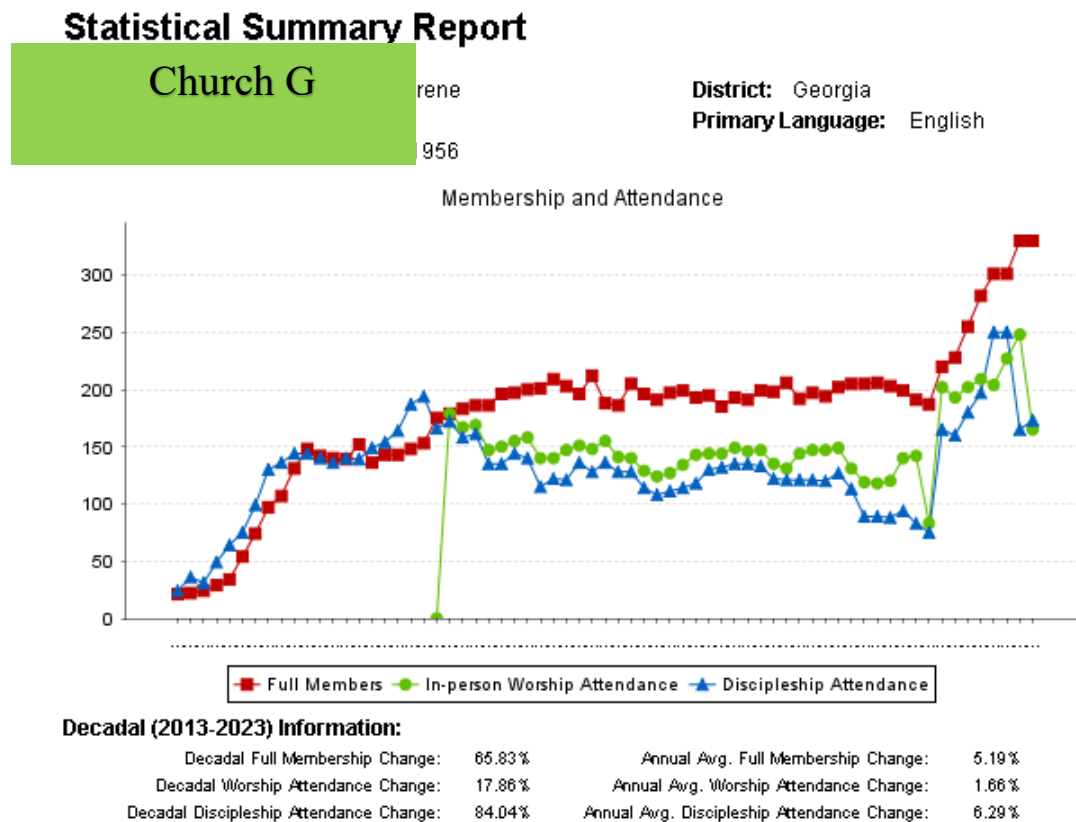
Example 7: Georgia District Churches organized between 1930 – 1959

Figure 7.a

Church G								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
1999	12	193	144	N/A	240	130	12	3
2018	23	228	202	No Data	295	180	23	20
2019	28	255	209	No Data	423	197	28	36
2022	31	301	248	No Data	325	165	31	14
2023	12	330	245	80	378	173	15	10
Decadal Change		65.83%	17.86%			84.04%		

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship years reported prior to 2019. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive trend.

Figure 7.b



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 8: Georgia District Churches organized between 1960 – 1989

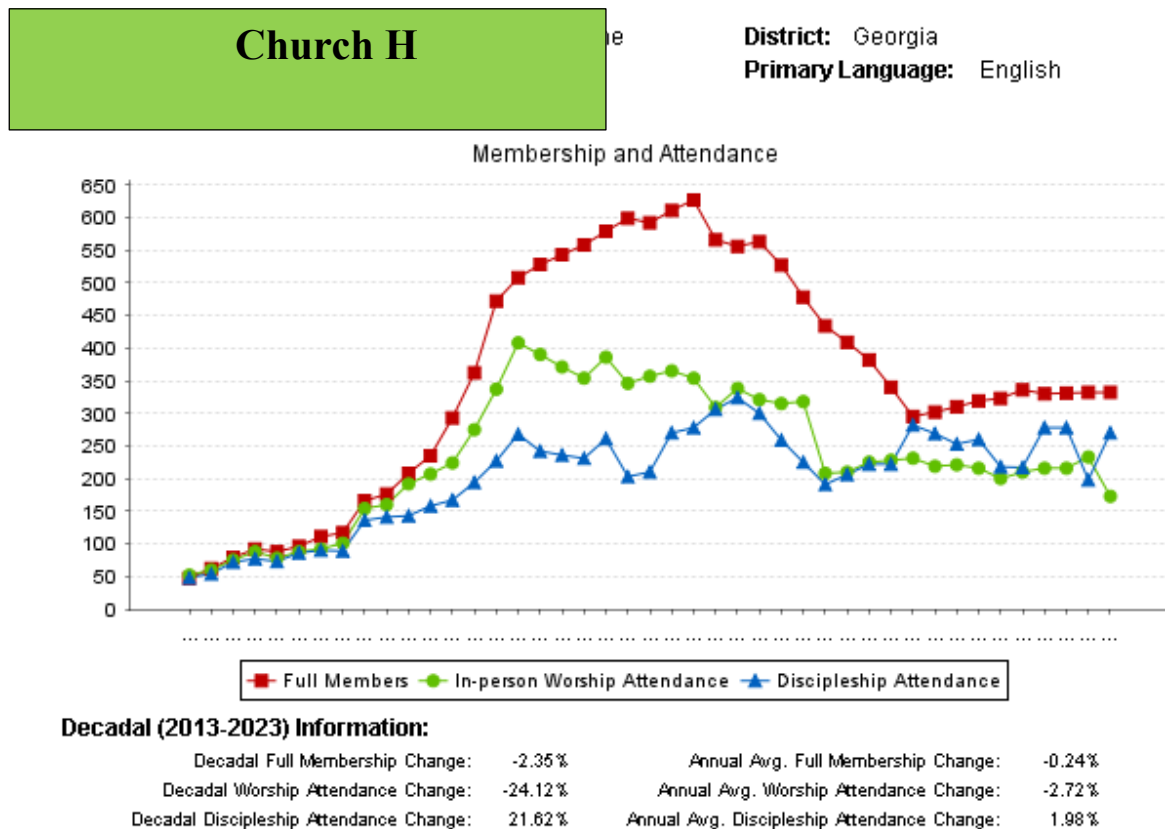
Figure 8.a

Church H								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2004	16	627	354	N/A	523	178	0	3
2015	11	295	219	N/A	400	269	5	18
2019	14	336	210	No Data	300	217	6	6
2022	2	332	233	No Data	424	198	0	0
2023	0	332	173	62	315	270	1	0
Decadal Change		-2.35%	-24.12%			21.62%		

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported prior to 2019. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive trend.

Figure 8.b

Statistical Summary Report



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 9: Georgia District Churches organized between 1960 – 1989

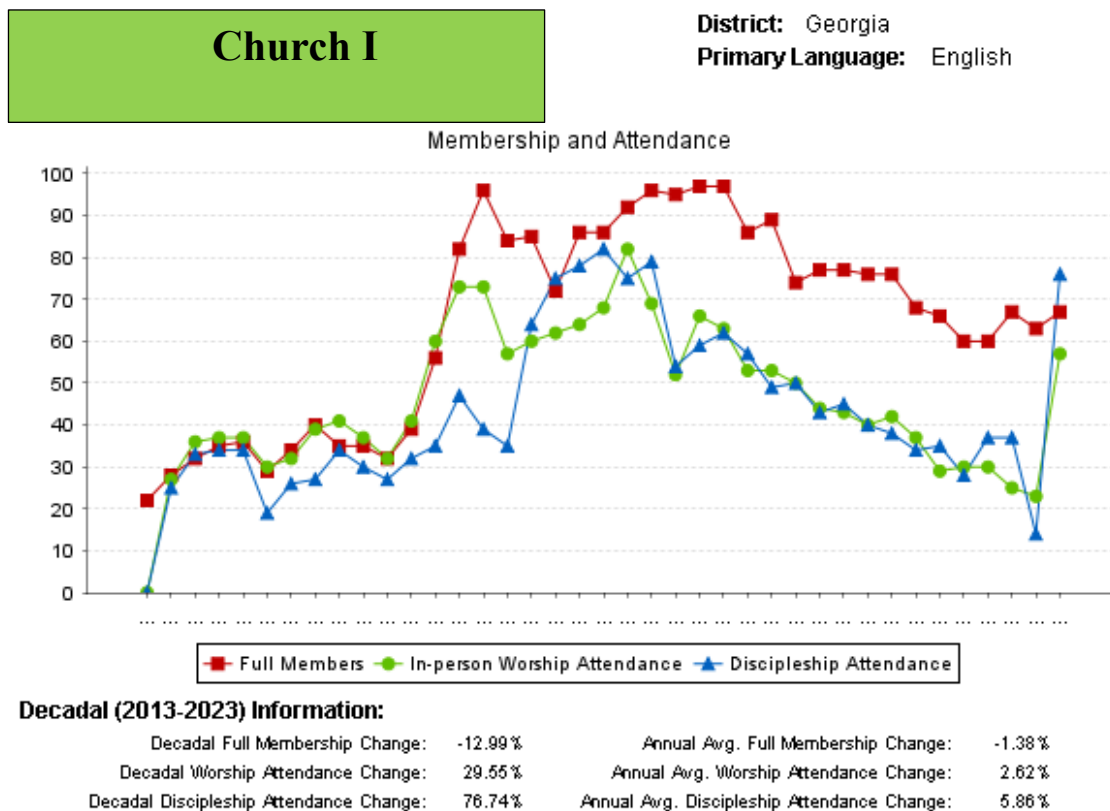
Figure 9.a

Church I								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2009	1	97	66	N/A	67	59	10	2
2010	6	86	37	N/A	62	57	6	0
2019	0	60	30	No Data	73	28	2	0
2022	0	63	23	No Data	50	14	1	1
2023	6	67	57	48	123	76	2	0
Decadal Change		-12.99%	-29.55%			76.74%		

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported prior to 2019. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive trend.

Figure 9.b

Statistical Summary Report



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

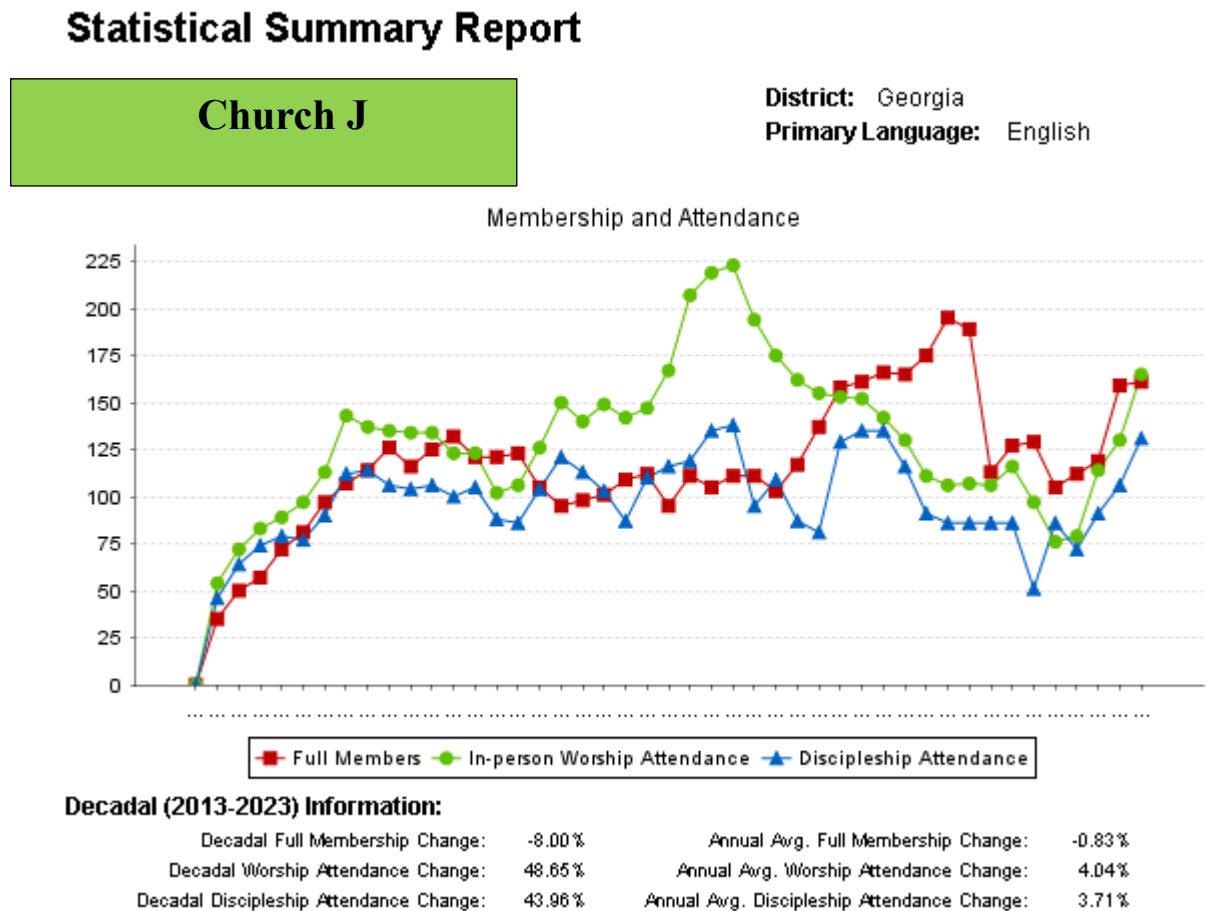
Example 10: Georgia District Churches organized between 1960 – 1989

Figure 10.a

Church J								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2014	8	195	106	N/A	131	86	0	2
2015	0	189	107	N/A	116	86	0	3
2019	5	105	76	No Data	105	86	0	1
2022	33	159	130	No Data	159	106	5	1
2023	2	161	165	25	214	131	25	6
Decadal Change		-8.00%	48.65%			43.96%		

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported prior to 2019. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive trend.

Figure 10.b



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 11: Georgia District Churches organized between 1990 – 2019

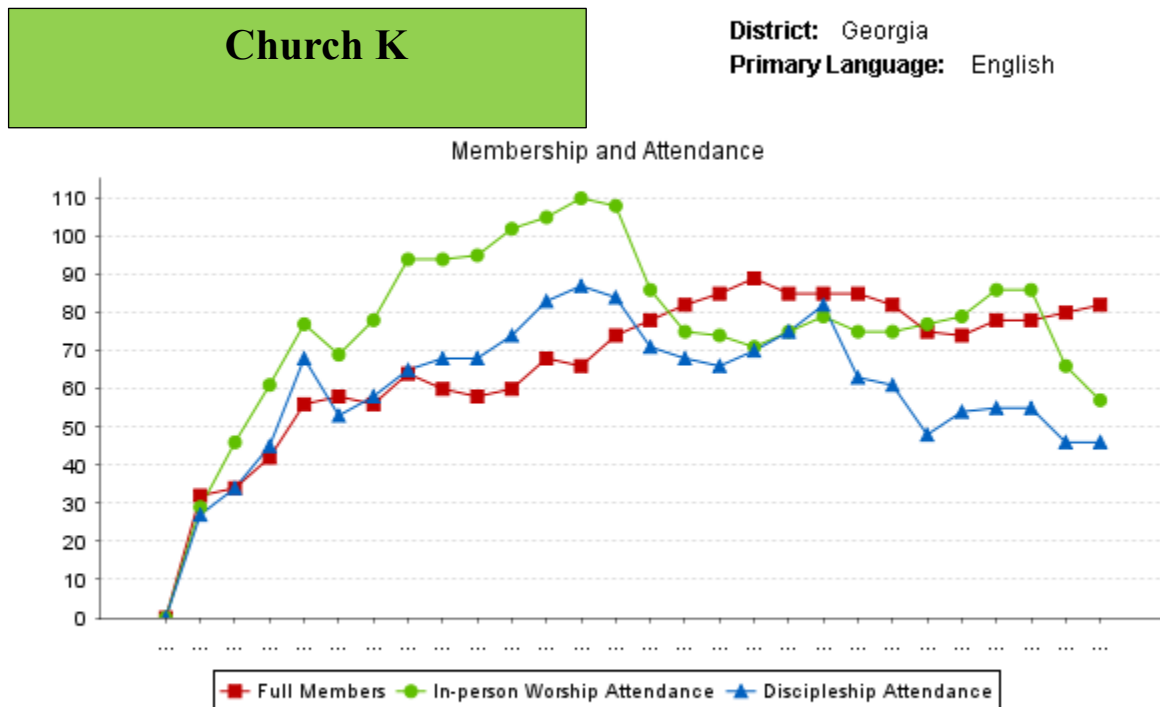
Figure 11.a

Church K								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2014	2	89	71	N/A	76	75	1	2
2015	2	85	79	N/A	115	82	4	2
2019	1	74	79	N/A	72	54	3	0
2022	3	78	66	N/A	77	46	0	0
2023	2	80	57	11	67	46	2	0
Decadal Change		-7.87%	-19.72%			-34.29%		

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported prior to 2019. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive trend.

Figure 11.b

Statistical Summary Report



Decadal (2013-2023) Information:

Decadal Full Membership Change:	-7.87%	Annual Avg. Full Membership Change:	-0.82%
Decadal Worship Attendance Change:	-19.72%	Annual Avg. Worship Attendance Change:	-2.17%
Decadal Discipleship Attendance Change:	-34.29%	Annual Avg. Discipleship Attendance Change:	-4.11%

APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 12: Georgia District Churches organized between 1990 – 2019

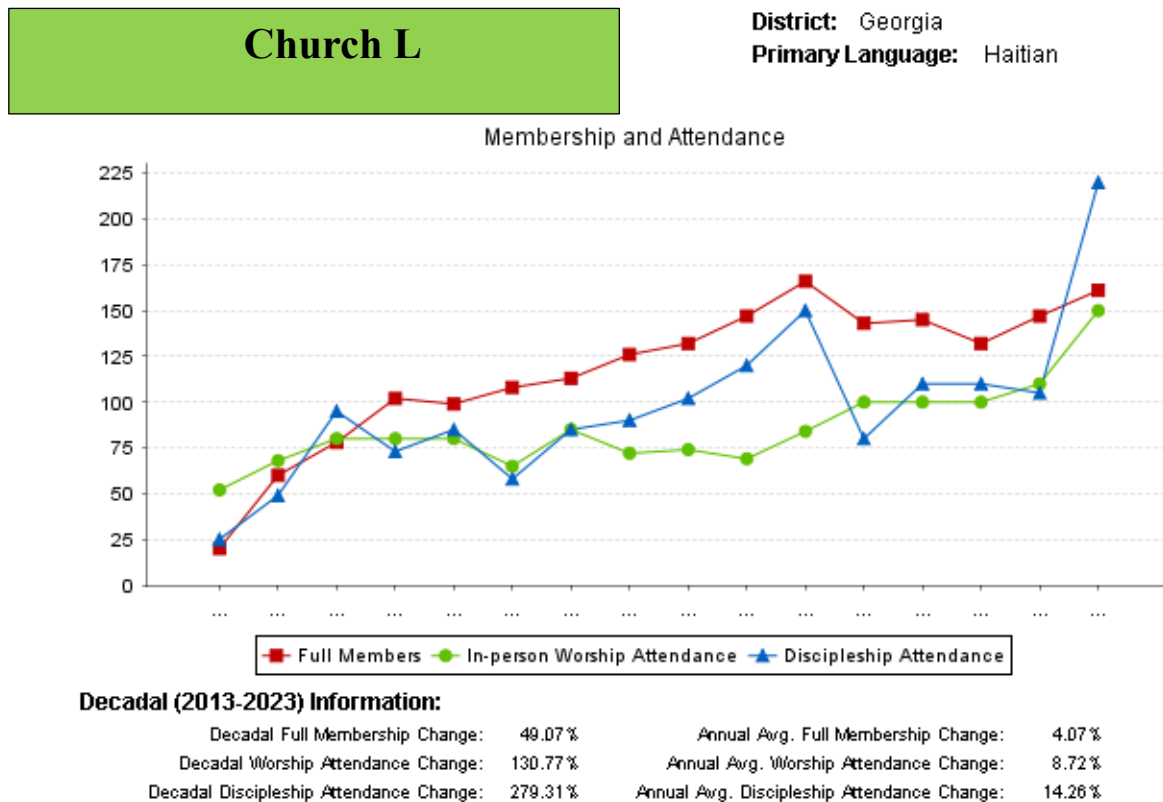
Figure 12.a

Church L								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2018	18	166	84	N/A	180	150	4	0
2019	12	143	100	No Data	100	80	2	9
2020	15	145	100	No Data	145	110	2	0
2022	12	147	110	No Data	52	105	4	12
2023	35	161	150	200	65	220	2	7
Decadal Change		8.00%	130.77%			279.31%		

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported prior to 2019. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive trend.

Figure 12.b

Statistical Summary Report



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 13: Georgia District Churches organized between 1990 – 2019

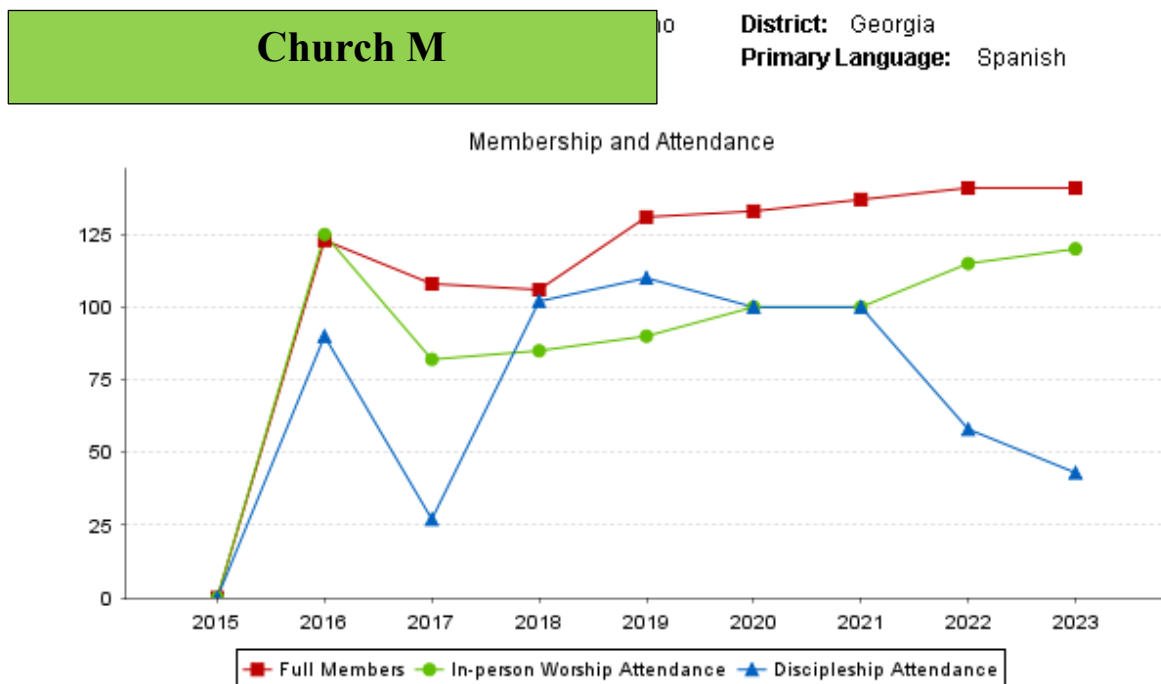
Figure 13.a

Church M								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2016	7	123	125	N/A	90	90	15	10
2017	7	108	82	N/A	16	27	16	9
2019	14	131	90	N/A	110	110	3	4
2022	4	141	120	N/A	6	58	0	0
2023	0	141	115	25	48	43	10	0
Less than 10 years of Data								

Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported prior to 2019. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive trend.

Figure 13.b

Statistical Summary Report



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 14: Georgia District Churches organized between 2020 - Present

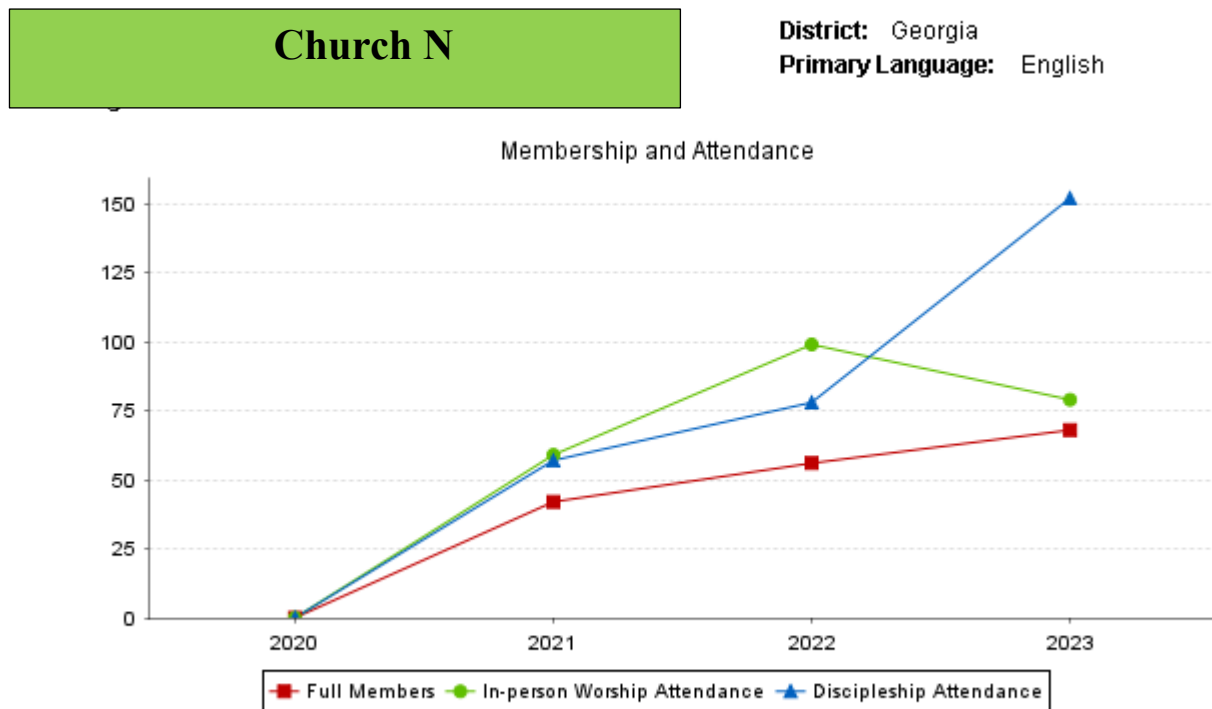
Figure 14.a

Church N								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2020	0	0	0	No Data	0	0	0	
2021	42	42	59	No Data	80	57	27	
2022	14	56	99	No data	101	78	18	
2023	12	68	79	52	194	152	21	
Less than 10 years of Data								

Chart Key: Green highlight with black type indicates when discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive growth trend in worship and discipleship.

Figure 14.b

Statistical Summary Report



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 15: Georgia District Churches organized between 2020 - Present

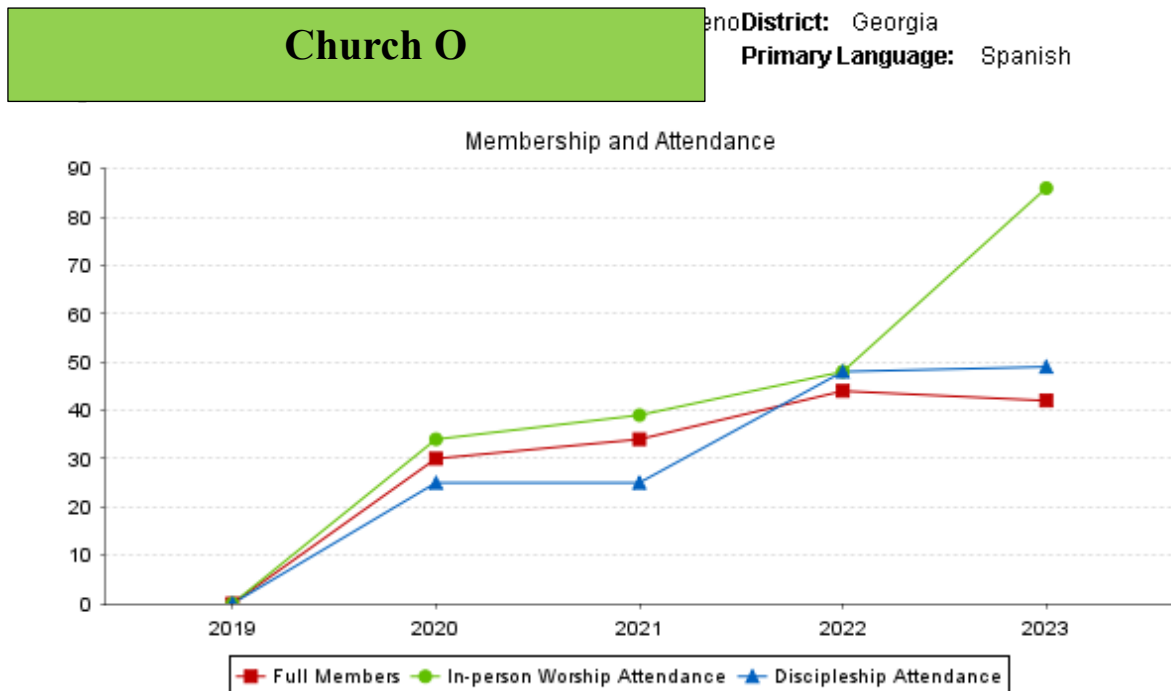
Figure 15.a

Church O								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2020	29	30	34	No Data	25	25	5	2
2021	4	34	39	No Data	4	25	9	4
2022	8	44	48	No data	4	48	4	2
2023	2	42	86	53	66	49	3	0
Less than 10 years of Data								

Chart Key: Green highlight with black type indicates when discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates a positive growth trend in worship and discipleship.

Figure 15.b

Statistical Summary Report



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 16: Georgia District Churches organized between 2020 - Present

Figure 16.a

Church Q								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2016	1	304	265	N/A	295	265	0	1
2020	0	100	50	No Data	59	28	0	0
2019	2	310	40	No Data	100	24	3	0
2022	14	70	50	No Data	12	21	6	8
2023	1	70	40	30	26	85	0	0
Decadal Change		-73.98%	-50.00%			21.43%		

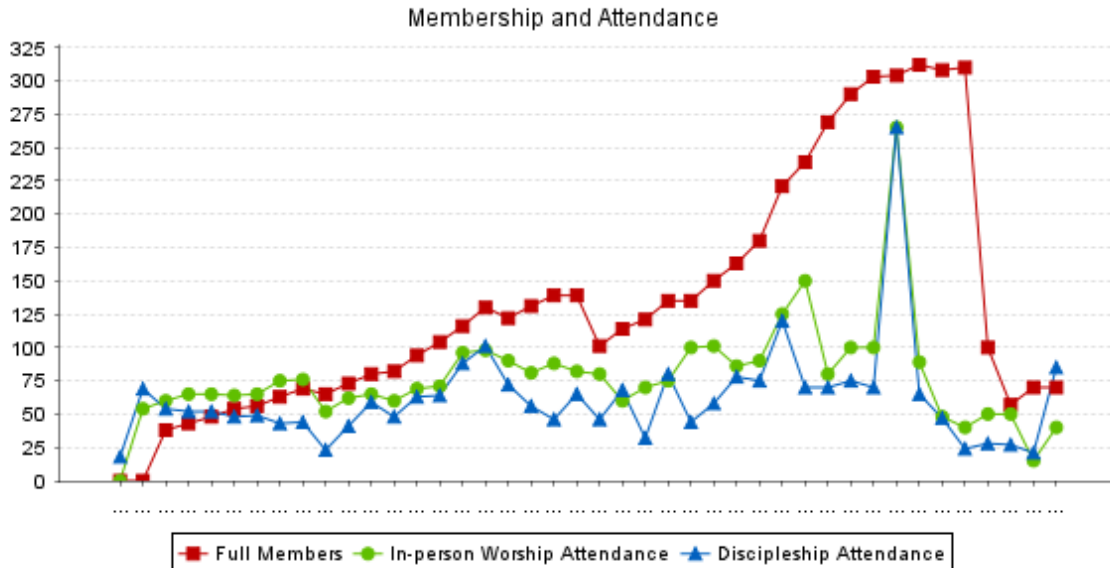
Chart Key: Green highlight denotes largest membership and discipleship year reported prior to 2019. Yellow highlight with red type indicates the year in which the pattern of decline of membership and discipleship began. Blue highlight with white type indicates positive trend.

Figure 16.b

Statistical Summary Report

Church Q

District: Georgia
Primary Language: English



Decadal (2013-2023) Information:

Decadal Full Membership Change:	-73.98%	Annual Avg. Full Membership Change:	-12.60%
Decadal Worship Attendance Change:	-50.00%	Annual Avg. Worship Attendance Change:	-6.70%
Decadal Discipleship Attendance Change:	21.43%	Annual Avg. Discipleship Attendance Change:	1.96%

APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

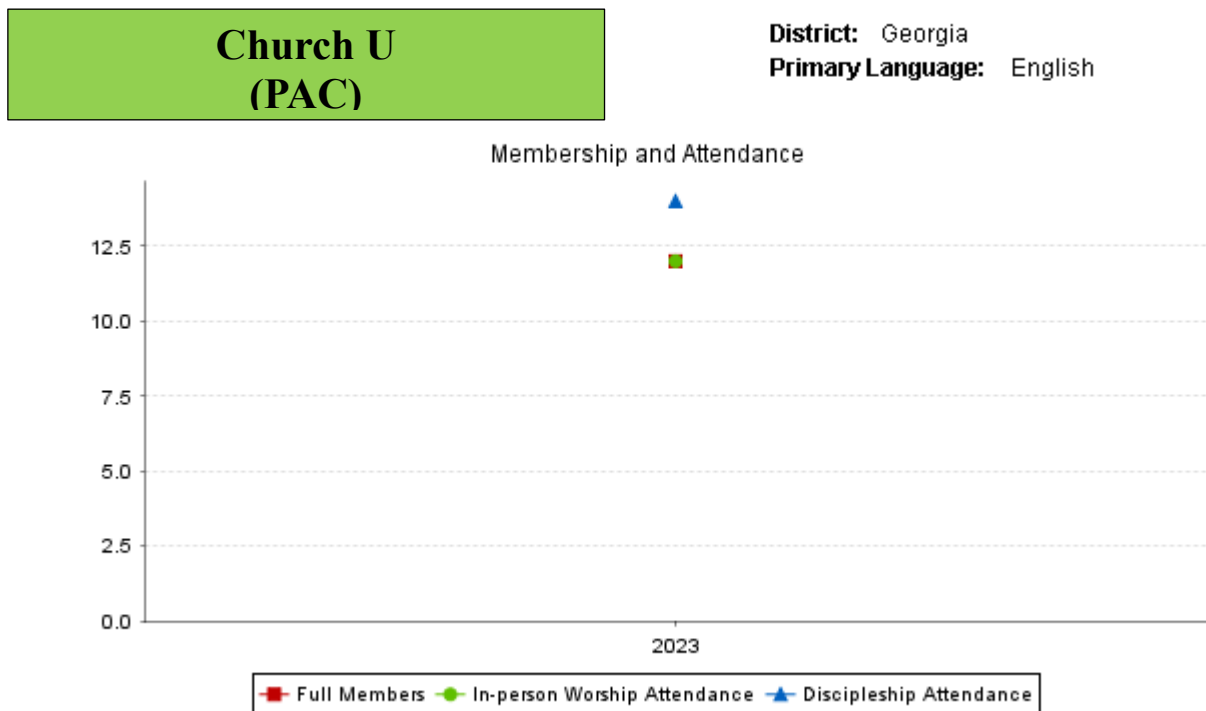
Example 17: Georgia District Churches organized between 2020 - Present

Figure 17.a

Church U								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2023	12	12	12	N/A	39	14	2	0
Less than 10 years of data			Parent Affiliated Church Organized 2023					

Figure 17.b

Statistical Summary Report



APPENDIX A

BLIND SUMMARY VIEW OF STATISTICS SELECTED GA DISTRICT CHURCHES

Example 17: Georgia District Churches organized between 2020 - Present

Figure 17.a

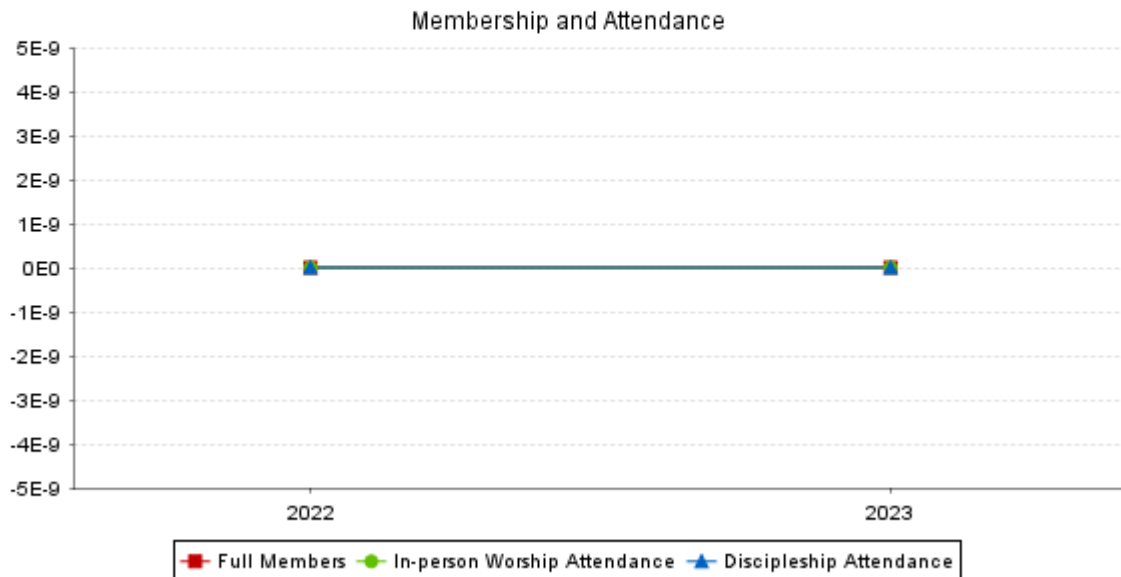
Church U								
Statistical Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Weekly In-Person Worship	Online Worship	Discipleship Accountability Care List	Discipleship attendance	Conversions	Baptisms
2023	0	0	0	No Data	0	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	No Data	0	0	0	0
Less than 10 years of data			Parent Affiliated Church Organized 2023					

Figure 17.b

Statistical Summary Report

**Church V
(PAC)**

District: Georgia
Primary Language: French



APPENDIX B

Example 18. Learning from the Church Survey-Member-Participant Survey
Figure 18.

Learning From the Church Survey Member-Participant Survey

Researcher: Rev. Susan M. Beverly 2023

Gender

Male
Female

Age

0-17	18-24
25-34	35-44
45-54	55-64
65-74	75 or more

Ethnicity

White	Asian
American Indian	Black or African American
Middle Eastern or North African	Hispanic Latino or Spanish origin
Native Hawaiian or	Other
Other Pacific Islander	

Education

Less than HS Diploma	High School
Some College	Bachelors Degree
Graduate Degree	Higher Education

Household Income

\$0 - \$24,999	\$25,000 - \$49,999
\$50,000 - \$74,999	\$80,000 - \$99,999
\$100,000 - \$149,999	\$150,000 or more

Marital Status

Single	Married
Divorced	Widowed

What is the name of the church you attend?

APPENDIX B

Example 18. Learning from the Church Survey-Member-Participant Survey (Continued)

How long have you been attending your church?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-30 years
- 31-40 years
- More than 40 years

Mark all the religious denominations that have helped to shape you spiritually.

- Baptist
- Methodist
- Presbyterian
- Lutheran
- Roman Catholic
- Pentecostal
- Church of the Nazarene
- Unitarian
- Latter Day Saints
- Jehovah's Witness
- Seventh Day Adventist
- Wesleyan
- Disciples of Christ
- Other

Should women be ordained and serve as Lead Pastors?

- No
- Yes
- Undecided

Who is to train and equip the congregation to carry out the mission and ministry of the church?

- Pastor
- Church Board
- Lay Ministers
- Church Members
- Other

APPENDIX B

Example 18. Learning from the Church Survey-Member-Participant Survey (Continued)

Who is to care for the congregation? (For example: Visit the sick, care for widows and orphans etc.). Select all that apply.

Pastor
Church Board
Lay Ministers
Church Members
Other

How do you understand baptism? Select all that apply.

Outward symbol of an inward work of God
Symbol of New Life in Christ
Holy Sacrament (Given by Christ)
Mark of a covenant between God and a Christian
Important means of grace for the Believer and the Church
Testimony of faith and identification with the local church
Empty Religious Act (Religious ritual or ceremony)

How do you define the Church? Select all that apply.

Body of Christ
Bride of Christ
Holy and Apostolic (Set apart by God)
Universal (Christian Believers from all nations)
Household of Faith (Family of God)
Religious Organization

What is the purpose of the local church. Select all that apply.

Preach
Teach
Nurture
Commission
Other

APPENDIX B

Example 18. Learning from the Church Survey-Member-Participant Survey (Continued)

Select the core values of the Church of the Nazarene.

We are a Christian People
We are a Holiness People
We are a Missional People
We are a Legalistic People
None of the Above

Sanctified people do not have to sin.

True
False

Nazarenes believe that there is a difference between a pure heart brought about by sanctification and a mature character which is the result of growth in grace.

True
False

What are the most important things that make your local church a visible sign of the power of God to transform people's lives into the image of Jesus Christ?

**How does your church make disciples of Jesus Christ? For example:
Intentional Discipleship Plan:**



OR: I don't know of an intentional discipleship plan at my church.

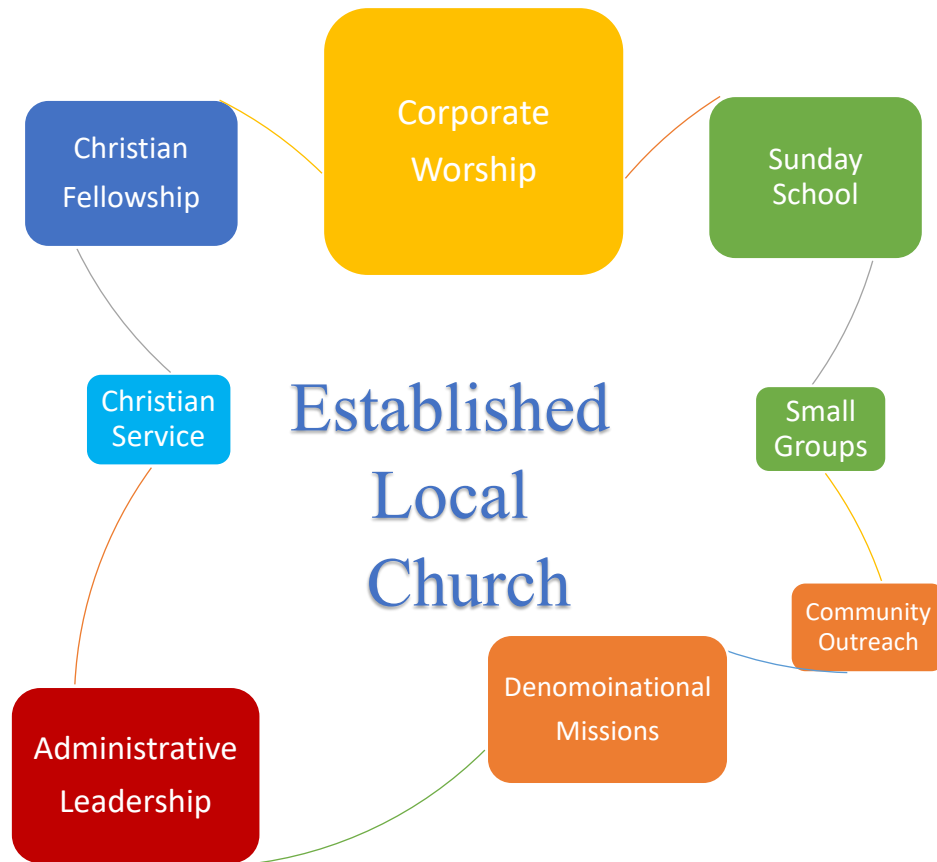
What is the most meaningful element of the worship at your church that is nurturing your soul?

For example: Preaching, Prayer, Congregational Singing, Special Music,
Scripture Reading, Moment of Silence, Passing of the Peace etc.

APPENDIX C

Established Church Model Present in Georgia District Nazarene Churches

Process Graphic B.1

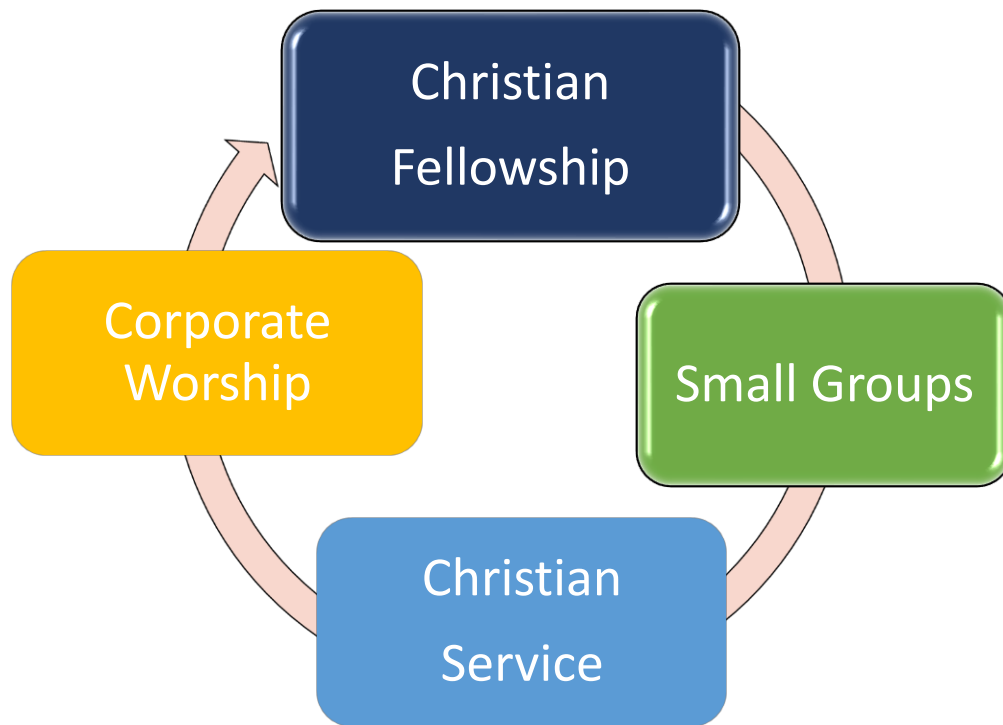


Note: In this Established Church Model, the possibility for launching New Church Starts in every ministry area and hosting a PAC is present and would provide balance to the ministry shape of the worshipping community-as-a-whole.

APPENDIX C

Parent Affiliated Church Developmental Ministry Model present in Georgia District Nazarene Churches

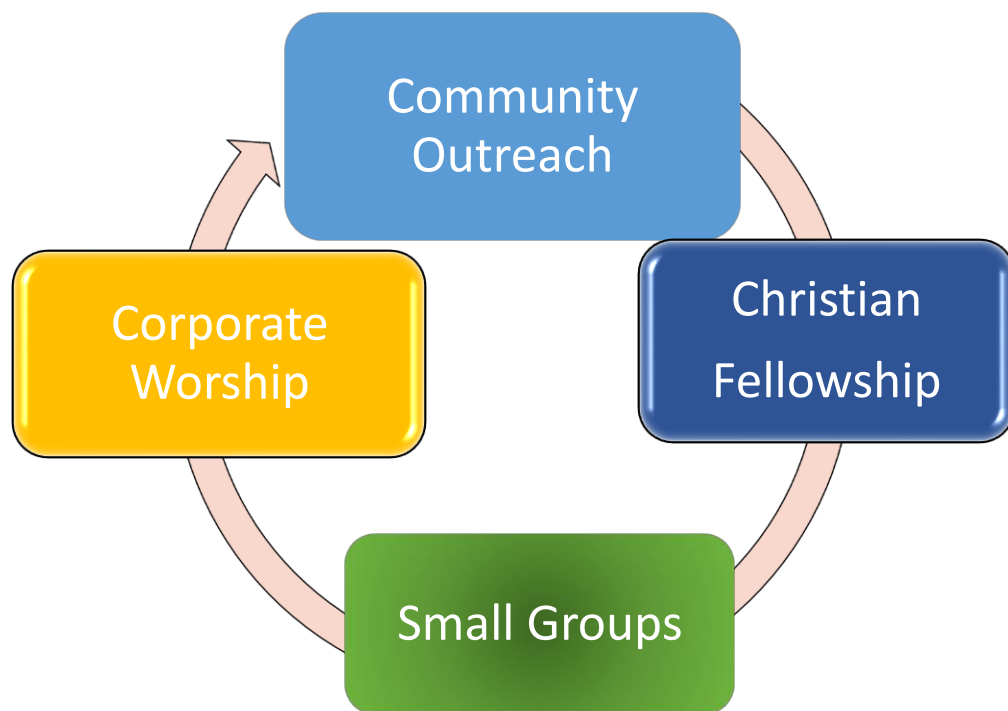
Process Graphic B.2



Note: The PAC Model could begin with any of the corporate gatherings. Every gathering is a form of Christocentric corporate worship. Each corporate gathering provides an entrance into immersive participation in the Christocentric Community life of God's holy people. Every established Church model has the potential for growth through the establishment of PAC churches.

APPENDIX C

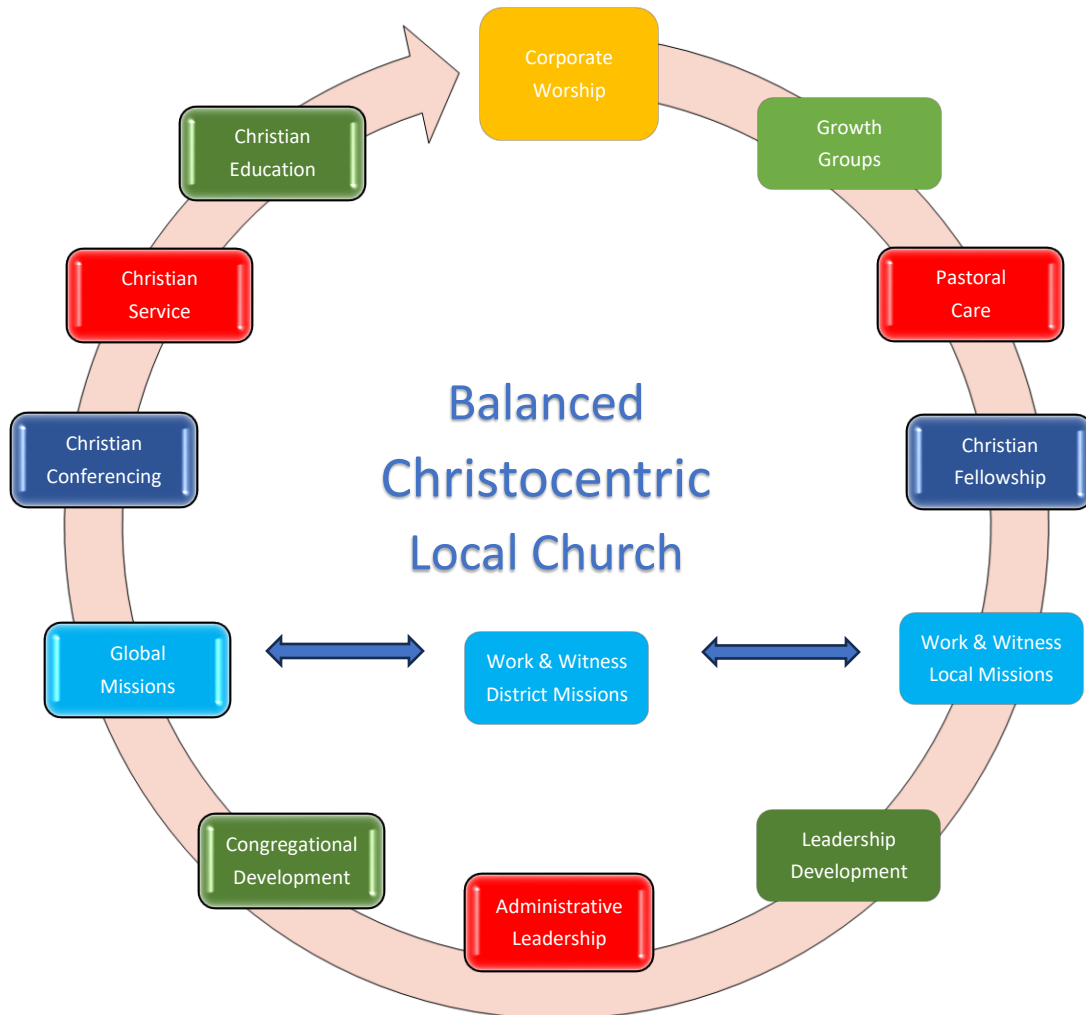
New Church Start Ministry Model Present in GA District Nazarene New Church Starts Process Graphic B.3



Note: This New Church Start Model could begin with any of the corporate gatherings. Every gathering is a form of Christocentric corporate worship. Each corporate gathering is an entrance into immersive participation in the Christocentric Community life of God's holy people. Every New Church Start Model has the potential to become an established and balanced Christocentric Church that can produce new church starts.

APPENDIX C

Balanced Christocentric Local Church Theoretical Model
Process Graphic B.4



Note: This theoretical model requires immersive participation in Christocentric Community. Every gathering is a form of Christocentric corporate worship and a means of doing life together as the holy people of God. A balanced Christocentric Church will produce new church plants and ongoing PAC ministries.

APPENDIX D

An Example of Incorporating Spiritual Disciplines in Bible Study

Heart Music: Knowing Who God is, Who We Are, and What We've Got!

Ephesians 5:15-20; Psalm 34; John 6:57-58

Session One "Why Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs?"

Gathering

Welcome

Opening Prayer Litany Based on Psalm 57

Leader: Lord God, we praise you for your love and faithfulness!

ALL: We will praise you, Lord, among the nations!

Leader: Have mercy on us, God; we are living in dangerous, uncertain days

ALL: We call out to you, God Most High and take refuge in You.

Leader: Our hearts are unwavering, God; we will sing and make music.

ALL: We will give thanks! We will make music to you among the nations!

Leader: We praise you, Lord. You are our God who comes through for us.

ALL: We will sing and make music to You, O God. Let your glory be over all the earth!

Call to Worship "Forever God is Faithful" Worship Video with Lyrics

Introduction: Isn't it wonderful to remember together that God is faithful! We count on God; His love endures forever. God never forgets our name or anything else. I wonder does anyone here struggle with remembering things? Have you ever misplaced your to-do list or put something away and forgotten where you put it? Would it surprise you to know that Psychologists have discovered a phenomenon—that is the fascinating connection between music and memory.

Watch this video clip: "Woman Makes Connection to Late Stage Alzheimer's Patient Using Music" <http://fox4kc.com/2014/12/13/video-woman-makes-connection-to-late-stage-alzheimers-patient-using-music/>

Lesson: There is a special spiritual dimension in singing that makes a place for communion with God that even a disease like Alzheimer's can't erase! Music and memory are intricately connected. Psychologists have discovered music increases a person's ability to learn languages and other information and can help those who have suffered traumatic brain injuries recover lost memories. Music activates large areas of the brain including auditory, motor, and limbic(emotional) regions. Music can preserve and transmit information over at least two generations and though very unusual music can be so deeply rooted in a person's memory that the person is haunted by songs they know but don't recognize. Music is a powerful and wonderful gift of God!

Scripture Reading, Reflection & Sharing

Read Ephesians 5:15-20

What is the Apostle Paul's authoritative prescription for being filled with the Spirit?

1. **Speak** to each other with _____, _____, and _____

APPENDIX D

An Example of Incorporating Spiritual Disciplines in Bible Study (Continued).

2. Sing and make music to the Lord in your _____.

3. Always give thanks to God the Father for _____ in the name of our Lord _____.

Hymnois
The Greek for Hymns
Songs of praise to God!

Is it any wonder that the Apostle Paul specifically calls Christians to utilize psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as a way we can live wisely and be daily filled with the Spirit?

Look at the picture on the screen. Do you remember a picture like this? Did you imagine you were one of the children? Where were you?

Our Opening Prayer Litany and Call to Worship were based on Psalm 57. Mrs. Feil sang a hymn with Ms. Gladys. Do you remember which one? Did you sing “Jesus Loves Me” as a child? Do you remember the very first time you heard it?

As we read the lyrics to “Jesus Loves Me” record what you hear about God and each one of his children?

Verse 1	
Verse 2	
Verse 3	

APPENDIX D

An Example of Incorporating Spiritual Disciplines in Bible Study (Continued).

Hymns usually have stanzas and refrains like a poem, in fact many hymns are Biblical Psalms or poetic works set to music so that there is rhythm, meter, and often rhyme.

No wonder psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs stick in our brains!

Dynamic Worship that included enthusiastic, whole-hearted singing is a Wesleyan Distinctive. We have a rich heritage of hymns in our Wesleyan tradition. The hymns they sang and the hymns and songs we still sing today call people to repentance and give testimony to the life-changing power of God! The corporate worship of early Methodism included theologically rich hymns and songs that focused on God as the source of every blessing and the giver of salvation through Jesus Christ made personal by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.³²⁸ Wesleyan hymns and spiritual songs preserve, teach, and proclaim the core of the Christian faith and model the Apostle Paul's prescription as well as the earliest patterns of praise and thanksgiving present in the worship of the people of God in every age.

Psalmos

*The Greek in the NT for sacred songs.
In the OT Psalms were often
accompanied by stringed instruments.*

The Psalm is a song form, specifically a sacred song or hymn particularly from the Book of Psalms that was traditionally used in Christian and Jewish worship.

Listen to a dramatized version of Psalm 34:

Ancient cultures used psalms, hymns, and cultic songs to praise leaders or the spiritual guide or god that they believed in. Christians are imitators of Christ; we worship God alone; we remember that God is our Creator, Sustainer, and the source of our salvation. Wesley realized Christian hymns and spiritual songs were an effective way to keep God at the center of our corporate worship and the daily living out of our faith. Paul makes a clear distinction in Ephesians 5:15-20; Biblical Psalms, and Christian hymns, and spiritual songs inspired and used by the Holy Spirit of God.

Hymns become a part of the persons who sing them so much so that God brings them to mind when a Christian needs to remember the biblical message and its application to the situation he or she is facing. What we think on is what shapes our thoughts, words, and actions. We are profoundly impacted by what we read, reflect on, and learn. Singing (even if we don't sing well) is one of the most effective ways to memorize anything. Psalm 34 is considered a didactic song, which is a psalm intended to teach from the *hokmāh* (Hebrew word for wisdom). In a similar way Psalm 22 invites its hearers to worship God and participate in the way of the Lord.

³²⁸ Kenneth C. Kinghorn, *The Heritage of American Methodism* (Strasbourg: Editions due Signe; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999).

APPENDIX D

An Example of Incorporating Spiritual Disciplines in Bible Study (Continued).



Think for a moment...What did you read this week? What did you reflect on this past week? What did you learn? How do you think it impacted your thoughts, words, and actions?

Reflect on Psalm 34 and write down your observations taking special notice of...

1) Who God is and the promise that is made to God's people [**Remember**]

Invitation to the hearers-God's people-(vv. 1-11)

The response required of God's people [**Repent/Remain**]
Call for all God's people (vv. 12-14)

The testimony of the psalmist's heart, the reason for his faith and the result [**Rejoice**].
Closing message (vv. 19-22).



The Psalmist's hope in God's promise of deliverance for all His people was realized when God sent Jesus to be the bread of life—the promised One who would save his people from their sins and heal the brokenhearted, (John 6:57-58; Psalm 16:10; Acts 5:31; Jeremiah 23:6; Matthew 1:21). Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed...Today, this scripture has been fulfilled Just as your heard it,” (Luke 4:18-19, 20b-21). This is the good news for each heart!

An invitation to Remember, Repent/Remain, and Rejoice

Closing: What about us?

Can we hear our own heart's testimony in the Psalmist's words? Do we hear the two-fold call to repent (turn from) evil and remain faithful in the way of the Lord? Do we have the assurance that results in a heart that can rejoice in the Lord?

We're going to close with a spiritual song. It's a way for us to pray together as we repent of evil and cooperate with the Holy Spirit of God as we receive forgiveness, restoration, and the confidence that we are God's people.

APPENDIX D

An Example of Incorporating Spiritual Disciplines in Bible Study (Continued)

A people with heart music who remember Who God is, who we are, and what we've got.

Sing: "Spirit of the Living God, Fall Afresh on Me"



Something to do for next time!

- This week look up the reference Scriptures from this lesson and record your observations, insights, and any questions you have on the journal page provided for this lesson.
- See how many psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs you know for each Scripture.
- Write down any times this week when the Holy Spirit of God speaks to you.

Heart Music Journal: Session One

Scripture	Psalm/Hymn/Song	Observation/Insight/Testimony
John 6:57-58		
Psalm 16:10		
Acts 5:31		
Jeremiah 23:6		
Matthew 1:21		
Luke 4:18-19, 20b-21		
Psalm 34		
Ephesians 5:15-20		

- Next week we'll have an opportunity to share our insights and testimonies.
- Key Word This Week: **REMEMBER**

APPENDIX E

Example of Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Experiential Worship Liturgy for Ash Wednesday



Gathering

"In Christ Alone"

Opening Prayer

Lord, Thank You for giving your only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life. We praise You for your mercy; for You did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. We come to remember we are finite and imperfect humans. We recognize our need of Your compassionate touch and merciful forgiveness. We give thanks to You as God the Father, creator of heaven and earth, as God the Son, redeemer of the world, and God the Holy Spirit, our advocate and guide. We ask for You to draw us close to Your heart as we worship here tonight. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

***Call to Worship (Based on Joel 2:1-2, 12-17)**

Leader: Behold, now is the acceptable time. Today is the day of God's salvation.

People: We tremble in fear and anticipation at the nearness of a God so great and powerful.

Leader: Return with all your heart, with weeping, fasting, and mourning.

People: God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Leader: Be reconciled to God, through Christ Jesus, and receive a new and right spirit within.

People: We will fast and pray as an inner discipline, preparing ourselves for faithful discipleship.

Commitment Medley: "Take Time to Be Holy" to "Sanctuary"

Epistle Lesson: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Prayer of Confession (Based on Psalm 51)

Pastor: The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken heart – one filled with regret and remorse – God will not despise. We are a broken people. Trusting in God's mending ways, let us confess our sins before God and one another: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

*Dale Dirksen, "Ash Wednesday: Call to Worship," *re:Worship*, Blog. (2004), <https://re.worship.Blogspot.com/2012/02/ash-wednesday-call-to-worship.html>.

APPENDIX E

Example of Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Experiential Worship Liturgy for Ash Wednesday (Continued).

ALL: Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment. Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me. You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Pastor: Purge us with hyssop, and we shall be clean; wash us, and we will be whiter than snow. Let us hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from our sins and blot out all of our iniquities.

ALL: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain in me a willing spirit.

*A Litany of Confession (Psalm 51) by Amy Loving available from:
<https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2015/02/ash-wednesday-confession.html>

Song of Petition: “Spirit of the Living God Fall Afresh on Me”

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Corporate Prayer of Petition and Assurance ³²⁹

O God, through Jesus’ sacrifice you have restored us as your forgiven children. In his name we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven,

Help us to know you through your inspired Word and to live by it as children in your family.
Hallowed be thy name.

Give us your Holy Spirit to rule in our hearts and use us to extend your kingdom of grace to others.

Thy kingdom come.

Make us zealous to carry out your will as gladly as the angels do, and to conform our will to yours.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Merciful Lord, since you are the provider of all things necessary for our bodies; fill us with trust.

Give us this day our daily bread.

³²⁹ Steve Brown, “Responsive Lord’s Prayer: Based on Matthew 6:9-13,” in “A Worship Service based on The Lord’s Prayer,” *Worship Ideas You Can Use*, September 6, 2008, <https://sibrown58.wordpress.com/2008/09/06/a-worship-service-based-on-the-lords-prayer/>

APPENDIX E

Example of Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Experiential Worship Liturgy for Ash Wednesday (Continued)

Continue to erase our sins and help us gladly to forgive and to do good to those who wrong us.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

We know the devil seeks to destroy our souls and the world lures us to ruin by appealing to the desires of our flesh. Guard us from the poison of misbelief and the trap of unrepented sin.

And lead us not into temptation.

Keep safe our bodies and souls, our property and honor, and above all send the Holy Spirit to preserve our faith in Christ which leads to life everlasting.

But deliver us from evil.

For all these petitions we look to you as King of Kings and Lord of your church.

For thine is the kingdom,

You alone hold the power to grant our requests.

and the power,

We worship you from whom all blessings flow.

and the glory forever and ever.

Relying on Jesus, who cancelled our sins and made us acceptable in your sight, we pray with confidence:

Amen. It shall be so.

Communion and Imposition of the Ashes

Closing Prayer

God, we are marked with ashes, symbols of repentant hearts and contrite spirits. We want to be transformed, to be made new, to learn the freedom of serving no other master but you. Let us heed your call and walk with Christ into the wilderness. Help us to see beneath the surface; not denial and sacrifice, not sin and death, but transformation, new life in Christ. Let us seek to be changed, let us seek to be so transfigured by your power and glory that we desire above all else to be worthy citizens of your new world of peace and justice. Amen.

Benediction

We leave the sanctuary in silence to remember our human need and Christ's atoning sacrifice



Genesis 3:19

APPENDIX F

Example of Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Experiential Devotional Worship Liturgy for Dinner Church Fellowship Based on Chapter IX. First Meditation from *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis De Sales.

Welcome & Gathering

Worship video “Morning Sunrise” by Tim Janis

<https://www.timjanis.com/featured-work-landing>

Opening Prayer [Preparation-Means for Placing oneself in the Presence of God]

*Holy God of love,
all we could ever want or desire
finds its infinite and fullest
expression in Christ Jesus,
but what we most desire to receive
is grace upon grace.*

*Grace to pardon our sins,
and overcome our injustices;
to justify us and to sanctify our souls;
and to bring about the holy change,
the renewal of our hearts
that will enable us to be transformed
into your own blessed image,
in which you created us.*

*Father, work in us
by the grace of Jesus Christ
through the Holy Spirit—one God, now and forever. Amen.*

*Adaptation of a Prayer by John Wesley by January Suyat & Shaun Bati available for use with small groups in The Way Truth Life Pastor’s Resource for Youth and Young Adult Ministry Leader’s Guide published by The Foundry Publisher’s and Nazarene Youth International.

Worship in Song

“Reckless Love of God” (Official Lyric Video)

Bethel Music & Cory Asbury

<https://www.bethelmusic.com>

Reading from the Psalm {Affections and Resolution}

Psalm 51 NIV (Listen to a Dramatized Version of Psalm 51)

Invite the group to close their eyes and sit quietly while the instrumental music plays

Worship in Song

“God, I Look to You”

Bethel Music Instrumental Worship

Jacob Agendia You Tube channel

APPENDIX F

Example of Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness Experiential Devotional Worship Liturgy for Dinner Church Fellowship Based on Chapter IX. First Meditation from *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis De Sales (Continued).

Invite the group to write a prayer to God in the same way that the writer of the Psalm cried out.

Closing/Worship in Song

“Lord, I Need You” (Official Lyric Video)
Matt Maher Available on You Tube

Conclusion: Prayer Requests/Extemporaneous Prayer for the Requests
Closing Prayer as a Community of Faith – “The Lord’s Prayer”

APPENDIX G

Examples of Corporate Prayer Liturgy

Example 1

“Father Forgive”

A Corporate Prayer of Confession

Leader: We know that all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God. We know that in spite of our deepest longings, desires, and efforts we are unable to perfectly reflect your glory and the perfection of Christ.

Assembly: Forgive us for the hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class, Father God, forgive.

Leader: We know that love of the world results in the misuse of material blessings, corruption of our minds, and actions that harm ourselves and others.

Assembly: Forgive the greed which exploits the labors of humanity and lays waste to earth, Father God, forgive.

Leader: We realize that we jealously and resentment creep in when we feel that others are being blessed while we suffer loss or endure trials and hardships.

Assembly: Forgive our envy of the welfare and happiness of others, Father God, forgive.

Leader: We realize that too often we are self-involved and uncaring towards those who are living without daily necessities, those who are under the hand of oppressions, and the many who are dying of disease, perishing in disasters, suffering under persecution, and decimated by acts of violence.

Assembly: Forgive our indifference to the plight of the homeless and the refugee, Father, forgive.

Leader: We cry out for deliverance from evil in all the ways that it presents itself in our world today—every nation, every people group, and in every language.

Assembly: Forgive the lust which uses and abuses the bodies of men and women, Father, forgive.

Leader: Forgive the misalignment of our passions, corruption of our thinking that results in the love of self and trust in our own strength.

Assembly: Forgive the pride which leads us to trust in ourselves, and not in You, Father, forgive.

Leader: We know that if we confess our sins God will cleanse us of all unrighteousness because of his mercy and our trust in Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

Leader and Assembly: in the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Amen.

**Adaptation of a prayer from from the text of A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants by Rueben P. Job and Norman Shawchuck, (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983), 280-281.*

APPENDIX G

Examples of Corporate Prayer Liturgy
Example 2

Prayer for Our Nation

Based on Micah 6:8

Assembly: We recognize we are only one nation among many, but we thank you for the many resources and privileges that you have given America. Teach us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

Leader: Move with your renewing Spirit in the hearts and minds of our President, Cabinet, Senators, and all elected officials. May they not only have the will to seek the common good but also the wisdom to recognize what truly is the common good.

Assembly: Though we are only one nation among many and often have competing ideologies teach us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

Leader: By your Spirit of Truth, discipline the minds of those who edit and control our mass media. Give them the courage to spurn the sensational gossip or violence which tears the fabric of our society, yet to publish the truth that cleanses and builds up.

Assembly: Though we are only one nation among many and are often presented with confusing information and evidence of complicated wickedness to which there seems to be no answer, teach us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

Leader: Come with your compassionate Spirit on all those who help mend the wounds and ills of our society. Those who reach out to street kids and drug addicts, all who care for misfits and outcasts, those who tend the diseased and injured, and all brave souls who try to right wrongs by changing unjust attitudes and laws.

Assembly: Though we are one nation among many, move us to overcome evil with good. Teach us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

Leader: By your reconciling Spirit, bridge the gap between city and country, employed and the unemployed, the wealthy and the poor, the political right and political left, and between the powerful and the weak.

Assembly: Though we are only one nation among many, bind us together to work for the establishment of your kingdom and not our own. Teach us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

Leader: Pour out the Spirit of Christ Jesus upon the congregations of your universal church in this land. Encourage and renew your ministers, pastors, and priests. Raise up prophets and evangelists of small ego and mighty faith. Let this new era be a time of opportunity that is faithfully seized in the name of your True Son.

Assembly: Though we are only one nation among many, heal our land, establish your justice among the nations and in our borders. Teach us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

APPENDIX G

Examples of Corporate Prayer Liturgy Example 2 (Continued).

Leader: Loving God, through Christ Jesus who strengthens us, we commit ourselves to making our country a place where grace, mercy, and peace are not in short supply.

All: In the all-providing, liberating, and revitalising Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen!

Leader: Hear God's promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14 to all who turn to him and humbly pray...

"if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

Join with me as we close with the prayer that Jesus taught the disciples to pray

People: "The Lord's Prayer

*Adapted from "Section II: Enjoying Re-Creation: "For Our Nation Prayers for the Twenty-First Century" in *Jesus Our Future*, Online:1999, https://www.bruceprewer.com/b_p21.htm.

APPENDIX H

The following invitation was emailed to the lead pastors and congregational leaders of the sample churches and to the Georgia District Superintendent. The Dissertation Abstract, NTS Approval form for the Dissertation, and survey link was provided to each participant as an attachment to the email to provide the purpose and context of the dissertation research.

Figure G.1

Dear Pastor (Name of Pastor/Congregational Leader),

I am in the last phase of my DMN Dissertation Research Project. I would like to interview you and your pastoral leadership team. I would also like to invite your congregation and those who attend your worship services and participate in the life of the church to participate in my research through an anonymous survey.

I am attaching my DMN Approval Form and Abstract and DMN Topic Design so that you can see the topic and focus of my Dissertation.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions.

In Christ,
Pastor Susan Beverly
Albany Grace CON
229-206-2991

The following email invitation to participate in an anonymous “Learning from the Church Survey” and link to the survey were sent to pastors, congregants, and participants of the sample churches.

Figure G.2

Hello Fellow Christian Pilgrims!

Will you please take the "Learning from the Church Survey"? I am collecting anonymous responses from congregations of Nazarene Churches in the Georgia District. All the responses will be kept confidential. The purpose is to learn from the members of our congregations in the Georgia District.

In Christ,
Pastor Susan Beverly
Albany Grace CON
229-206-2991

APPENDIX H

The following interview questions were asked of all church leaders whether ordained, licensed, or lay leaders.

Figure G.3

Dissertation Research Interview

Pastor/Ministry Leader:

Church:

Date:

Church Organization Date:

Demographics of the Congregation:

Pastor/Ministry Leader Education Experience:

Years of Pastoral Experience:

How long have you been serving your current church?

Have there been any Pastoral or Leadership Challenges in your current church or Previous pastoral experience?

1. What is the Church?
2. What is the purpose of the Church?
3. How does your church make disciples of Jesus Christ? (Intentional Discipleship Process or Plan in place...yes or no—describe/explain)
4. How are your services planned? (e.g. Lectionary, Topical, Seasonal, Culture-Driven)
5. Is there a worship committee? Worship Leader? Do you and those responsible for leading the worship pray and plan services together?
6. Is there an order of service? (e.g. Bulletin, Set Service Elements and expected Service Order, Projected Order, App etc.)
7. Have you encountered any theological struggles within your congregational ministry context? (e.g. Sanctification, Nazarene Essentials, sacraments, Liturgy, Women's Ordination etc.)
8. What role does music play in worship at your church? (Proclamation of the Word, Congregational Singing etc.)
9. What type of music is utilized in worship at your church? (Hymns, Psalms, Spiritual Songs etc.)
10. How do you understand the sacrament of baptism?
11. How do you understand the sacrament of Communion (Lord's Supper/Eucharist)?
12. What is the role of sacraments in the life of the Christian and the Church?
13. What is the tradition of your local church for observing the sacraments? (e.g. Use of Liturgy, Designated Schedule etc.)
14. Does your church use atmospherics? Describe them and explain the theological reason for utilizing them? (e.g. Specialty Lights, Paraments, Media etc.)
15. What kind of community impact does your church have? (e.g. Compassionate Ministry, Work and Witness, Volunteering etc.)
16. What is the greatest strength of your current church?
17. Do you believe that the corporate worship service is leading your congregation to be Christ-like Disciples? Yes or No. Explain.
18. What aspect of your church's worship is the most life-giving for you as a Christian?

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Approved by

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