ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SALVATION'S SONG:
INSIGHTS INTO SALVATIONIST MISSIOLOGY FROM PRACTICES OF COMMUNAL SINGING AT NEW ADDINGTON SALVATION ARMY COMMUNITY CHURCH

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A thesis in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of Anglia Ruskin University
for the degree of Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology

Submitted: October 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to The Salvation Army United Kingdom with The Republic of Ireland Territory, for enabling my participation in this programme.

Thanks too to the members of the New Addington Salvation Army (NASA) family, who have supported me throughout this process, bearing with me as I have sought to juggle studies alongside my other responsibilities.

Sincere and grateful thanks to the fifteen participants in this research, who graciously and generously offered their time and gifted their insights. It would literally not be the same piece of work without each and every one of you.

Thank you to the team at the Cambridge Theological Federation, in particular Jenny Thorogood and Reverend Dr Andrew Todd for your encouragement and support. Thanks to Professor Emeritus Vernon Trafford, for sharing your vast wisdom and experience. Thanks too to all those with whom I have shared the DProf journey over the years; you will never know how much your fellowship along the way has meant. Particular thanks to Tim Leeson, Bekah Callow and Hannah Bucke, whose friendship and camaraderie helped me over the finish line! It has been a privilege to journey with you for the past five years.

I am entirely indebted to my supervisory team; Reverend Dr John Bradbury who supervised me during the early days, Dr Helen Cameron, whose wisdom, insight and support has been invaluable since the moment she joined the team, and Dr Zoë Bennett, upon whom I have relied as a calming influence and wise guide from the start of this process until the end. I am extremely grateful.

A huge thank you to my parents, family and friends, who supported me and believed that I could do this, even when I wasn't quite so sure. Thanks too to Jef and Julia for the wonderful Herne Bay writing retreat!

Finally, to Emma, Anais and Khaim; I couldn't have done this without your love and support. Thank you for making it possible for me to achieve such a long-held goal.

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ABSTRACT

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PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE IN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

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OCTOBER 2019

This thesis addresses two questions: What is the lived experience of singing for members of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church? What are the implications for Salvationist missiology and practice arising from analysis of that experience? As a Salvation Army officer leading both a church congregation and a community choir, I have a particular interest in these questions as they pertain to the role of singing in mission.

The research methodology is qualitative, with participants creatively exploring their relationship to singing within The Salvation Army. Participants were purposively selected, encouraging the involvement of those least likely to put themselves forward. The thesis also considers extracts from my research journal, reflections on which provide insights into the themes explored and conclusions reached. Participant data is brought into critical dialogue with the conceptual framework, which draws upon the theoretical perspectives of missiology and ethnomusicology.

Notable themes emerging from the participant data are 'belonging', 'emotion', 'spirituality' and 'transformation'. Reflection upon the missiological literature resulted in the proposal of five missional 'ways of being' which are; the facilitation and nurture of community; the empowerment for and engagement in ministry; the integration of internal structures with external action; the authentic communication of the truth; the embodiment and enactment of Christian hope. These five 'ways of being' are considered in light of the participant data, and singing's contribution to these aspects of mission is demonstrated.

The research demonstrates that singing provides a 'third-space' for the facilitation and nurture of community; its impact on wellbeing empowers singers to participate in ministry; singing generates a virtuous circle of benefits which motivate, equip and enable singers for outward actions; singing can make biblical truths accessible, encourage new self-understanding, and embrace non-Christians within the embodied witness to the gospel; singing's psychological and social benefits offer present comfort and glimpses of future hope. The research concludes that the more holistic one's view of mission, the more blurred the boundaries between the church and the world, particularly concerning participation in the missio Dei. The thesis ends by considering the implications for my own practice and the wider implications for The Salvation Army arising from the research.

Key words: Holistic Missiology, Ethnomusicology, Salvation Army, Singing, Choir

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INTRODUCTION

As a Salvation Army officer (minister) I am privileged, alongside my wife Emma, to lead The Salvation Army in New Addington. For the 11 years that we have led the corps (church), I have also led SingCR0nise Community Choir, which is a ministry of the corps in the local community. Leadership in these contexts has afforded me unique insights into singing's significance for many people. A desire to understand more fully the missional significance of practices of singing in the choir and congregation led to the research presented in this thesis.

Chapter one sets out the context of the research with reference to my own background and the demography of New Addington. The local church context is introduced with particular reference to the period during which Emma and I have led the church. Finally, singing and mission within the wider Salvation Army are considered with supporting reflections upon extracts from my research journal. Chapter two outlines the conceptual framework and considers the key theoretical perspective of missiology. This chapter proposes five missional 'ways of being' arising from the missiological data. The conceptual framework is explored further in chapter three, which discusses the theoretical perspective of ethnomusicology as it pertains to the specific research questions under consideration. Chapter four details the research methodology and method, with participant data presented in chapter five. Chapter six discusses the themes arising from the data and in chapter seven these are brought into critical dialogue with the five missional 'ways of being' identified in chapter two to offer conceptual conclusions. Chapter eight considers the implications for practice and contribution to knowledge arising from the research findings.

CHAPTER ONE
CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

This chapter provides the contextual background to the research. I locate myself as researcher, outlining aspects of my upbringing and my current role as a Salvation Army officer. The context of New Addington, the geographical locus of the research, is introduced, as is New Addington Salvation Army Community Church, the community from which participants are drawn, and the church I currently lead. Since the thesis seeks insights into Salvationist missiology from local experiences of singing, both mission and singing in the context of The Salvation Army are introduced. Extracts from a journal, which I kept during the research process, are referenced throughout the thesis. In this chapter, journal extracts outline my own experiences of and reflections upon the themes of mission and singing within the context of The Salvation Army.

Locating the Researcher

'Research in practical theology is undertaken by particular humans in specific historical and social contexts' (Bennett et al, 2018:13). These historical and social contexts contribute to the formation of opinions, allegiances, biases and blind-spots, providing the kaleidoscopic lens through which the researcher perceives the world. Self-reflexivity can help the researcher to be mindful of some of these formative influences, but others may only be perceived by those encountering the research as an outsider. Paul Weston (Sexton and Weston 2016:61) notes the importance of understanding how an individual or tradition arrives at certain ways of thinking, in appreciating the beliefs of the individual or tradition. This section offers insights into the particular historical and social contexts which have shaped me as a researcher.

It is the mid 1970's. Flash cards carpet the living room floor and my two-year-old self hops from one to the next, as my mother sings at the piano and I await the moment the music stops, when I can turn over the card beneath my feet and read the word written upon it. This, one of my earliest memories, evidences that singing is embedded deep within my psyche, playing a part in my earliest education. As I grew up within The Salvation Army, singing featured heavily. From Sunday School choruses, to rousing songs of praise, to slow, emotive hymns, which still remind me of long Sunday evening services. Aged seven I joined the children's choir, known in The Salvation Army as 'The Singing Company'; a name replete with theological implications. 'Company' reflects the military metaphor which permeates the denomination. In The Salvation Army, singing is not (just) about

entertainment, learning or even worship - it is more than the soundtrack to the battle, it is a means of fighting The War. This theology is expressed in the 1893 edition of The Army's sheet music publication series The Musical Salvationist;

> The great end a [singing] Brigade should set before it is that of directly spreading salvation. The making of sweet sounds, the joining in a sort of club for musical pleasure, the banding together of a select company of Soldiers for the mere pleasure of greater social intercourse – such can never be proper objects for a Brigade. (1893:161)

One hundred and twenty-six years later, in a social and historical context very different to the Victorian era in which it was written, this statement conflicts with my own views concerning singing, however, the line which follows it is one with which I can agree: 'Judge all efforts by the spiritual results'. This thesis aims to do just that, though whether the original author's understanding of 'spiritual results' would match my own is questionable.

A lifelong, fourth generation Salvationist, I have been a Salvation Army Officer (ordained minister) for over sixteen years and have thirty years' experience leading sung worship in varied contexts. I have written several songs which are used within The Salvation Army and beyond. I have over ten years' experience leading choirs, and currently lead SingCR0nise Community Choir which is open to people of all faiths and none and which sings songs with both Christian and secular lyrics. Singing also plays a key role in our gathered worship at The Salvation Army in New Addington. One first-time attender commented after the service that the songs had played an important part in her experience that day, and I believe this to be the case for many who have joined our church family.

Another relevant area of professional context is my teaching role at William Booth College. For several years, I taught a class on the use of songs in worship, which I also adapted for use with Methodist Ordinands at Wesley House, Cambridge. In delivering these classes, I witnessed the topic of singing stimulating conversation and controversy, suggesting that there is considerable appetite for discussion and debate concerning this issue, not least amongst people training for ministry.

New Addington

For the past eleven years, my ministry context has been within the community of New Addington in the London Borough of Croydon. New Addington South and New Addington North wards (formerly New Addington and Fieldway wards) are among the most economically deprived Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the United Kingdom, in the bottom 10% and 5% respectively. A 2015 report by Croydon Council, compiled using data from the 2011 Census states:

> New Addington is an area of high unemployment with high proportions of adults with no or low qualifications…the Fieldway ward has high unemployment and many families are on benefits.

The same report cites the levels of educational deprivation in the wards.

> The top 5% most deprived LSOAs in this domain are predominantly located in Fieldway and New Addington... Historically, attainment at KS2 and KS4 has been lower from students from New Addington and Fieldway compared to the rest of the borough. The underlying data also suggests that there may be relatively fewer students staying on in education after 16 years of age, particularly in the LSOAs based in New Addington.

The report concludes that across the borough of Croydon, 'Fieldway is the most deprived overall' with New Addington only slightly less deprived at 4th of 24 (Fallon 2015: 5,6,12).

Croydon Council's 2015 Annual Health Report states that New Addington has the highest incidence of serious mental illness in the borough (1.3% of all adults). The same report names Fieldway as having the highest proportion of adults claiming out of work benefits in the borough (17.2%). The report notes that depression and anxiety are 4 to 10 times more common in those unemployed for more than 12 weeks, and that mental health problems are 3 times more common in children in households with the lowest 20% of income (Croydon.gov.uk 2015:17). It is unsurprising therefore that mental wellbeing is an issue of concern in New Addington.

New Addington Salvation Army Community Church

It is within this context of deprivation that New Addington Salvation Army Community Church serves. Not all members come from poorly educated or materially deprived backgrounds by any means, but the communities within which the church ministers must

engage with both the physical realities and the stigma associated with such socio-economic conditions. Music, and in particular singing, has been central to many of the forms of outreach in which the church has engaged, which have sought to bring much-needed uplift to the community.

The Salvation Army began ministering in the post-war Croydon overspill wards of New Addington and Fieldway in the late 1950's. Whilst its capacity to serve the community has fluctuated over the decades, it has never been a large church, and by 2008, following substantial decline to barely sustainable numbers, The Salvation Army's divisional (regional) leadership reached the decision to reimagine the corps in terms of a new form of missional outreach. At this point, Emma and I were appointed to lead the corps, and this set of circumstances provided us and the half-dozen or so, mainly older female members, with a 'change or die' mandate, which most (if not quite all) of the existing congregation embraced with varying degrees of understanding and engagement. During our first few months, we were joined by three or four other Salvationist families who were keen to explore new ways of being and doing church. These families brought the skills, resources and commitment necessary to begin the process of re-establishing a viable congregation to engage with the community's diverse needs.

Of the many changes during those early days, two were of primary importance. Firstly, the content of the Sunday worship gathering changed dramatically and secondly the concept of worship extending beyond that gathering became a central teaching theme. The changes to Sunday worship content were primarily intended to create an environment which was more welcoming and engaging to people without experience of church, in particular younger people (the median age in New Addington was 34 at the 2011 census - www.ukcensusdata.com/new-addington-e05000157#sthash.DjS0aEUi.dpbs - accessed 8/10/19). Alongside the inclusion of videos and interactive forms of worship, singing was central to this change. Prior to our arrival, the church had no regular musical accompaniment, which dramatically impacted the experience of singing in worship, particularly when combined with the numerically diminishing congregation. The arrival of musicians and additional singers therefore had a profound impact upon the Sunday worship gathering. Not only did the overall musicality improve, but the nature of the songs utilised became more diverse, with contemporary worship songs gradually introduced alongside traditional hymns (which took on a more contemporary 'feel' when accompanied by keyboard, guitar, bass and eventually drums and flute). Whilst the songs themselves were not necessarily directly responsible for the period of numerical growth which ensued, it would be fair to say that many people seeking a new church or exploring church for the

first time, factor the music and in particular the singing, into their decision-making when it comes to choosing or attending a church – a fact borne out by participants in my research and anecdotal evidence from conversations with other congregants.

Locating Mission Within The Salvation Army

Having considered my personal background and the professional context within which I currently work and which forms the basis of enquiry in this research, the following introduces Salvationist perspectives on mission. Throughout the thesis extracts from my research journal, and my subsequent reflections upon them, provide contextual background to the research. The entry below illustrates the contemporary dialogue around mission within The Salvation Army which is considered in greater detail in chapter two.

> **November 2017 – Plenty of Charitable Organisations**
>
> 'The Salvation Army should not simply be doing good works - there are plenty of charitable organisations that can do that perfectly well. We should be in the business of transformation.' ('Amen! Hallelujah!') 'As General John Gowans wrote; 'I believe in transformation, God *CAN* change the hearts of men!' We are in the business of the transformation of *HEARTS*!' ('Amen!' Hallelujah!)
>
> Rather than joining the chorus of approving 'Amens', my heart sank at these words. The leader of The Salvation Army UK and Ireland Territory had just articulated about as narrow an understanding of mission as was possible. The inferred reduction of vital and valuable aspects of The Army's work to sub-missional 'do-goodery' troubled me deeply. My Father-in-Law was, at that very moment, in Uganda visiting wells dug by The Salvation Army to alleviate suffering and sickness and prevent needless deaths. Were such wells dug solely with the intention of providing opportunities for evangelism? I sincerely hoped not. They had intrinsic value as means of changing and saving lives. What could be more transformative than that? Try living with filthy water for a few decades and see whether your life is more transformed by a well or by the Good News that Jesus died for your sins.
>
> Closer to home, a few days later, my son and I walked the streets of London and were moved by the number of homeless people cowering in doorways, shivering and vulnerable. Did they need Salvation? Absolutely - from the wind, the rain, the cold, and the violent inhumanity of their daily reality. If they needed saving from sin, that must surely include the structural, societal sin that saw them slumped on

> a pavement in the first place and the ambivalence of those of us who walked by without a care. This is not to denigrate the missional imperative of helping people to see Jesus, but rather to recognise that Jesus seems to want me to see them.
>
> In Matthew 25 Jesus admonishes those who ignored the poor, the prisoners, the sick and the lonely and praises those who met the pressing physical needs of such people. No mention of evangelistic agendas - just simple acts of humanity, which Jesus credits as righteousness (Matthew 25:46). Those whose destiny is punishment according to Jesus' parable, seem shocked that their lack of regard for their fellow men and women has sealed their eternal fate in such a way. They called Jesus 'Lord', and as such expected to spend eternity with him. Jesus, it seems, however, has an altogether different measure of recognition of his Lordship and it strikes me that it is found in precisely the kind of things that 'plenty of charitable organisations can do'. I suppose it is just as well that they can, if The Salvation Army is intent on redirecting its efforts towards the pursuit of some supposedly higher end.

This reflection presents a somewhat caricatured interpretation of the missional conversation within The Salvation Army, and the reality is more nuanced than the polemic above suggests. It does, however, offer insight into a central point of contention and debate within Salvationist missiology: Is doing good, ever good enough? John Swinton and Harriet Mowat begin their book *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* with a quote from Kunst which asserts; 'The Church does not exist fundamentally to meet needs; in its being, the Church, like Christ, exists to glorify the Father' (2006:3). The frustration evident in the journal entry above reflects two contrasting interpretations of Kunst's words. If the two parts of the statement are understood as unrelated clauses, a logical conclusion is that the meeting of needs falls outside the Church's primary remit. However, an alternative conclusion, in light of Matthew 5:16 (let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven) and 1 Peter 2:12 (Live such good lives among the pagans that…they may see your good deeds and glorify God) is that whilst the Church, like Christ, exists to glorify the Father, the Father is glorified when the Church, like Christ, meets the world's needs. This conclusion leads to a holistic understanding of mission, which is considered in the next chapter.

Locating Singing Within The Salvation Army

Within The Salvation Army, singing has historically served the purposes of performance, proclamation, proselytisation, pedagogy, praise and pastoral ministry. William Booth instructed Salvationists to 'Sing so as to make the world hear' (Salvation Army Song Book 1986: Foreword) and arguably, for Booth, the singing of Salvationists primarily served the purpose of leading unbelievers to God. In many Army songs there is an insider-outsider dynamic evident, with the singers (insiders) communicating the ontological difference between their lives and those of the listeners (outsiders), which is the reception of salvation in Christ (see Appendix D).

Throughout its history, The Salvation Army has developed a strong musical tradition, notably centred around its brass bands and choirs. Whilst playing a brass instrument is a skill to be learnt rather than an innate human ability, singing is arguably a far more accessible activity. However, except for congregational singing, choral singing within The Army has traditionally been reserved for those who not only declare a Christian faith but also sign either the Junior Soldier's Promise (children) or the Covenant of Soldiership (adults) (Appendices E and F). This is no longer universally true, and there are several Salvation Army corps (churches) with community choirs, and growing numbers of corps are adopting or considering open-access policies for their 'Sections' (Singing Company, Songster Brigade and bands). My own experiences running a community choir at the corps I lead, and operating an open policy in our worship band, convince me that an orthopraxy of closedness runs counter to a holistic missiology. It is timely, considering evidence demonstrating singing's role in the promotion of emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual wellbeing (Judd and Pooley 2014), to encourage, and theologically defend the transition from a predominantly presentational to a participatory model of singing within The Army. This resonates with a holistic missiology and locates singing as a prime deliverer of its aims.

As stated earlier in this chapter, alongside my research among participants, my own journal reflections serve as interpretive guides to my thinking. One such reflection is offered here to contextualise that which follows in the thesis.

> **October 2017 – Uneven Song**
>
> I attended Evensong at King's College, Cambridge today. As I entered the building, organ music filling the air, my eyes adjusting to the dappled candlelight, I gazed upwards at the stunningly intricate and breathtakingly high vaulted ceiling, and outwards, drinking in the technicolour wonder of the stained-glass windows,

and a sense of expectation grew within me. This was, I hoped, going to be a sublimely peaceful and truly worshipful experience.

My own church couldn't be more different to King's chapel's ancient traditions and ornate beauty. My congregation are more likely to arrive to a cacophony of chaos than the blissful strains of an organ voluntary. 'Both expressions have their merits', I tell myself as I process silently down the centre aisle and settle into a pew in eager anticipation of what's to come, finding it hard to remember what those merits might be in my own hectic Sunday morning environ.

A lady robed in ecclesial (or is it scholastic?) garb, and speaking with the kind of quiet authority that commands undivided attention, informs first one side of the chapel, and then the other, that the A4 sheet I'd found on the pew next to me would be our guide for the next 45 minutes of worship. I pore over it in the dim light, searching for clues as to our journey and destination. Sit. Stand. Kneel…Kneel? But there are no cushions where I'm sitting and the floor is hard and cold. Kneel? I'm not sure I'll manage the walk back to my hotel if my knees are subjected to such cruel and unusual punishment! Anticipation of the kneeling part casts a spectral shadow over proceedings, until, like a participant in a reverent Mexican wave, I find myself standing for the entrance of the choir and clergy.

What follows is much as I expected. We stand - the choir sings. We sit. A prayer is offered. We stand - the choir sings. We sit. A reading from the Old Testament, I don't remember which, but it was one of the Prophets. We stand - the choir sings. We sit. A reading from the New Testament - the first chapter of James, verses 12-18 as I recall. We stand - the choir sings. My laminated guide informs me that the kneeling part is imminent. All Kneel. No one kneels; at least, not in Tourist Class, where I'm sitting. Those members of college, choir and clergy seated in the ecclesial equivalent of Business and First lower themselves in graceful dignity onto their waiting prayer cushions, their grateful knees no doubt uttering their own 'Thanks be to God' upon impact. The rest of us, myself included, perch awkwardly on the edge of our seats, unsure precisely how we have rebelled en masse, or who our rebel leader might have been, but grateful nonetheless that our knees are spared the stone-cold floor.

It is then I realise. I am a spectator and not a true participant in this act of worship. Sure, I'm fascinated and engaged and occasionally moved by what I'm witnessing,

> but in the same way one might experience a movie or play. I'm not one of the actors, I'm just a member of the audience. Of course, for some of those seated around me, this 45-minute interlude may well have represented another tick on their Things To Do In Cambridge list, rounding off a day of punting and sightseeing before heading out for dinner. But not for me. I'd come hoping for more, what, I don't know, but something more than I experienced.
>
> I emerged into the early evening rain in a state of quiet reflection, the organ strains fading with each step. It was Evensong but I hadn't sung a note. My voice had been entirely silenced from the moment I walked into the chapel until the moment I said thank you to the man with the collection basket as I left. In a building designed with the most sublime acoustics imaginable, I had been unable to sing. And I felt robbed; as though the choir had flaunted their privilege; rubbing it in my face with their 'I will sing of your strength...I will sing of your love...I sing praise to you...' (Psalm 59) I. I. I. Well lucky them, because I had been afforded no such opportunity. All I could do was listen as their voices were raised in praise. All I could do was spectate.
>
> I wandered, melancholically through the rain. Having abandoned the idea of my umbrella which was no match for the gusty breeze, I took my chances with the elements. At least the rain fell on the singer and the silenced without discrimination. I found myself walking past a church. Its lights were on, and as I drew closer I began to recognise the music coming from within. A worship band was rehearsing, perhaps its songs for the coming Sunday, when they would lead those gathered in hearty renditions of praise. Liberating my voice, I sang quietly, under my breath, as I slowed my pace to join with the band in their song; 'This is amazing grace; this is unfailing love. That you should take my place, that you would bear my cross. You laid down your life that I could be set free; Oh Jesus I sing for all that you've done for me'.
>
> Maybe I did get to add my voice to the uneven song - eventually. (And perhaps, amid the cacophonous chaos, my own congregation will sing it too, this Sunday!)

I include this reflection not to denigrate other forms of worship or ways of being and doing Church, but to illustrate a central theme in this thesis. In the particular context of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church, participation is of greater importance than professionalism or performance when it comes to the role of singing in mission. We shall

see that the participants in the research process cite a sense of belonging as one of the key benefits they derive from singing. Their belonging is neither contingent upon musical talent, formal membership or confession of faith, and my thinking around mission has been profoundly influenced by their responses to this inclusive approach.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined my own background and that of the research context. I have located myself historically, denominationally, experientially and theologically, demonstrating my relationship to both singing and The Salvation Army. The research context is introduced with reference to its demography and internal dynamics. Mission and singing are introduced as key dialogue partners, which will be considered in greater detail in the following chapters, which outline their significance within the conceptual framework which underpins the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF MISSIOLOGY

Introduction

The development of the conceptual framework began with the three papers which constituted the first stage of the Professional Doctorate programme (Appendices A, B and C). In analysing the theological and hermeneutical dynamics inherent in songs I have written over several years, I identified a recurrent connection between faith and action. In Paper 1, I wrote of my songs; 'an examination of my lyrics might reveal an underlying desire to direct the singer towards an intellectual embrace and practical outworking of social justice, which I present as biblically ordained and essentially non-negotiable for anyone seeking to take the implications of the biblical narrative seriously' (Appendix A page 21). Recognising that this theological slant is reflective of both Practical Theology and my denominational context, I go on to write; 'In several of my songs, I seek to use scripture as a liberationist might, as "an emancipation proclamation" (Spencer 2012:56) and an invocation to those singing to appropriate the words personally and to become embodiments of the sentiments on their lips'. In writing this paper I began to clarify the trajectory of my thinking regarding my research, shifting from an initial position of open-ended questioning regarding singing's role in the Church, to a specific enquiry into the relationship between singing and mission. This shift in thinking led to the development of the research aim explored in this thesis, which is to gain insights into Salvationist missiology from practices of communal singing in the particular local Salvation Army context I lead. To this end, the conceptual framework encompasses the relationship between Missiology and Ethnomusicology.

Analysis of local mission is understood within the broader denominational context, which is located within the wider context of the Church's mission and ultimately the Missio Dei. Similarly, singing in the local context is considered according to insights from the discipline of Ethnomusicology, and the field of Christian Congregational Music Studies. Participant experiences are assessed in light of these theoretical perspectives and also speak back into the respective disciplines in both confirmation and challenge.

The Research as Practical Theology

'Practical Theology is not undertaken in a vacuum or for its own sake or theoretical beauty' (Bennett et al 2018:159). Practical Theology seeks answers in order to inform and transform people and practices through the 'development of a transformative and

illuminating understanding of what is going on' (Swinton and Mowat 2006:v), for the purpose of contributing to 'human flourishing and understanding' (Bennet et al 2018:167). The fundamental relationality at the heart of practical theological research, requires sensitivity to its potential impact upon all stakeholders; participants, audience and researcher. As a practitioner theologian, involved in local church leadership, I undertook research not only to derive insights into particular academic fields, but to gain a greater understanding of my own practice through deeper appreciation of the experiences of those in my sphere of influence. In this thesis, I seek not only to offer my own reflections, but to allow the voices of the participants to be heard, recognising their legitimacy as sources of theological insight into the research questions.

Challenged by Practical Theology's lofty aims, I occasionally questioned the validity of my own project and the scope and importance of its potential impact. One such moment of questioning led to the following reflection in my journal.

> **October 2016 – A Moment of Doubt**
>
> My research matters if;
>
> - I treat it as an opportunity to give voices to the voiceless in my congregation.
> - I receive what they offer as 'gifts' to be treasured and not data to be analysed.
> - It helps me to deepen my understanding of why I do what I do and who I am.
> - It helps to enrich the experiences of others both in and beyond my immediate locality.

Stemming from a moment of self-doubt, this journal entry helped me to clarify the 'why' of my research. Whilst I'd given much thought to the 'what, who, how, when and where', the 'why' eluded me momentarily, resulting in a crisis of purpose. Others' research seemed dynamic and worthwhile, whereas my own felt, to me at least, somewhat banal and insignificant. It was a reflection upon a fellow student's research into the maltreatment of Luo widows in Kenya which prompted this crisis of confidence in my own work; how could my reflections on an activity as commonplace as singing ever seek to measure up to something so profound? The source of my momentary despair became the source of my inspiration as I looked, not at the content of my colleague's research, but at its underlying philosophical purposes, which I realised we shared. Both research enterprises sought to identify and listen to marginalised voices and to treat their offerings with dignity and

respect. We both sought to deepen our understanding of our professional practice and personal identity. The goal of both pieces of work was to enhance and enrich understandings in order to transform practices. These realisations restored my self-confidence, underscored the fact that central tenets of practical theology research were present in my work, and enabled me to understand my potential contribution to Salvationist missiology, which, whilst different to the plight of the Luo, nonetheless has wide-reaching implications for belief and practice which could prove transformative both for Salvationists and those they seek to serve.

The Research in Relation to the Theoretical Perspective of Missiology

'Practical Theology is a fundamentally missiological discipline which receives its purpose, its motivation and its dynamic from acknowledging and working out what it means to participate faithfully in God's mission' (Swinton and Mowat 2006:27). This thesis seeks insights into singing's role in that faithful participation in mission, and to that end what follows in this chapter provides a theoretical context of mission, particularly within The Salvation Army, within which subsequent reflections and data analysis will be considered. A variety of interlocutors feature in this consideration of missiology, either by virtue of their significance to the missiological landscape in general, The Salvation Army in particular or my own understanding and practice. Whilst far from exhaustive, these voices help to position me within the discipline.

Karl Barth, Lesslie Newbigin, David Bosch, Tom Wright and Chris Wright represent key influences not only on the landscape of contemporary theology and missiology but upon my own theological education and development. Their perspectives on the mission of the Church flowing from the mission of God, and the relationship of that mission to Jesus' life, ministry, death, resurrection and return, formed the foundation of my missiological education and shaped my thinking and practice. The teaching of Mission when I was training to be a Salvation Army Officer was heavily influenced by David Bosch's *Transforming Mission*. Bosch provided a theological grounding and language for what for me had previously been 'gut feelings' concerning mission. Growing up as a child of mixed Jamaican and British heritage, I was aware of issues of racial prejudice and injustice, even within the Church. As the sibling of a disabled brother, I further understood from an early age that faith had to be 'worked out' within the context of significant challenges to simplistic interpretations of God's nature and will. I learnt to complexify issues of faith as they were worked out within the contexts of disability and racial (in)justice. This complexification led me to conclude, early in life, that any understanding of the Church's role in the world which focussed solely upon narrow, personal, 'spiritual' salvation to the

exclusion of the wider issues which impact people's lives, was inherently flawed. As a Salvationist, I was aware that the Church to which I belonged was motivated by love for God, to serve the world, and yet even within that context, I was mindful of theological tensions within the movement concerning the nature of the salvation which was central to its very name and identity. In Bosch, and through him, Karl Barth - 'the decisive Protestant missiologist in this generation' (382) - I found a theological foundation for a holistic understanding of salvation as 'something that realizes itself in this life' and which therefore 'determines the scope of the missionary enterprise' (403). Through Bosch I was also introduced to the work of Lesslie Newbigin, whose characteristics of the community founded by Jesus shape my thinking later in this chapter concerning 'ways of being' in God's mission.

During this formative stage in my missiological education, I was aware that Lesslie Newbigin was speaking directly into aspects of The Salvation Army's missional activity through his friendship with an individual who had influence among those who were keen to see the reinvigoration of The Army's missional focus. This awareness afforded Newbigin's work even greater significance in my own missiological development. The holistic soteriology and missiology found in Barth, Bosch and Newbigin resonated with the Biblical Theology of N.T. Wright, which influenced the Biblical studies elements of the Officer Training course, placing the life and ministry of Jesus within the context of God's cosmic plan for creation, rather than simply as a means of personal salvation, a theme continued in the work of Chris Wright. My ministry as a Salvation Army Officer is grounded in the holistic soteriology and missiology of which Barth, Bosch, Newbigin, N.T. Wright and Chris Wright are key proponents, and thus these voices feature in my work.

During the preliminary stages of my research, it became clear that the theme of mission would loom large in my work. At this point, I was directed to the work of Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, who provide a missiological perspective with which I find resonance as a practitioner, due to their focus upon both the Church's inner life (Mission ad intra) and its outward expression (Mission ad extra), both of which are aspects for which I have daily responsibility within my own local context. These categories of ad intra and ad extra provide a helpful framework for understanding the implications for the Church as it engages in God's mission, and their significance in my own thinking is demonstrated later in the chapter, in the context of the development of the missional 'ways of being' which are considered in the thesis.

Robert Beckford engages theologically with the issues of urban life, and his ground-up approach has particular appeal for me as a practitioner seeking to engage with the challenging issues faced within my own ministry context. Whilst Beckford's inclusion is far from tokenism, I declare an intentionality regarding my engagement with a theologian writing from a Black-Caribbean, British perspective, reflective of my own. Cathy Ross speaks into the theme of hospitality as it pertains to the Church's participation in mission. This is particularly significant in relation to the role of the community choir in providing a place of welcome and inclusion as a 'third-space' (Male and Weston 2019:91ff) (a concept considered in later chapters). The Salvation Army's historical context is explored with reference to its founders, William and Catherine Booth, whose influence upon Salvationist missiology is inescapable. Contemporary Salvationist missiology in the UK is considered in light of mission and vision statements and initiatives, contributions to the UK with the Republic of Ireland's 2013 Mission Symposium and reference to pertinent publications, doctoral theses and first-hand experiences. Engagement with such a diverse range of theologians, missiologists, biblical scholars and practitioners, is consistent with the interdisciplinarity inherent within Practical Theology, which draws upon a range of voices in engaging with the lived experience of faith.

Missio Dei

The Salvation Army's Handbook of Doctrine states that;

> Our mission is God's mission. God in love reaches out through his people to a suffering and needy world, a world that he loves. In mission we express in word and deed and through the totality of our lives the compassion of God for the lost. (2010:303)

Whilst not explicitly using the term 'missio Dei', this statement unequivocally places the mission of the Church within the context of the mission of God. In my experience, when speaking of mission within The Salvation Army, the term missio Dei is frequently used and thus it is pertinent to consider its meaning at the outset.

The Church of England publication *Mission-Shaped Church* defines the missio Dei as 'the ongoing mission of God's love to the world' (2004:20). This is a clear and succinct definition, provided the mission is understood as being God's, rather than the activity of the Church. Such an understanding of mission as God's loving restoration and transformation of the world, reflects a shift in missiological thinking which occurred during the mid-twentieth century. Where mission had previously been primarily understood either

soteriologically (the saving of souls from damnation), culturally (the introduction and promotion of Western 'Christian' ideals), ecclesiastically (often in terms of denominational expansion) or salvation-historically (the transformation of the world into the kingdom of God), certain theologians, notably Karl Barth, began to articulate mission not as an activity of the Church but as an attribute of God. As the Father sends the Son, and the Father and Son send the Spirit, so the Father, Son and Spirit send the Church, which is invited to participate in, and be an instrument for the mission of God (missio Dei) (Bosch 2011:399). Thus understood, the Church engages in the missio Dei as it represents 'God in and over against the world', 'points to God at work in world history and names him there', and, as is echoed in the extract from the Handbook of Doctrine, participates 'in the movement of God's love toward people' (400-1). This missiological perspective dispenses with triumphalist, expansionist, ecclesiocentric perspectives of mission as something which the Church 'does to others', in favour of an understanding of the mission of God as 'setting the tone for a way of being in our world' (Kandiah in Sexton and Weston 2016:255), characterised by looking for where God is working in the world and joining him there (Edge and Morgan 2017:4). God is love, and his nature is inextricable from his activity; 'God is what he does' (Stratis in Sexton and Weston 2016:28). The missio Dei can therefore be summarised as the expression of God's loving nature in and to the world, in which the Church finds its identity and purpose through participation. Kandiah's description of the missio Dei as 'setting the tone' for the Church's 'way of being' in the world (2016:255) is helpfully non-prescriptive regarding specific activities. However, God's very nature calls the Church into corresponding loving action; 'anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love' (1 John 4:8). The Church is thus compelled towards ways of being and doing which express and embody God's love in the world.

Such an understanding of the missio Dei 'setting the tone' for the Church's life in the world resonates with the missiology evident at The Salvation Army's nascence. John Read, writing about Catherine Booth, who he describes as 'the principal architect of the Army's theology' (2013:212), asserts that for Catherine;

> …the Church was an incarnational expression of the life and mission of Christ…not an end in itself, but a means to an end, that being the fulfilment and completion of the mission of Christ (207).

Thus, whilst not so named, missio Dei thinking arguably shaped The Army from the outset and still finds a place in formal articulations of Salvationist missiology today.

Salvation Army officer Jason Davies-Kildea, in his doctoral thesis (2017:33), contends that this belief in The Army's calling to express God's love in action, stemming from its roots in Wesleyan holiness, proved to be 'essential in [The Army] resisting the extremes of the fundamentalist/modernist conflicts of the early twentieth century' which might otherwise have pulled the movement apart across the social and evangelistic divide. Whilst The Army has sought to resist such extremes, tensions continue along this contested border to this day.

Such tensions have no place in the missio Dei. God's mission is to restore creation and reconcile relationships, both human and divine, and the Church exists for the sole purpose of serving the missio Dei via engagement in a vast array of activities and attitudes which characterise the 'missiones ecclesiae' (400). The missio Dei is inherently holistic, affecting 'all people in all aspects of their existence' and embracing 'both the church and the world' (Bosch 2011:401), and therefore the Church's participation in God's mission must be equally expansive and all-encompassing. As Bosch succinctly notes 'there is mission because God loves people' (402), and one might add that there is the Church for precisely the same reason.

Statements of Missional Intent

As the Church seeks to find its identity and purpose as an expression of God's love, so it establishes parameters within which to ensure the veracity of its participation in the missio Dei. These are often articulated as Mission or Vision Statements, and The Salvation Army is no exception in this regard.

The Salvation Army is a global organisation which is divided into geographical territories whose leadership has discretion in contextualising the mission. The international mission statement reads:

> The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in his name without discrimination.
> (www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/Mission - accessed 9/10/19)

The Salvation Army United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland's Mission Statement reads:

> Called to be disciples of Jesus Christ, The Salvation Army United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland exists to save souls, grow saints and serve suffering humanity.

The Territory's Vision Statement is similarly succinct:

> As disciples of Jesus Christ, we will be a Spirit-filled, radical, growing movement, with a burning desire to lead people into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, actively serve the community, and fight for social justice. (https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/our-mission-vision-and-values - accessed 7/10/19)

Despite their concise expression, the UK with the Republic of Ireland Territory's statements leave room for a range of interpretations regarding the specific meaning of each element and the relationships between them. Whilst the Mission Statement's three-fold mantra of 'save souls, grow saints and serve suffering humanity' is memorable, it is not unproblematic. Unexplained, the first clause suggests that Salvationists themselves are called to save souls, rather than such action belonging to God alone. This notion is rooted within The Army's history, with Read contending that for Catherine Booth;

> …salvation or restoration is achieved, humanly speaking, by soul saving; that is by addressing conscience, an advocate for the moral law in every human heart. Soul saving is an active partnership with God the Holy Spirit who alone convicts people of their sins. (2013:117)

Thus understood, 'soul saving' is an activity akin to being 'fishers of people' (Matthew 4:19), with the Church having, not a salvific role, but a mediatory one, persuading people of their need to seek salvation in the one in whom it can be found. Such language, however, must be approached with caution, lest it be understood as apportioning undue soteriological significance to human activity. Lesslie Newbigin warns that where the Church speaks of its own mission rather than the missio Dei, the temptation for justification by works arises, alongside a corresponding, erroneous sense of obligation to 'save the unbelievers from perishing' (1989:117). Newbigin unequivocally asserts that it is not the Church but 'God who acts in the power of his Spirit, doing mighty works, creating signs of a new age, working secretly in the hearts of men and women to draw them to Christ' (119).

Misunderstanding the Church's role in soul-saving becomes even more problematic when that task is articulated or implied as being of greater significance than the growing of saints or the serving of suffering humanity. Where the salvation of souls is narrowly interpreted as spiritual conversion (as seems often to be the case among those claiming 'saving souls' as a principal missional characteristic), such a theology can result in the '[bifurcation of] Christian mission into a primary, spiritual mandate and a subordinate (often muted) social mandate' (Kirkpatrick in Sexton and Weston 2016:195). This subordination of the social mandate of mission is noted by Davies-Kildea, writing of The Salvation Army in Australia;

> The Salvation Army is involved every day in saving people from homelessness, family violence, addictions and many other forms of deprivation and disadvantage. However, these 'salvations' consistently take second place to more 'spiritual' activities, if they are even acknowledged as being in the same category. (2017:125)

Such hierarchizing of mission imperatives fails to engage with a holistic understanding of the missio Dei, wherein 'each baptized Christian and each local congregation is a primary agent in God's mission through practices of *evangelism, compassion, and social justice*' (Sherron George 2013:287 *emphasis added*). This integrated missiology is articulated in The Anglican Church's Five Marks of Mission, which are;

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

(www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx - accessed 1/6/19)

The Five Marks originated at a 1984 Anglican Consultative Council, and once developed, were adopted by the General Synod of the Church of England in 1996. They have since formed the basis of holistic approaches to missional thinking and practice both within the Church of England and beyond. Whilst they are 'neither a perfect nor a complete definition of mission' they nevertheless 'form a good working basis for a holistic approach to mission' (Walls and Ross 2008:xiv). The Five Marks encourage an integrated approach to

understanding mission beyond proclamation with a view to conversion, encompassing practical, loving action at the individual, societal and environmental levels within the scope of God's missional concern. They provide a helpful language by which an organisation such as The Salvation Army might reflect upon its commitment to social action within the remit of mission, and it is unsurprising that, at least on an informal, conversational basis, they are frequently referenced as a framework for missiological thinking within The Army.

A similar quest for a language of holistic mission characterises the journey undertaken by the Lausanne movement. Since the 1970's the Lausanne movement sought to galvanise Evangelicals (indeed, all Christians) around a mission of the 'whole Church' taking 'the whole gospel to the whole world' (www.lausanne.org/content/whole-gospel-whole-church-whole-world - accessed 8/10/19). This is also expressed as 'the whole gospel for the whole person for the whole world' (Walls and Ross 2008:46). In October 2010, 4,200 Evangelical leaders from 198 countries gathered in Cape Town for the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation. The resulting commitment articulates both biblical convictions and calls to action regarding the Church's participation in the mission of God. This mission begins with God's love for the world and is based fundamentally on love. The Church's participation therefore embraces love for the Triune God, love for God's word and the way of life it teaches, love for humanity (with particular reference to the 'poor and suffering'), love for creation and love for the Church itself.

In seeking to contextualise traditional Evangelical perspectives concerning personal salvation within a more expansive, biblically-underpinned expression of God's mission and therefore the mission of the Church, the Cape Town Commitment provided a framework of mission which resonated with conversations taking place in many churches, and not least within The Salvation Army, concerning holistic mission. In 2013, The Salvation Army in the UK held its first Mission Symposium to consider some of the questions raised by the Cape Town document. In his contribution to the Symposium, David Taylor asked;

> …how can we [The Army] renew an understanding of integrated mission – uniting, displaying and telling – in which we hold worship, social service and evangelism together in local, loving, missional community? (Taylor in Mitchinson ed., 2013: Loc.3291).

Taylor's question alludes to a disconnect (in some quarters) between The Army's theology and practice of integrated mission and the opinions of some concerning the legitimacy of

such integration. Both The Cape Town Commitment and the ensuing Salvation Army Mission Symposium affirmed that the missio Dei is inherently integrated and holistic in both theory and practice. The word holistic implies a breadth to God's mission which necessitates equally broad-ranging manifestations of engagement, and the word integrated suggests an interrelationship between different manifestations of missional participation. In her keynote address to the Symposium, Karen Shakespeare asserted, 'Salvation is holistic - God's mission, from which our mission is derived, encompasses the whole of life' (Shakespeare in Mitchinson ed., 2013: Loc.329). In speaking of holistic salvation, Shakespeare negated any notion of 'holistic' approaches to mission being employed for the sole purpose of the achievement of the narrow goal of individual, spiritual salvation (from sin). Whilst not denying this aspect of salvation, she broadened the scope and efficacy of salvation to embrace not only the whole person, but the whole of creation.

Shakespeare's contention resonates with the perspective of Chris Wright, chair of the Cape Town Statement Working Group. Wright asserts that at its heart, the Church's involvement in God's mission comprises being sent to engage in and with the all-encompassing breadth of God's concern for the world (2010:23). He cites the range of activities to which biblical individuals were sent; Joseph to save lives in a famine, Moses to deliver Israel from slavery, Elijah to influence politics, Jesus to preach, proclaim freedom, heal the sick and so on. Wright concludes that these and other examples provide a biblical mandate for an equally broad range of contemporary activities to which those participating in God's mission might be sent. He includes within the remit of mission, famine relief, action for justice, teaching and healing, amongst other things (24). Both Shakespeare and Wright follow in a similar vein to David Bosch, who, reflecting upon the biblical origins of holistic missiology, articulates Luke's understanding of salvation as pertaining not just to some future state, but to 'the termination of poverty, discrimination, illness, demon possession, sin…economic, social, political, physical, psychological, and spiritual suffering' (2011:403). Many such issues were discussed during The Army's symposium, and some will also be considered in later chapters with particular reference to singing's impact upon them.

Two years after the Mission Symposium, The Salvation Army in the UK and Ireland launched a new missional strategy, known as TIDE (Transformation, Integration, Discipleship, Effectiveness). The TIDE priorities are articulated as follows:

> …bringing about lasting **Transformation** in lives and communities blighted by spiritual and social poverty; engaging every aspect of our movement in our **Integrated** mission of physical, emotional and spiritual health for every person; nurturing and equipping people in their faith to commit to lifelong **Discipleship**; and **Effectiveness** in how we support and deliver mission. (www.salvationarmy.org.uk/files/transforming-livespdf/download?token=WeNtmK-x - accessed 7/10/19)

For reasons beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss, the TIDE strategy received a mixed reception within The Army, not least due to its timing coinciding with major administrative changes within the Territory. However, its highlighting of integrated mission, encompassing physical, emotional and spiritual health for all, and its reference to both spiritual and social (by which I understand economic, relational and aspirational) poverty, reaffirmed The Army's commitment to mission and salvation as holistic concepts. However, the TIDE strategy was launched two years prior to the conference which inspired the journal entry 'Plenty of Charitable Organisations' found in chapter one, demonstrating that this issue continues to represent a fault-line in Salvationist missiology and these seismically active 'theological plates' have the potential to shake the ground on which The Army stands.

The Historical Background to Salvationist Missiology

Paul Weston notes that 'the theological enterprise is nurtured not just by the interrelatedness of its inner and logically constituent parts but also by the power of the historical contexts in which it is developed' (Weston in Sexton and Weston eds., 2016:61). The development of The Salvation Army's missiology must therefore be understood within the context of its history, and against the backdrop of mission thinking in the late nineteenth century. Citing The Army's early work as an exemplar of social innovation from the religious margins, Paul Bickley writes; 'The Salvation Army pushed against the religious and social establishment of the day and began serving the poor in ways that would even now be considered bold' (Bickley in Ross and Smith eds., 2018:182). The Salvation Army was born into a world in which the motivation for mission was characterised primarily by the responsibility of the individual missionary to share the gospel, and the responsibility of the 'lost soul' to receive it, in order to escape the eternal punishment awaiting the unrepentant sinner (Bosch 2011:295). The Salvation Army's famed social ministry among Victorian England's poorest, might suggest a departure from this solely spiritual understanding of mission, to embrace the more holistic approach to

which Bickley alludes. Indeed, in the preface to his social manifesto 'In Darkest England and the Way Out', William Booth described The Salvation Army's mission as 'a huge Campaign carried on for many years against the evils which lie at the root of all the miseries of modern life' (1890: Preface). One might even sense echoes of the Social Gospel in Booth's words, but within a few paragraphs he closes the door firmly to any such interpretation;

> I propose to go straight for these sinking classes, and in doing so shall continue to aim at the heart. I still prophesy the uttermost disappointment unless that citadel is reached...If we help the man it is in order that we may change him…I see the folly of hoping to accomplish anything abiding, either in the circumstances or the morals of these hopeless classes, except there be a change effected in the whole man as well as in his surroundings…
>
> …even in failing of this my ultimate design, I shall at least benefit the bodies, if not the souls, of men; and if I do not save the fathers, I shall make a better chance for the children...My only hope for the permanent deliverance of mankind from misery, either in this world or the next, is the regeneration or remaking of the individual by the power of the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ. But in providing for the relief of temporal misery I reckon that I am only making it easy where it is now difficult, and possible where it is now all but impossible, for men and women to find their way to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.
> (1890: extracts from Preface)

Booth's approach might be described as pragmatic evangelicalism. Clearly aware of the possibility for his Salvation Army's mission to be misinterpreted as simply 'making life better for the poor and needy' or even embracing such amelioration within the goals of mission or the parameters of salvation, he made explicit his rationale for incorporating such activity into his modus operandi. Pragmatically, the meeting of human need served a dual purpose; firstly, it provided opportunities to share the gospel with the individual being helped; secondly, it enabled the needy person to hear the gospel by quelling the noise of their rumbling belly or shivering bones so that they could then go on to experience salvation in Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Booth's theology was not untypical of his time. Citing Bebbington, Kirkpatrick notes that in the late nineteenth century 'evangelical social action was largely justified theologically through the removal of "obstacles to the progress of the gospel" or "eliminating social sins that contravened divine commands"' (Kirkpatrick in Sexton and Weston 2016:194-5). A cynical reading of Booth

might see social justice as a Trojan horse by which a narrow and solely spiritual form of salvation was brought to the doors of the most vulnerable at their point of physical need. However, that would be to ignore Booth's genuine desire to achieve the fundamental transformation of both the physical and the spiritual circumstances of the poorest and most vulnerable, as evidenced by his impassioned call to the nation; 'Let us arise in the name of God and humanity, and wipe away the sad stigma from the British banner that our horses are better treated than our labourers' (1890:282). Indeed, Booth's indictment of the wider Church concerning this matter was even stronger;

> It is no better than a ghastly mockery – theologians might use a stronger word – to call by the name of One who came to seek and to save that which was lost those Churches which in the midst of lost multitudes either sleep in apathy or display a fitful interest in a chasuble. Why all this apparatus of temples and meeting-houses to save men from perdition in a world which is to come, while never a helping hand is stretched out to save them from the inferno of their present life? Is it not time that, forgetting for a moment their wranglings about the infinitely little or infinitely obscure, they should concentrate all their energies on a united effort to break this terrible perpetuity of perdition, and to rescue some at least of those for whom they profess to believe their Founder came to die? (1890:15ff)

The theological conservatism evident in the preface to *In Darkest England* stands in dialectical tension with the frustration with the ecclesial status quo evident in the tirade above. Booth called his Army and indeed the nation, to engage with the realities of poverty and its deafening effects upon would-be hearers of the gospel. Through social action and calling to account The Powers That Be, those engaged in mission could both secure a degree of earthly salvation for those battered by the evils of this life, *and* introduce men and women to Jesus, who guarantees eternal salvation in the next. Booth's rallying cry to Church and State to save men and women from the 'inferno of their present life', comes tantalisingly close to articulating the alleviation of bodily suffering and the challenging of societal ills as salvific acts. Indeed, his use of the language of 'evil' when speaking of issues such as poverty and unemployment suggests that he viewed the fight against them in theological terms. However, the unequivocal language and theology of the preface to *In Darkest England* tempers any fully holistic interpretation of Booth's soteriology, suggesting that for William Booth, social action, whilst undeniably important and part of the Church's calling, ultimately served the purpose of communicating and facilitating the reception of a greater salvation of the soul.

For all of William Booth's passion for social justice, it was arguably his orthodox evangelical theological convictions, particularly concerning the fate of the unrepentant and therefore unsaved soul, which ultimately fuelled his missional ambitions. According to this theological standpoint 'eschatology, particularly in its more individual perspective, is both motive and object of missionary proclamation' (Bevans and Schroeder 2004:44). Booth was by no means unique in his marriage of the social and spiritual imperatives for the Church's ministry. Bevans and Schroeder note that among those who viewed salvation as 'the avoidance of eternal punishment', missionary work was 'almost always linked to some kind of charitable work, but this was not seen as witnessing to or bringing God's salvation already now breaking into the world, but as a process of "softening people up" ' (2004:44). This would be an unfair oversimplification of Booth's theology, but nevertheless, it was ultimately the desire to save ignorant people from eternal punishment in the fires of hell which fuelled William Booth's views on The Army's mission.

Not only can such soteriology and eschatology drive mission but it can also shape how it is carried out. How salvation and humanity's need for it are understood fundamentally impacts how and why the Church engages with the world it considers to be in need of such salvation (see Bosch 408ff). Whilst this is demonstrated clearly in William Booth, who unashamedly embraced and was driven by this relationship between soteriology and missiology, it was equally true of The Salvation Army's co-founder, Catherine Booth, the 'visionary architect of the Army's theology' (Read 2013:212). Catherine was convinced of the Church's calling not only to communicate the truth of the gospel, but to persuade and convince unbelievers of its veracity. Embracing the phrase 'aggressive Christianity' to describe her missiological approach, Catherine promoted both evangelistic proactivity and ecclesial adaptability. Read describes her methodology as 'addressing an embodied and encultured whole person, in whatever way is necessary to speak to their heart, soul, and mind' (2013:141). In order to engage with such people, Catherine believed that;

> …the Church must be a full expression, visible and tangible, of the life and mission of Christ…embodied in men and women…speaking in loving accents… sympathising with their sorrows, bearing their burdens, reproving their sins, instructing their ignorance, inspiring their hope, and wooing them to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. (Read 2013:139)

Such language tempers extreme interpretations of Catherine Booth's 'aggressive Christianity', and whilst one might argue for a crescendo in her rhetoric, culminating at 'the

fountain' of salvation, it is evident that for Catherine, The Army's mission to 'save souls' nevertheless required engagement with the whole person; body, mind and spirit.

Holistic Approaches to Soteriology and Missiology

Given its historical origins it is perhaps unsurprising to note The Salvation Army's twenty-first century tensions concerning holistic or integrated understandings of mission, in which 'social action and evangelism are both essential and indivisible components' (Kirkpatrick in Sexton and Weston 2016:195). However, that such tensions persist within the context of a denomination renowned for its social activism, suggests that there is still work to be done in articulating a holistic soteriology robust enough to undergird the holistic missiology for which I and many other Salvationists advocate. Davies-Kildea asserts;

> Where dualistic beliefs prioritise the health of the soul over the life of the body, an eschatological emphasis on reward or punishment in the afterlife eschews action to change the present in favour of waiting for future bliss. The only important task for those who assume this theological mantle is the saving of souls, in order that as many as possible might make it to heaven. There is little room for social ministries in this worldview unless they directly facilitate evangelism, for it would be better to be homeless and have accepted Jesus than to be housed but ultimately destined for hell. (2017:125)

Davies-Kildea describes a theology which finds justification in a particularly individualistic soteriology, predicated upon the fundamental need for personal salvation from personal sin, with the ultimate goal being eternal, personal spiritual salvation. Bosch is unequivocal regarding such a soteriology;

> …it is totally untenable to limit salvation to the individual and his or her personal relationship with God. Hatred, injustice, oppression, war, and other forms of violence are manifestations of *evil*; concern for humaneness, for the conquering of famine, illness, and meaninglessness is part of the *salvation* for which we hope and labour. (2011:406)

Chris Wright similarly challenges dis-integrated understandings of salvation. He decries 'Mission that claims the high spiritual ground of preaching only a gospel of personal forgiveness without the radical challenge of the full biblical demands of God's justice and compassion', concluding that 'mission without social compassion and justice is biblically deficient' (2006:288).

The death and resurrection of Christ defeated death, and consequently life has both present significance and future continuity. Whilst salvation pertains to eternal life, eternal life does not begin at the point of death, rather, because of Christ's victory over death, humankind can live in the reality of eternity in the here and now (Newbigin 1995:105). The gospel therefore has implications for body and spirit, and mission, rightly understood, engages both. According to Newbigin, there can be no 'preaching of the 'text' of the gospel except in an explicit relation to the 'context' of the contemporary world' (135). The acceptance of the call to conversion is manifested in the following of the life and teaching of Jesus as seen in the New Testament. Bodily and spiritual expressions of love are inextricably linked; love God with heart, soul, mind and strength and love neighbour as self (Mark 12:29). This greatest of commandments both defines the individual Christian calling and that of the Church, whereby acts of justice and compassion are not mere precursors to 'real' mission, they are inherent to it. In the words of Newbigin; 'acts by which the Church tries to share in and to bear the pain of those who suffer, are not an escape from the real business of fighting for liberation, or an alternative to it: they are an authentic part of the victory of the Lamb' (1995:108).

Evangelicalism, within which The Salvation Army locates itself, at least corporately, has long had, and still has in some quarters, a complex relationship with the concept of mission as it pertains to social justice and compassionate action. Newbigin articulates the complexity thus:

> …there are those who place exclusive emphasis on the winning of individuals to conversion …numerical growth…becomes the central goal of mission. Action for justice and peace in the world is a secondary matter…The gospel…is about changing people, not about changing structures…The emphasis here is exclusively on the salvation of the individual soul and the growth of the Church. The primary task is evangelism, the direct preaching of the gospel in words – spoken or written. Action for social justice and peace may be a way of drawing people to hear the gospel, but it is not an intrinsic part of the gospel itself.
>
> …there are those who condemn this as irrelevant or wrong. The gospel, they will say, is about God's kingdom, God's reign over all nations and all things…The central responsibility of the Church is…to seek the doing of God's will of righteousness and peace in this world…What is needed…is not evangelistic preaching but action by Christians along with all people of goodwill to tackle the

> terrible problems of the nation, to free the oppressed, heal the sick and bring hope to the hopeless.' (1989:135 & 136)

Newbigin's identification of the two 'camps' of mission theology is disturbingly accurate, leading him to declare; 'If I am not mistaken, the conflict between these two ways of understanding mission is profoundly weakening the Church's witness' (1989:136). Newbigin calls for a rediscovery of the full, holistic gospel – the 'new reality which the work of Christ has brought into being'– which necessitates the 'community whose members are deeply rooted in Christ as their absolute Lord and Saviour' challenging, in both word and deed, the powers which enslave the world. Newbigin asserts that whilst it matters 'supremely that every human being should have the opportunity to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour' and the gospel can never be 'identified with any particular project for justice and peace, however laudable' it is nevertheless 'impossible to give faithful witness to the gospel while being indifferent to the situation of the hungry, the sick, the victims of human inhumanity' (1989:136). If the hope the Church proclaims ignores such evils, then it is no hope at all.

The Cape Town Commitment offered a response to this theological conundrum, and represented a renewed articulation of Evangelical convictions concerning mission as a holistic concept, encompassing both spiritual and socio-political aspects of salvation. The Commitment states;

> The context of all our mission is the world in which we live, the world of sin, suffering, injustice, and creational disorder, into which God sends us to love and serve for Christ's sake. All our mission must therefore reflect the integration of evangelism and committed engagement in the world, both being ordered and driven by the whole biblical revelation of the gospel of God. (2011:28)

As noted above, these themes were expounded upon during The Army's 2013 Mission Symposium which engaged with the issues raised by the Cape Town conference. Contributors to the symposium, from both within and beyond The Salvation Army, promoted holistic understandings of mission, as evidenced in Karen Shakespeare's aforementioned keynote address. Graham Tomlin, speaking into the conversation from a non-Salvationist perspective, described 'signs of love and compassion…bringing life to drabness, feeding the hungry or bringing sight to the blind' as means of testifying to God's saving work in Christ in that they 'display the very nature of God who moves out of himself in compassion and love' (Tomlin in Mitchinson ed., 2013: Loc.576).

However, notwithstanding such articulations of integrated understandings of mission, holistic missiology continues to be an issue of contention within The Salvation Army. There remain those who, despite acknowledging diverse forms of social action carried out under the banner of mission, view them as subordinate to (if not in the service of) the highest goal of mission; the salvation of souls, defined as individuals' personal acceptance of and repentance from sin; belief in the atoning death of Jesus; and acceptance of the resurrected Christ as Saviour. This elevation of spiritual salvation in a hierarchy of missional activity and purpose flows from an eschatology and soteriology constructed around the concept of eternal punishment for those who die without accepting Jesus. Whilst earthly sufferings are worthy of alleviation, they are nothing when weighed against eternity in hell, so the logic goes. The centralisation of such a belief can fuel a dis-integration of mission, as bodily and spiritual *salvations* and the various means of addressing them, are pitted against one another in a battle for pre-eminence. At best, this creates a continual vacillation between primacy being given to the realms of the spiritual and the physical in mission. At worst, it results in the relegation of activities aimed at the amelioration of the physical sphere into a 'lower league' of mission, if indeed they are considered missional at all. In conversation about this with a Salvation Army Officer who has spent most of their officership working in Salvation Army social centres, it became apparent that the fallout of this theological warfare is felt at a personal and not just a philosophical level. This Officer felt that their ministry was viewed as 'less than' by some within The Army, who did not apportion 'missional' value to actions which were not intentionally undertaken with the express purpose of achieving an individual's spiritual salvation. This officer embraced as a missional achievement - an 'exodus moment' in which hope was glimpsed - successfully encouraging a surly teenager to take down his hoodie to engage in conversation. The significance of this moment was dismissed by some however, except in so far as it represented a 'step in the right direction' towards the ultimate goal of spiritual salvation.

This failure to recognise the inherent missional value of such 'exodus moments', except as movements towards spiritual salvation, is at odds with the holistic missiology expressed by the TIDE statement and in the Handbook of Doctrine and expanded upon at the 2013 Mission Symposium. It is nonetheless the case that there are those within The Army who persist in espousing a 'fire and brimstone' missiology which official forums have moved beyond. The divergence of missiological and soteriological perspectives within The Army is recognised in retired Salvation Army officer Philip Garnham's doctoral research. Garnham notes that the theology espoused by increasing numbers of Salvationists leads

them to alternative motivations for mission other than the fear of hell. Garnham argues for a broadening of the scope of potential soteriological perspectives;

> …in order to allow Salvationists who are no longer persuaded with regard to the doctrine of the endless punishment of the wicked, the integrity of a faithful continuity between what we say we believe and what we actually believe… Salvationists should be allowed to live and work beyond the dark shadow of the weakly grounded doctrine of the endless punishment of the wicked and find alternative motivations which will help fund our continued mission to speak out and live out the good news of the gospel with neighbour and nation. (Garnham 2018:2)

Garnham's research found that 21st century Salvationists in the UK are increasingly ambivalent towards the idea and concept of hell and many are not motivated by it missionally as their 19th and early 20th century counterparts were. And yet, it seems at an organisational level there is a desire to uphold doctrinal orthodoxy, which, in The Army's case, includes a belief in the 'endless punishment of the wicked'. Although many Salvationists have found creative ways of accommodating this doctrine within a range of theologies of hell, as long as The Salvation Army's Eleven Articles of Faith (Appendix G), culminate in endless punishment for the 'unsaved', any practice or project which does not, either by design or desire, expressly pursue salvation from hell, is at risk of being deemed 'sub-missional', irrespective of how positive it may be for the created order. Missional success or failure will be judged according to the number of souls saved from a future hell as opposed to the number of lives saved from present ones. This is problematic not only because of its disheartening impact on people engaged in forms of mission such as my colleague officer described, but also because it embeds disingenuity into any project, practice or relationship which does not explicitly declare its underlying soteriological intention.

Newbigin addresses this relationship between soteriology and missiology head on:

> …I am not placing at the center (sic) of the argument the question of the salvation or perdition of the individual. Clearly that is part of what is involved, but my contention is that the biblical picture is distorted if this is put in the center.
> But it may be asked: if it is true that those who die without faith in Christ are not necessarily lost, and if it is also true that those who are baptized Christians are not necessarily saved, what is the point of missions?... In answer to that question, I would refer again to the word of Paul which I quoted earlier, 'I do it all for the sake

> of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings' (1 Cor. 9:23)… When Jesus sent out his disciples on his mission, he showed them his hands and his side. They will share in his mission as they share in his passion, as they follow him in challenging and unmasking the powers of evil. (1989:127)

Where salvation from eternal perdition acts as a key (or sole) motivator for mission, the step is a small one to the rejection of other missional acts as superfluous distractions from the goal of soul-saving, or as means to such an end. Newbigin, much like Barth before him, recasts mission as the Church living out its faith, motivated by the desire to be in the 'third-space' (Weston in Male and Weston 2019:103) where Christ is found; the liminal places where the kingdom of God encounters the places, people and structures awaiting the liberating reign of the King.

Tom Wright similarly argues for a holistic, integrated soteriology and missiology. He urges the Church to 'recover from its long-term schizophrenia', and asserts that the split between 'saving souls' and 'doing good in the world' is a product, not of the Bible or the gospel, but of the cultural captivity of both within the western world. (2007:277) Wright argues against the stories of Jesus' life and teaching (the feeding and healing of bodies, minds and souls) as mere 'extended introductions' to the 'main event' of the Passion, which locate Jesus historically in order to validate the soteriologically 'important' part of the gospel. Rather, he contends that these accounts describe how Jesus launched the kingdom of God which was accomplished in his death and resurrection (2012:401). Any reimagining of the kingdom for today must equally avoid dismissing the feeding and healing of bodies, minds and souls as mere extended introductions or means of achieving the 'main event' of an individual giving assent to a creed or accepting Jesus as Saviour. Such acts, rather, are significant and integral to the mission of God and therefore of the Church, in that they claim ground for the kingship of God. In the gospels, God, through Jesus, is becoming king, not only as he dies and rises from death, but also as he walks on water, heals the sick, feeds the hungry and raises the dead. In what is sometimes called the 'Nazareth Manifesto' (Luke 4:18–19), Jesus articulates his mission as encompassing the preaching of good news, especially to the poor and marginalised, the practice of compassion towards those in need, the pursuit of justice for the oppressed and the announcement of God's love and favour towards humankind. As Sherron George asserts; 'In order to embrace the fullness of God's holistic mission, we must honour each distinct part of it' (2013:287). God's kingdom comes through such restorative and transformative acts as the agents of the king can imagine and enact. These actions then, are not means to an end, but are integral to the advancement of the Kingdom in themselves. Robert

Beckford also stresses that the life and teaching of Jesus is as significant to Jesus' (and therefore the Church's) mission, as his death and resurrection. For the Church to engage in the missio Dei, it must therefore embrace its prophetic missional calling, which is at once interventionist, holistic, liberating, di-unital (acknowledging and living with inherent tensions) and spiritual (2004:116ff). It is important to note that none of these assertions neglect or downplay the spiritual aspect of salvation. Rather, they describe a rich, holistic soteriology in which all aspects are interconnected and cannot rightly be isolated or ranked in terms of importance. It is within such a context of broad-based soteriology and missiology that singing will be considered in later chapters.

Five Missional 'Ways of Being'

A common theme among the ways of thinking holistically about mission described above is that of expansiveness. Since 'all our mission flows from the prior mission of God' (Chris Wright 2010:24) the Church is invited to participate in the missio Dei in ways which are as wide, long, high and deep as the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:18). Sherron George contends that 'without the full participation of "all the saints" in their complementary mission practices, we can never comprehend "the breadth and length and height and depth" of "the love of Christ" and "be filled with all the fullness of God"' (2013:287). Embracing such expansive potential can attract what Chris Wright refers to as 'the old knock-down line…if everything is mission, then nothing is mission' (2010:26), which challenges holistic missiology. I have been on the receiving end of this knock-down, and responded, echoing Wright, that on the contrary, 'if everything is mission', that is, a conscious participation with God in the expression of God's love in the world, then indeed every activity undertaken within that context not only can be, but is, mission.

Of course, such an expansive view of the Church's potential participation in the missio Dei leaves room for an equally expansive range of responses in practice. Since the scope of missional participation might be limited only by human imagination, I have found it helpful in my own thinking and ministry to consider certain 'ways of being' which could be said to characterise the Church's participation in the missio Dei. The 'ways of being' which I have identified as being particularly significant in this regard are; the facilitation and nurture of community; the empowerment for and engagement in ministry; the integration of internal structures with external action; the authentic communication of the truth; the embodiment and enactment of Christian hope. Each 'way of being' is considered in detail below, but first, their origins and context are outlined.

The concept of 'ways of being' concerns the nature and purpose of the Church, rather than focussing upon particular activities. It allows for the embracing of an almost infinite range of specific activities as the Church lives out its participation in the missio Dei. The language of 'ways of being' echoes Kandiah's description, considered earlier in this chapter, of the missio Dei 'setting the tone for a way of being in our world' (Kandiah in Sexton and Weston 2016:255). Kandiah resists apportioning specific activities to the Church engaged in God's mission, referring instead to the ontological nature of mission as a 'way of being' which ought to encompass all aspects of life.

The five particular 'ways of being' considered below are similarly all-embracing, finding expression in the whole of life, not only within the parameters of what might traditionally be considered as 'Church'. They are derived from my own experience of local church leadership and from the literature with which I have engaged, and are the result of the harmonisation of several complementary perspectives on the place of the Church in the missio Dei. Bevans and Schroeder's descriptions of the ad intra and ad extra aspects of missional participation highlight the Church's calling to 'ways of being' which are integrated and holistic, whereby the Church's mission 'to itself' is carried out for the betterment of its participation in God's mission to the world. Like Kandiah, Bevans and Schroeder contend that 'mission is not a task that is one among several in which the Church should be engaged' but rather 'belongs to the very purpose, life and structure of the Church' (2004:290). In describing the Church's participatory role in the missio Dei, they write;

> The Church, first of all, must work to become what it is called to be and what it is in its deepest nature. The Church needs constantly to work on the quality of its community, the vitality of its spiritual life, the integrity of its internal structures – this is mission ad intra, its mission to itself. The internal quality, vitality and integrity are not, however, cultivated for the Church itself; they are cultivated, rather, so that the Church can be a credible and attractive witness to the gospel in the world. As the Church lives as a model of what it preaches and works for in the world, it carries out its mission ad extra – to the world. (2004:56)

The above describes the life of the Church as it seeks to participate in the missio Dei. The Church must be a healthy, vital community of integrity in order to be a credible participant in mission. This notion resonates with Newbigin's assertion that Jesus 'did not write a book but formed a community'. Newbigin highlights six key characteristics of this 'Christ community', which might be summarised thus: The Church should be a community of

praise, truth, action, ministry, mutual responsibility and hope (1989: 227ff). As I reflected upon these qualities and considered how they might be manifested within the context of the ad intra and ad extra callings of the Church, the five missional 'ways of being' outlined below took shape. These 'ways of being' do not represent a definitive framework or schema for mission, but rather serve as points of reference for further reflection and consideration regarding the Church's participation in the missio Dei. The five 'ways of being' (the facilitation and nurture of community; the empowerment for and engagement in ministry; the integration of internal structures with external action; the authentic communication of the truth; the embodiment and enactment of Christian hope) are considered in turn below.

The Facilitation and Nurture of Community

This 'way of being' reflects Bevans & Schroeder's insistence that the Church must constantly seek to improve the quality of its community. It also draws upon Newbigin's description of the Church as a community of mutual responsibility. As noted above, Newbigin famously said that Jesus 'did not write a book but formed a community' (1989:227). In its participation in the missio Dei, the Church is both the extension of the community which Jesus formed, and is also tasked with its nurture. David Bosch similarly advocates for the importance of community, noting that we live in a world 'in which people are dependent on each other and every individual exists within a web of inter-human relationships' (2011:406). As participants in the mission of the triune God, who is the very quintessence of community, the Church and its members, are called to stand against the prevailing culture of individualism, to bear witness in word and deed, to the essential interconnectedness of humankind.

Throughout its sixty-year history, The Salvation Army in New Addington has sought to recognise its place within the web of relationships which form the community of New Addington. For the past decade, each Christmas, the church has performed a free pantomime, attended by over 1200 people, many of whom would be unable to afford to attend a professional performance. This event has become central to the life of the local community, but for all its benefits to the wider community, it has arguably benefited the church as much, if not more, not least in terms of its galvanising impact upon relationships within the congregation. The pantomime is but one example of the reality that when the local church seeks to nurture and serve the local community, its own life and internal community is similarly enhanced. When the internal community of the church functions positively, for the benefit of the wider community it seeks to serve, so the church best reflects the communal life and mission of the Triune God. As Catherine Booth said,

Christianity must come to the world 'embodied in men and women' (2013:139) and thus effective community is essential for effective mission.

The facilitation and nurture of community requires the Church to embrace the prophetic practice of hospitality, by which it reflects the all-embracing welcome of the 'God of hospitality' (Ross and Bevans 2015:83). Cathy Ross describes the Church as the place 'where we welcome the stranger with doors wide open where there is a place for everyone' (73). My own church's strapline 'A Church for Everyone' echoes this aspiration. This open-door policy is not without risk and contains inherent tensions, as the welcomed ones bring inevitable change and challenge to the place and people of welcome, disrupting the status quo. However, rather than being something to be feared, this change is essential in nurturing and growing the community of the church, as 'we need the stranger to challenge us, to help us see ourselves as others see us, to call us out of our complacencies and Christian ghettos, to offer us new worlds, to break us out of our cosy domesticities' (Ross and Bevans 2015:70).

The Empowerment for and Engagement of Individuals in Ministry

This 'way of being' encompasses both the 'ad intra' and 'ad extra' imperatives of mission described by Bevans and Schroeder, particularly concerning the vitality of spiritual life to which they refer (2004:56). Investment in the spiritual lives of individuals not only benefits them personally, it also plays a key role in enabling the effective ministry of the Church. A church's capacity for participation in the missio Dei relies upon the wellbeing and preparedness of its congregation for engagement in ministry. It is therefore incumbent upon the Church, recognising the role of all members in ministry in its many forms, to pursue ways of being which empower individuals for such engagement.

From its inception, The Salvation Army has embraced a belief in The Priesthood of All Believers. Whilst this has not always been adequately reflected within The Army's hierarchical, militaristic structure, its essence lies at the heart of Salvationist theology. Catherine Booth asserted that in The Army 'We give to every consecrated man, woman, and child liberty for the exercise of their individual gifts' and in an 1898 address, William Booth declared 'I ordain every man, woman and child here present that has received the new life. I ordain you now' (Read 2013:173). To be a Christian is to embrace a call to ministry. The Church participates in mission to the extent to which its members are equipped, empowered for and engaged in ministry. Ministry in this context is wide-ranging and encompasses such tasks as contribute to the advancement of the kingdom of God, however indiscernibly. Newbigin describes the Church as the place in which individuals

should be ‘trained, supported, and nourished in the exercise of their parts of the priestly ministry in the world’ (1989:230). In this context diversity is celebrated and individuals are empowered to participate in Christ’s royal priesthood in the world according to their varied gifts and callings.

The Integration of Internal Structures with External Action

This ‘way of being’ relates directly to Bevans and Schroeder’s call for due consideration to be given both to the internal structures and systems which contribute to a church’s effective functioning and the external purpose for which those structures and systems exist. The Church’s ‘Mission ad intra’; ‘the quality of its community, the vitality of its spiritual life, the integrity of its internal structures’, must be integrated with and in the service of its ‘Mission ad extra’; its living out of ‘what it preaches and works for in the world’ as the Church participates in the missio Dei (2004:56).

Whilst Bevans and Schroeder assert the need for the internal functions of the Church to find external expression, many people’s primary association with the Church is the context of gathered worship, and this is clearly a vital aspect of the Church’s life. However, it is essential for the internal life of the Church to be integrated with and result in external action, beyond the Sunday gathering, and the Sunday gathering must not create an artificial demarcation between ‘worship’ and ‘real life’. The theological method of Robert Beckford is helpful here in articulating the importance of an integrated approach.
For Beckford, the theological journey begins with ‘the real-life issues that confront us’ (2004:19). Salvation, for Beckford, as for many others engaging with issues of poverty, violence and injustice, is not, nor should it ever be, restricted to the spiritual realm. Since salvation encompasses the whole of life, worship too must speak into and flow out of each worshipper’s lived experiences. Beckford laments the superficially innocuous separation of the physical and the spiritual which is often manifested in the context of worship, by such words as ‘Let’s forget what is happening around us in the world and just concentrate on Jesus’ (20), a notion which I have heard or been encouraged to sing about countless times in church myself (Appendix H). This separation is rooted, Beckford contends, in the ‘false dichotomy imposed upon blacks during slavery and colonialism’, rendering the seemingly innocuous positively sinister. Such origins aside, this incitement of worshipers to differentiate between their physical and spiritual lives has missiological ramifications as it provides life-support to the dualism wherein spiritual salvation from sin and eternal punishment ultimately trumps more ‘worldly’ forms of salvation which the Church might embrace in its understanding of mission.

Newbigin too calls for integration between the Church's inner life and outward action. He asserts that the Church's response to God's grace, which is expressed in gathered worship, must also find expression in acts of loving service. Praise and thanksgiving must be expressed both in reverent worship of the 'One who is worthy of all the praise that we can offer' and in an overflow of gratitude to God manifested in acts of love for one's neighbour (1989:228). It is this overflow which is significant if the community of praise is to avoid becoming insular and self-serving. These acts of service should not represent the Church's pursuit of what Newbigin calls 'a moral crusade', but should be the natural response to the gift of God's grace to the Church and the world. In our early years leading our current church, we sought to make explicit this implicit relationship between praise, gratitude and loving action by reimagining the worship service once a month, with the congregation litter picking on the streets and gardening at homes in the local community, rather than worshiping inside the church building. This had the desired effect of embedding a broad understanding of worship into the theological fabric of the church, which enabled activities to be viewed as worshipful and missional which might otherwise not have been. Praise to God was, and continues to be, manifested in service to others, to the benefit of both the community of the church and the wider community beyond.

The inward life of the Church is undoubtedly important; worship, teaching, prayer, testimony, fellowship and order are central to the development of healthy communities of disciples, committed to holy living and equipped and empowered for ministry. However, such virtues as are cultivated within the community of faith must also find expression in action beyond it. Newbigin speaks of the local church as living not for itself, but for 'the concerns of its neighbourhood'; a fellowship from which 'good news overflows in good action' (1989:229). This view is echoed by Bevans and Schroeder, who state that 'internal quality, vitality and integrity are not, however, cultivated for the Church itself; they are cultivated, rather, so that the Church can be a credible and attractive witness to the gospel in the world' (2004:56).

This credible and attractive, embodied witness to the gospel, must encompass action to address both the causes and effects of a community's struggles. Indeed, Barth suggests that the Church's mission 'is not secondary to its being; the Church exists in being sent and in building up itself for the sake of its mission' (IV:3:381). Barth's presentation of ecclesiology through the lens of mission frames missionary activity as 'the church being the church', rather than as one of many activities in which the church engages. The Salvation Army historically defined its ecclesial status in terms of its missionary activity. Until 1878, The Salvation Army was called The Christian Mission and throughout its

history, its self-understanding was ‘as a form of special missionary emergency service both within and alongside the wider Church’ (Taylor 2014:100). It was, by its own self-identification (and at times that of others) resolutely not a church. This perspective was maintained, at least formally, until 1998 when the inclusion of a chapter on *The Doctrine of the Church* in the *Handbook of Doctrine*, restated The Army’s position;

> Salvation Army doctrine implies a doctrine of the Church…One very important change since the Eleven Articles were formulated and adopted is the evolution of the Movement from an agency for evangelism to a church, an evangelistic body of believers who worship, fellowship, minister and are in mission together. (1998:100)

This statement not only repositions The Salvation Army among the churches, but it also resonates with a Barthian understanding of mission as a state of being as opposed to doing. Salvationists are ‘in mission together’ not ‘doing mission together’. The distinction may be subtle, but it is profound. Mission is God’s, to be participated in by his people, the Church. It is not what the Church does, it is who the Church is; the very state of being which the Church is in. However, the ‘being’ of the Church must find expression in the ‘doing’ of practical action. As Bevans and Schroeder observe, the Church is ‘the community that shares and continues Jesus’ mission’ (2004:35) and Jesus engaged in an embodied and practical ministry as he healed and fed and ministered to the needs of the people he met.

This practical outworking of the life of the Church is expressed potently by proponents of Liberation Theology and my personal context is incomplete without brief reference to it. I first encountered Liberation Theology during my undergraduate studies, and the theological lens through which I viewed the world was irrevocably overlaid with the concerns and experiences of the marginalised. This liberating encounter with a new way of thinking theologically was both informative and transformative for me, shaping the direction my life would take. The liberationist missiology which so shaped my own is succinctly expressed by Leonardo Boff, who writes;

> Faith generates commitment to the transformation of society as a way of preparing material for the kingdom here and now – for this kingdom is already beginning, here on earth. (1986:41-42)

Boff locates the mission in which the Church participates in the space between the realised kingdom of God and that which is yet to come. The Church, compelled by faith to

engage in the transformation of society, plants the seeds and nurtures the flowering of the kingdom coming on earth. This embodied faith, forged through experience, evidences an integration of the personal and public dimensions of salvation and therefore also of mission. Chris Rowland, considering liberation theology in a UK context, notes;

> There is a continuing need for a theology which reflects the dialectic between experience in contemporary Britain and yet seeks to be faithful to a Gospel where there is a preferential option for the poor and needy which pervades the ethos of earliest Christianity. (1995:46)

Whilst sometimes criticised for overemphasis on the material realities of people's lives, Liberation Theology offers an unashamedly holistic and integrated view of salvation and mission, towards which the Church's internal structures and external actions are orientated and for which purpose they exist. As a community of mutual responsibility, the Church's call to action extends to advocacy for human liberation, which flows out of the Church's own experience of having been liberated. The Church must never be self-serving, indeed Newbigin asserts that for the Christian, 'the language of rights is out of place except when it serves to remind us of the rights of others' (1989:228).

My own missiological education, when training to become a Salvation Army Officer, was influenced by the work of David Bosch, whose era-defining *Transforming Mission* transformed the teaching of mission throughout the world during the 1990's and since. Bosch provided a framework and a language to describe salvation as I had begun to understand it, but which I had hitherto felt (rightly or wrongly) was somewhat beyond denominational orthodoxy. Far from being limited to the personal assurance of heaven, salvation encompassed more than the vertical relationship between individuals and God. Rather, 'Salvation in Christ is salvation in the context of human society en route to a whole and healed world' (2011:408). This definition was revelatory to me, not in changing my view of salvation, but in giving credence to that which I had sensed deep down for many years and which had been fuelled by my undergraduate encounters with Liberation Theology. I had long understood the salvation of my Salvationism as having implications far beyond the personal – an understanding underscored by Bosch;

> Hatred, injustice, oppression, war, and other forms of violence are manifestations of evil; concern for humaneness, for the conquering of famine, illness, and meaninglessness is part of the salvation for which we hope and labour. Christians pray that the reign of God should come and God's will be done on earth as it is in

> heaven (Mt 6:10); it follows from this that the earth is the locus of the Christian's calling and sanctification. (2011:406-407)

Bosch asserts that when Christians act against 'poverty, misery, sickness, criminality and social chaos' they 'mediate salvation', incorporating liberation from such estates within the soteriological realm and therefore also within the realm of mission. Such an understanding demands a construal of mission which is 'more comprehensive than has traditionally been the case' (410). His assertion that it is untenable to limit salvation to a personal relationship with God, abrogates any attempts to undermine or undervalue holistic understandings of mission. For Bosch, 'salvation is as coherent, broad, and deep as the needs and exigencies of human existence'. Feeding the hungry or challenging the structures which cause their hunger, for instance, are not peripheral exercises in the service of or en route to some higher salvation, they are integral to the Church's participation in the missio Dei, as it exists in the space between the 'now' and the 'not yet' of the kingdom of God. Whilst acknowledging that 'final salvation will not be wrought by human hands, not even by *Christian* hands' (409), Bosch urges the Church to discover its purpose between 'salvation *indicative* (salvation is already a reality)' and 'salvation *subjunctive* (comprehensive salvation is yet to come)' by embracing the 'salvation *imperative*', which is to 'get involved in the ministry of salvation' (410). In such integrated action lies the mission of God and therefore the mission of the Church.

The Authentic Communication of the Truth

Writing in 1989, long before the invention of the phrase 'Fake News', Lesslie Newbigin described a world in which 'the power of the contemporary media to shape thought and imagination is very great' (1989:229). Today, perhaps more than ever, the Church needs to be what Newbigin called 'a community of truth' (228); a community grounded in truth through 'the constant remembering and rehearsing of the true story of human nature and destiny'. Thus grounded, the Church seeking to participate in the missio Dei may then be what Bevans and Schroeder refer to as a 'credible and attractive witness' (2004:56) to the whole truth of the gospel – salvation in its fullest sense; spiritual, physical, emotional, psychological, relational, structural, economic and political. The message is both communicated and authenticated by the experiences and living testimonies in word and deed, of the community of witnesses. Barth describes how the one who is awoken to the truth concerning Christ is compelled to bear witness to it.

> The Word of the living Jesus Christ is the creative call by which He awakens man to an active knowledge of the truth and thus receives him into the new standing of

> the Christian, namely, into a particular fellowship with Himself, thrusting Him as His afflicted but well-equipped witness into the service of His prophetic work. (VI:3:481)

Barth maintains that Christians witness to the truth of Christ's saving work and participate in God's mission through prophetic not salvific means, as 'afflicted but well-equipped' witnesses to it (IV:3:874). Like Barth, Robert Beckford, considers prophetic action to be central to the Church's authentic communication of the whole truth of the gospel. The incarnation represents God's salvific intervention in history, to which the Church bears prophetic witness as it engages in the quest for justice and acts as salt and light in the world (2004:117). However, whilst recognising the Church's call to intervene in the world, Beckford criticises missional models structured solely around witness or welfare for failing to engage with the fullness of God's mission as manifested in the incarnation. The authentic communication of gospel truth requires the Church to be more than a mere witness to the gospel – it must be a credible and attractive manifestation and embodiment of the gospel in the world. The effectiveness of such prophetic action to which the Church is called, relies upon the responsiveness of the Church to the Spirit of God, which, Beckford asserts is found 'where men and women are working to address the causes and consequences of systemic failure in a manner that restores dignity, accountability and justice' (120).

The Church in mission is called to communicate the truth to the world, that through Jesus, everything required for salvation has already taken place. The Church's role is not conversion to personal salvation – such is reserved for God alone. Rather, the Church is called to attest to the work and word of God, so that those who have yet to hear of it are made aware that they too fall within the loving embrace of salvation (Barth IV:3:876). Barth's missiology is inherently positive and participatory, emphasising the promise of life over the terrors of hell (874) and the calling of all Christians to bear truthful witness to such life. The news entrusted to the Church is good, and should be communicated as such. Indeed, Barth praised the Salvation Army for its 'glad and spirited' expression of the gospel. He also offered a similar critique of self-interested or insular churches as had William Booth a half-century before; 'a church which is not as such an evangelising Church is either not yet or no longer the Church, or only a dead Church, itself standing in supreme need of renewal by evangelisation' (874).

Barth asserted that the authentic communication of gospel truth is accomplished in both word and action: 'Christians are either the messengers of God (with or without words) to

both Jew and Gentile or else they are not Christians at all' (III:3:64). Barth was uncompromising; to be a Christian means to participate in God's mission and participation in God's mission involves the authentic communication, in word and deed, of gospel truth.

The Embodiment and Enactment of Christian Hope

The final aspect of Christian community to which Newbigin refers is the community of hope (1989:232). This 'way of being' is all-encompassing, as the hope to which it refers has ramifications for individual Christians, church communities and the entire creation. Christian hope is the hope for 'God's renewal of all things, for his overcoming of corruption, decay and death, for his filling of the whole cosmos with his love and grace, his power and glory' (Wright 2007:282). The Church which embodies and enacts this hope will be an irrepressible and irresistible force in the world and will enable others to glimpse hope in the midst of difficulty, doubt and despair. The hope presented in the gospel and represented by the crucified and risen Christ, so contradicts the prevailing paradigm of hopelessness that 'no amount of brilliant argument can make it sound reasonable to the inhabitants of the reigning plausibility structure' (Newbigin 1989:232). It is incumbent therefore, upon those who hold to this hope, to be 'the only possible hermeneutic of the gospel' (2007:227). Only as the Church lives out the seeming absurdity of hope in the world, will the reality of the new creation be seen and experienced. Only this living hermeneutic will make the gospel and its central character attractive to a world in which it seems utterly implausible as not just *a* version, but *the* version of reality.

Christian hope is concerned, in no small part, with the contentious role of Jesus Christ in salvation. Addressing this contention, Barth holds in tension both the uniqueness of Christ and the magnanimity of God, articulating the hope of the gospel thus:

> Jesus Christ accomplished what man had no freedom, right, nor power to accomplish, namely, the reconciliation of the world to God, the deliverance of man from the guilt and slavery of his sin, his justification and sanctification, his acceptance into peace with God as the fellowship of Father and son…No one and nothing can undo or reverse this free act of the free grace of the free God in which there has already taken place the birth of a new and free man…this good news is the truth. (IV:3:462)

Whilst Barth is unequivocal regarding Christ's unique role in salvation, he shares Newbigin's concerns around plausibility, noting that 'we are startled by the form of His passion, and therefore by the narrowness of the way and the straitness of the gate

through which He bids us pass to be with Him' (463). Notwithstanding such concerns, Barth unambiguously asserts that salvation is indeed found only through Christ. However, he continues to hold out hope, centred in God's grace, regarding humanity's ultimate end. He describes this hope as 'an undeserved and inconceivable overflowing of the significance, operation and outreach of the reality of God and man in Jesus Christ' (477). Whilst resolutely resisting humanity's right to expect universal salvation, Barth equally refuses to deny God's right to endow it;

> …there is no good reason why we should forbid ourselves, or be forbidden, openness to the possibility that in the reality of God and man in Jesus Christ there is contained much more than we might expect and therefore the supremely unexpected withdrawal of that final threat, i.e., that in the truth of this reality there might be contained the super-abundant promise of the final deliverance of all men…
>
> …If we are certainly forbidden to count on this as though we had a claim to it, as though it were not supremely the work of God to which man can have no possible claim, we are surely commanded the more definitely to hope and pray for it… (IV:3:477-478)

Barth elevates the saving work of Christ on the cross beyond the restrictions of doctrinally-expressed limitations concerning the scope of God's grace. He deftly avoids accusations of Universalism whilst nonetheless positing the suggestion that universal reconciliation is not beyond the reach of God's ever-renewing mercy. Christ's saving work, he suggests, has the potential to reach farther than humanity's limited understanding thereof, and therein lies the hope the Church is called to both embody and enact.

The exodus is arguably the Old Testament's primary archetype of embodied and enacted salvation hope. Lesslie Newbigin writes of this event;

> …this is much more than a model: it is God's supreme saving action. God's revelation of himself to Moses is in the form of a call to go and liberate captive Israel…God's cause and the cause of those exploited immigrant workers are the same…there is simple identification: this deliverance is God's salvation. (1995:96)

Certain Christian readings of the exodus event assert that it prefigures a spiritual liberation effected by Christ, thus neutering the narrative of potency in respect of the physical realm. Newbigin rejects such dualist approaches to spiritual and corporeal salvation. Human

beings are not disembodied souls, and therefore the hope the Christian enacts and embodies necessarily concerns the realities of lived experience as well as a heavenly future. God did not deliver Israel from physical slavery in Egypt in order to effectuate their spiritual salvation at some later stage. God called Moses to set the people free from physical bondage; that was both Moses' and God's liberating purpose, and the Church must similarly embody and proclaim hope for today as well as for tomorrow.

The Church which embodies and enacts such a hope truly is 'the only hermeneutic of the gospel' (1995:227). To embody Christian hope, the Church must engage with the realities of injustice, suffering and isolation as manifested in the world, for there the Spirit of God is found, accomplishing God's mission, and there the Church is invited into participation.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the conceptual framework of the thesis, and has considered the place of the research within the field of Practical Theology. Missiology is presented as the key theoretical perspective within the conceptual framework, with holistic understandings of both salvation and mission advocated according to the theology which undergirds them. Salvationist missiology is located within the landscape of the wider field and according to the history and internal concerns of The Salvation Army. Interlocutors have been considered who have been influential in my own life, ministry and theological education and whose perspectives help to establish the parameters for mission as a theoretical perspective and constituent part of the conceptual framework within which I shall be operating. The missio Dei is summarised as the expression of God's loving nature in and to the world, in which the Church finds its identity and purpose through participation. This participation is considered according to five missional 'ways of being', which arise from the interaction of personal ministry experience with reflective engagement upon Lesslie Newbigin's work on the nature of Christian community (1989:227-232) and Bevans and Schroeder's consideration of the 'ad intra' and 'ad extra' implications of engagement in the missio Dei (2004:56).

CHAPTER THREE
THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter continues the exploration of the theoretical perspectives inherent in the conceptual framework. Where the previous chapter presented missiology as it pertains to the research which follows, this chapter considers such aspects of ethnomusicology as provide a framework within which to understand and analyse the empirical data and against which to draw conclusions. Ethnomusicology is a wide-ranging and diverse discipline. Whilst this chapter considers a range of strands within the discipline as they provide insight into the research concerns, the primary focus is upon singing's physiological and psychosocial impacts, which provides the necessary background for later consideration of participant responses.

In 1964, Fred Brown, a Salvation Army officer who attempted to enculturate Salvationist mission into the youth culture of the 1960's, wrote that 'one of the most attractive characteristics of The Salvation Army is its music and song, for these typify in the minds of many people the happiness, even gaiety, of the Army's religion' (1964:94). So much of both The Salvation Army's self-identity and the public's perception of the movement is linked to its music. As Brown goes on to note; 'whenever a TV producer handles a Salvation Army programme, he pleads for bright singing, smiling faces, tambourines and rhythmic handclapping'. For many people, both within and outside The Salvation Army, the denomination is synonymous with music-making, and not least singing. The centrality of singing within The Army, and my desire to understand its significance within my own context motivates my engagement with ethnomusicology in this thesis. In seeking to understand the significance of participant responses, engagement with a range of theorists and practitioners, particularly those working and researching in the realm of music and wellbeing, was undertaken. The interlocutors selected provide specific insights into the physiological and psychosocial benefits of singing, which contribute towards an understanding of singing's relationship with mission, which is the central research concern.

Music, Singing and Human Responses

Barenboim describes the impact of music, with reference to Aristotle's claim that; 'in listening to such strains our souls undergo a change…music has a power of forming the character…' (Aristotle, Politics, Book 8, Section V. Quoted in Barenboim 2009:6,7). This is a bold claim on Aristotle's part, and yet it is undoubtedly a common human experience to

find music, in its many forms, profoundly moving. To be moved is to be changed, even momentarily, and to be changed, even momentarily is to be changed irrevocably, as that moment takes its place among those experiences which form and shape who we are. Music therefore has the capacity to be transformative, and transformation, as is explored in this thesis, is at the heart of the missio Dei and therefore the mission of the Church.

In seeking to understand singing's role in transformation, this thesis considers peer-reviewed research which demonstrates the physiological and psychosocial changes which singing can achieve. Many scientific studies have been undertaken exploring the interrelationship between singing/music and health and wellbeing. MacDonald, Kreutz and Mitchell (2012) note:

> Musicians, therapists, philosophers, as well as other artists and scholars alike have documented [music's] physical, mental, and social effects in treatises from as early as 4000 BC to the present. (2012:3)

A 2018 study by Stone et al. into singing's physiological effects, measured the production of endocannabinoids during cycling, dancing, reading and singing. This small, but significant study among 9 female choir members, reached the following conclusions.

> Singing increased plasma levels of anandamide (AEA) by 42% ($P<0.05$), palmitoylethanolamine (PEA) by 53% ($P<0.01$) and oleoylethanolamine (OEA) by 34% ($P<0.05$), and improved positive mood and emotions ($P<0.01$)… Increases in endocannabinoids may underlie the rewarding and pleasurable effects of singing and exercise, and ultimately some of the long-term beneficial effects on mental health, cognition and memory.
>
> …These data provide biochemical evidence of an increase in novel signalling messengers known to improve mood, reduce stress and anxiety, enhance memory, protect brain function and reduce pain. Singing, in particular group singing, has been associated with an increase in positive mood and improved immune function in humans (Kreutz et al. 2004; Schladt et al. 2017). Choir singing also enables social interactions, exhibiting a greater benefit to mood than singing alone (Schladt et al. 2017). (Stone et al. 2018)

This study demonstrates that singing, more than the other activities tested, increases circulatory levels of the neurotransmitters endocannabinoids, which operate within the

central and peripheral nervous systems, including within the brain, and are involved in such processes as mood, memory and the sensation of pain, amongst other things. Stone et al. (2018) demonstrate through plasma analysis, that when people assert that singing makes them feel less anxious, more positive and generally better, either physically or emotionally, there is chemical evidence to support their claim. Add to this the dynamic impact of group or choral singing, and its facilitation of human interactions, and the effect of singing upon health and wellbeing becomes even more potent.

Altenmüller and Schlaug (2012:12ff) note music-making's role in brain development and plasticity (adaptation). Whilst primarily considering the differences in various aspects of the brain physiology of professional musicians (particularly those who began making music in childhood) compared with non-musicians, they suggest that brain benefits can be derived even by 'adult musical amateurs'.

> …we suggest that music-induced brain plasticity may produce benefits for wellbeing in general and may influence neurohormonal status as well as cognitive and emotional processes in healthy and diseased individuals, helping to improve various sensory, motor, coordinative, or emotional disabilities. (2012:13)

Altenmüller and Schlaug attribute music's influence on the brain to its role in the production of dopamine. Like the endocannabinoids studied by Stone et al. (2018) dopamine is a neurotransmitter. The majority of nerve cells sensitive to dopamine are located behind the base of the frontal cortex, in the so-called 'emotional' brain. Dopamine plays a crucial role in the brain's response to reward as well as to learning, and famously, addiction. Altenmüller and Schlaug note that '"natural" rewards such as musical experiences and other positive social interactions likewise activate dopaminergic neurons' (2012:15) and as such generate similar emotional and physical responses. This is alluded to by Alison, a participant in my own study, who refers to singing as 'the original mood-altering, non-fattening, wonder-drug'.

Where dopamine is associated with 'feelings of pleasure based on novelty or newness' (2012:16), the release of another neurotransmitter, serotonin is more often associated with 'feelings of satisfaction from expected outcomes'. Altenmüller and Schlaug cite Evers and Suhr (2000) who recorded significant increases in serotonin levels in participants, following exposure to music which they found pleasing. Such chemical responses to music are also accompanied by other physiological responses such as increased regional cerebral blood flow and what Altenmüller and Schlaug refer to as 'activity changes in the

amygdala, the ventral striatum, and the hippocampus' (2012:16). One need not be an expert in anatomy and physiology to understand that these studies demonstrate that music has a significant influence upon human biology. Altenmüller and Schlaug conclude that music's influence on 'hormonal central nervous changes' (2012:17) can be harnessed in the pursuit of mental wellbeing. They write;

> Since music can change activity in brain structures that function abnormally in patients suffering from depression…it seems plausible to assume that music can be used to stimulate and regulate activity in these structures either by listening to or by making music, and thus ameliorate symptoms of depression. (2012:17)

Such amelioration of wellbeing is arguably also beneficial to individuals who do not suffer from depression, and the significance of this will be considered in later chapters, with reference to participant responses.

Whilst acknowledging the effects upon brain biology, it is important to recognise that music impacts upon the 'self' which is more than the brain. Elliot and Silverman provide a helpful description of the 'self' as the locus of music's impact;

> …we do not mean brain systems and processes alone. We mean (a) the combined body-brain-mind-conscious-and-unconscious systems and processes that contribute to the self as an integrated whole and (b) the fluid systems and processes of our unique environments (our physical-social-gendered-cultural-historical contexts) that we interact with constantly and that shape and re-shape all our 'self-processes'. Implicit in this view is our resistance to a widespread belief that human beings are essentially 'brains', that music is 'in the brain', that musical experiences are 'just brain processes' and so forth… (2012:32)

Much of music's power to transform arguably stems from its ability to engage with the entire 'self'; body, mind and spirit as an integrated whole. Mary Butterton notes that 'when we play or listen to music we experience a very rich personal sensory, emotional and intellectual phenomenon, each in our unique way' (2004:11). It is this uniquely personal aspect of our reception of music which makes it so powerful. Just as music is received personally, so too is it originated in an essentially personal manner, emanating from a composer(s) or performer(s). Thus understood, music is necessarily relational as the sounds and dynamic shapes first imagined by the composer(s)/performer(s) are received and responded to by the listener(s), within their own context. Each listener has a unique

emotional, intellectual and even physical response, which shapes the music's meaning for them. These uniquely personal responses to music relate to cognitive theories of emotion, which predicate emotional response on the evaluation or appraisal of a given situation. As such, emotional responses to music do not arise in a vacuum, but rather out of an individual's reaction to music as experienced within a particular set of circumstances. This is important to keep in mind, as we consider different participants' responses to singing, in later chapters.

The uniqueness of individual responses to music raises a question which is as contentious for musicologists as the nature/nurture question is for psychologists; whether music contains any intrinsic power to communicate anything specific at all, or whether music simply *is*. On one level, music is nothing more or less than a series of vibrations at different frequencies impacting upon the auditory system and understood by the brain as being music, as opposed to another form of sound. However, the question remains as to how the brain differentiates between those vibrations which are music and those which are not. This question itself is contingent upon a defined distinction between music and other forms of sound. Elliot and Silverman (2012:25ff) note the complexity inherent in defining music, not least due to the many different cultural understandings of what music is. They note that;

> …not every musical culture in the world conceives of music in terms of music products, pieces or 'works' of music. In short, the sonic features of 'music' around the world are inherently unstable. Another popular assumption is that music is a matter of humanly organized sounds that evoke or express emotions or feelings. The problem with this idea is that while our experiences of music often involve affect, so do many other aural experiences… Accordingly, neither the evocation nor the expression of emotions/feelings is a necessary or sufficient feature of all works of music. (2012:26-27)

Such qualifications considered, within this thesis, music is understood as resulting from deliberate human creative action. As Elliot and Silverman state 'without some form of intentional human activity, there can be neither musical sounds nor 'works' of musical sound' (2012:29). Music thus defined may be intentional, but the question remains whether music in and of itself can intentionally convey specific ideas or evoke particular feelings. This is an almost impossible question to answer definitively, hence its parallels with the nature-nurture debate. However, since singing's role in the evocation of emotional

and physical responses is examined in this thesis, it is pertinent to consider briefly some of the attendant theories.

Convention Theories of musical reception apportion particular characteristics to certain musical forms within specific cultural contexts; for example, the cultural convention of a harp glissando 'sounding' romantic, or low, tremolo strings suggesting a sense of suspense or tension. Contour Theory, as expounded by Peter Kivy amongst others (1989), associates music's emotive capacity with its ability to imitate or suggest particular human vocal or physical expressions (i.e. fast music mimicking the embodied human expression and articulation of excitement or slow, quiet, minor-key music suggesting the human emotion of sadness).

Contour and Convention Theories do not necessarily work cross-culturally, since different physical and vocal responses to particular emotions may be evident within different cultural contexts (for instance, in certain Western contexts, expressions of mourning are quietly subdued, both physically and vocally, whereas in certain Majority World contexts mourning is expressed via loud vocalisation and large embodied actions). Such cultural limitations must be considered when seeking to draw any conclusions concerning the relationship between music and human physical and emotional responses. Indeed, Madell queries whether music, the interpretation of which is inherently subjective, can ever be said to objectively reflect human behaviours or emotions (1996:64).

Whilst such theories as contour and convention may be unable to account for all human responses to music, studies have demonstrated a relationship between particular musical forms and human physical responses, which surpasses learned conventions. Olds (1986) observed foetal responses to a range of musical stimuli, noting that higher tempo music led to a corresponding increase in foetal heart rates, with the converse being true when the unborn babies were played music at a lower tempo. Hepper (1991) and Lamont (2001) evidenced the foetal development of 'musical memory' during the final trimester of pregnancy. Hepper exposed foetuses to a soap opera theme tune during the final months of pregnancy, and 2-4 days after birth, they showed a decrease in heart rate and movement and were generally calmer when played the music, compared with the control groups. When Hepper repeated the test at 21 days, no such difference between groups was evident, leading Hepper to conclude that 'musical memory', at least in infancy, is a relatively short-lived phenomenon.

In Lamont's 2001 study, women listened to their favourite song daily during pregnancy. Approximately one year after their births, the babies were observed to attend to their mothers' favourite songs for longer than to an unfamiliar song. As this was not evident amongst the control groups, Lamont concluded that the babies in the study had retained the 'musical memory', and were thus inclined to listen more attentively to the familiar song.

The notion of musical familiarity breeding contentment was similarly confirmed in a study by Miller and Strongman (2002:21), who observed that, in the context of Pentecostal congregational singing, familiar songs resulted in higher levels of enjoyment amongst singers. My own experience of leading gathered worship and choirs supports this assertion and I propose - with no substantiation but personal judgment - that songs with a similar form, style, melodic/harmonic/rhythmic pattern and even composer, tend to be received and engaged with more readily than those which might be said to 'break the mould' of convention. Harmonising the findings of these diverse studies, one might contend that, at least in the particular cultural contexts studied, listener/singer responses to familiar musical pieces and forms, are conditioned, in part, by that familiarity.

In my own context, the types of music sung in both Sunday worship and the community choir generally follow the 'norms' and conventions considered above. Songs of praise tend to be up-tempo and rhythmically dynamic, encouraging physical responses such as moving and clapping. Songs with more reflective lyrics tend towards slower, more sustained musical forms, and elicit less by way of physical response. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider further whether the musical forms described above ape human physical and emotional responses to the subject matter with which the songs engage or whether human responses are driven by the music. Suffice to say that causal or otherwise, there is a relationship between the style and tempo of songs, the lyrics they contain and the emotional and physical responses they engender, which is of interest as we consider participant responses to singing later in the thesis.

Turning from purely scientific approaches, we now introduce a theological voice to the musicological conversation. Jeremy Begbie is a preeminent figure in this dialogue. Allowing for certain caveats, including cultural limitations, Begbie operates with Contour Theory, but contends that in addition to mirroring the physical contours of human emotional responses, music has the added power of harmony to further enhance its emotive capacities. Begbie describes the musical equivalent of 'gravitational pull' as chords move either towards or away from the tonic (2011:345) dissipating or generating

both musical and emotional tension in the process. Asserting that 'dissonance provokes a less pleasant sensation than consonance' (347), Begbie claims there is a natural human desire for resolution to the tonic. This desire for the resolution of tensions is arguably true in life as in music, suggesting a parallel between lived experience and harmonic structure akin to the parallels with vocalisation and gesture asserted by Contour Theory. Begbie brings such musicological insights into dialogue with Christianity, asserting that 'music can serve to enrich and advance theology' (2000:3). He suggests that music plays a role in illuminating doctrinal truths and in the 'life, worship and witness of Christians' (127) not least through its constant creation of tension, suggestion of incompleteness and movement towards resolution. In this sense, music mirrors the tensions and resolutions inherent in Christian understandings of the world. Furthermore, Begbie observes that in one sense, 'music resolves; in another it strives ahead towards resolution' (126). This 'now and not yet' nature of resolution in music, leads Begbie to attribute to music the capacity not only to mirror but also to form human responses to the Psalmist-cry of 'how long' which so often characterises the Christian life and the Christian's relationship with eschatology. He writes;

> …music is especially qualified to form in us, not just the patience required when something takes time, but the patience needed in the midst of delay. Delayed gratification is integral to the experience of salvation; it is also integral to music… (2000:127)

Begbie describes music's capacity to be 'projected beyond the final cadence into the ensuing silence' (126). Whilst he is referring specifically to the rhythmic, metric and tonal complexities of musical pieces written in Sonata form, I suggest that his conclusion can equally be applied to the capacity of songs to continue their transforming influence in the hearer or singer beyond the fading of the final note, as is evidenced in the participant responses to follow.

Begbie engages with theological concepts via musicological reflections and sets a helpful precedent for discussing the reciprocal insights of theology, music and the human experience, upon which my own reflections stand.

Continuing the theme of the dialogue between theology and music, John Sloboda (2000:110), raises questions concerning the psychology of singing in worship. These seek to ascertain amongst other things what happens in people's minds when they engage with music and when they engage in gathered worship, and what, if anything, is the nature of

the overlap between the mental processes involved. Sloboda explores the impact of music upon affective responses, noting, akin to Begbie and Contour Theory, the role of characteristics such as the harmonic structure, tempo and overall style and feel of a piece of music, in evoking emotional responses. In addition to influencing individual emotions, Sloboda also notes music's capacity to facilitate interpersonal relationships. He contends that a given piece of music can coordinate 'at least the shape of the rise and fall of emotional response to music in a body of people' (123). This corporate response to music is even more marked when groups of people make music together, such as happens in choral and congregational contexts. Sloboda gives two reasons for this phenomenon: Firstly, multiplying the number of voices multiplies the emotional experience. Secondly, and Sloboda argues, more importantly, 'new aspects of a melody emerge when it is put in counterpoint with another one, because added to the individual characteristics of each melody is now the harmonic and rhythmic structure that is created by the relationship of the two melodies' (2000:124). The significance of Sloboda's assertions will become evident in later chapters as consideration is given to participant responses concerning their own experiences of singing, particularly in the context of the choir, where scale (number of voices) is a salient issue.

Anthony Storr similarly describes the emotive potency of music experienced in a group setting, asserting that;

> Music brings about similar physical responses in different people at the same time. This is why it is able to draw groups together and create a sense of unity…Music has the effect of intensifying or underlining the emotion which a particular event calls forth, by simultaneously co-ordinating the emotions of a group of people. (1993:24)

Storr and Sloboda's assertions concerning the collective impact of group participation in music can be seen enacted in choirs, congregations and football stadia the world over. Songs and singing can have a uniquely galvanising impact on groups of people as their physical and emotional connection is underscored through the shared expression of lyrics, notes and even breathing patterns. Storr affords to music the accolade of being 'a source of reconciliation, exhilaration, and hope' (187-8).

Whilst assertions that corporate music-making generates shared emotional and physical experiences and serves to facilitate and deepen interpersonal relationships may be generally true, this is not universally the case. We shall see that for at least two

participants in my research (Zara and Harry) singing with others can generate discomfort or anxiety. The 'rise and fall' of their 'emotional response' is at odds rather than in harmony with the group's. In my own experience, too, certain Salvation Army songs which are militant in style provoke in me, not a sense of motivation or inspiration (as might be the intention) but an association with forms of Salvationism with which I struggle, and consequently Sloboda's notion of the amplification of emotion based on scale does not apply. The caveat of culture (noted above), with which both contour and convention theories operate, must therefore be extended to include personal responses to music, which may not follow expected cultural 'norms' or intentions.

Leonard B. Meyer addresses this necessity for cultural and personal contextualisation in music, noting that a proper appreciation and understanding of certain musical genres and forms relies upon familiarity with the form's original context.

> …to the listener practiced only in the music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the cadential formula which closes and completes many pieces written during the Renaissance will seem to be a semicadence. It will be felt to be incomplete, to lack finality. However, to a listener who understands the Renaissance style, the same cadence will seem to be a final, satisfactory conclusion. (1956:128)

Whilst accepting Meyer's general premise, I would propose that understanding a particular musical style does not necessarily always result in satisfaction. The listener who understands the Renaissance style might nevertheless still find its closing cadential sequence unsatisfactory. Such complexity is similarly true of my response to the militantly-styled Salvationist songs cited above, which I simultaneously both understand and find uncomfortable. Meyer asserts that one's expectations of music are governed by one's knowledge and experience either of the structural form common to a genre, or of the 'sound terms' within a specific piece (129). He notes that when a 'sound term' is repeated on numerous occasions within a piece, the listener is eventually conditioned to expect to hear its conclusion even from its opening notes. Meyer furthers this contention, stating that the more familiar a listener becomes with a particular 'sound term' or motif, the more even a fragment of it comes to represent for them the whole phrase in its completeness. This notion of a fragment of a musical theme or motif alluding to or representing a larger musical idea has implications pertinent to my own thinking. To extend Meyer's conclusion to include the relationship of singer to song, I would contend that the more familiar a singer is with a particular song or even genre, the more it represents and reinforces the

themes and emotions with which the singer associates it. Thus, even a line abstracted, recalled or alluded to, from a song, carries within it the full potency of the song (and even perhaps the broader genre, in the case of worship music) in its entirety. This could go some way to explaining why familiarity breeds contentment where singing is concerned, and why, as we shall see illustrated later as we examine the participant data, songs and singing are so inextricably linked to deep emotional and spiritual experiences for a great many people.

Congregational Singing

Nowhere, perhaps, is the deep emotional and spiritual experience of singing more keenly observed than in the context of congregational sung worship. Musicologist and conductor Daniel Barenboim notes that all sound requires energy for its production and sustenance. Thus, 'The musician who produces a sound literally brings it into the physical world' (2007:8). There is a particular energy evident in congregational singing, as the sound is produced collectively, for the express purpose of worship. Barenboim observes how the lifespan of a single note is finite and thus music is limited in time. Whilst this is self-evidently true on one level, there is a sense in which congregational and to an extent choral singing defies these natural laws of music. Firstly, in congregational singing, the energy required to formulate sound is shared, and as one person's energy or physical or emotional capacity to sing wanes, so another's can soar. Secondly, and perhaps most potently, the singing of songs common to the worldwide Church, and indeed the very fact that churches sing at all, ensures that the sound of congregational song transcends the temporality of each singer or song and moves towards a reflection of the infinite (Appendix I).

My own ministry experience has convinced me that congregants often more readily recall the words of the songs used in worship than the words of the sermon, such is the power of song to communicate meaning and elicit emotional responses. Peter Moger agrees, noting that 'worship songs become very easily embedded in the consciousness because they are short and sung repeatedly. Hence the power of a short song is considerable, and often greater than that of a reading or a sermon' (1994:14). Hymns and worship songs possess the unique quality of conveying theological concepts in ways which can be readily recalled. According to John Inge;

> …many people learned and memorised what theology they know through the singing of hymns. Hymn singing has been rivalled only by nursery rhymes as a method for memorising words. Ordinary people who have been exposed to

> hymnody during their childhood and youth will be able to repeat both the words and music of hymns when most other aspects of church are beyond recall. (2000:180)

The emotive potency of songs and their ability to shape how words and concepts are understood and the meanings they possess for individuals, has huge implications for congregational singing. Congregational songs often seek to apportion meaning to or suggest meanings for abstract concepts, including but not limited to the Divine. Such an enterprise is fraught with the tensions inherent in humanity's quest to understand God, in which, Inge contends 'God talk which is sung is of paramount importance' (182). It is undoubtedly the case that songs can be extremely potent vehicles in this divine quest, not least because music consists of a series of created and resolved tensions, be they rhythmic, melodic, harmonic or dynamic, which, when appropriately married to lyrics, contribute to the potency of a song. Worship songs and hymns enable singers to express worship to God, but they also communicate theology and, notably, in the context of my own research, encourage particular behaviours and responses.

The role of songs in human behaviour is illustrated by Tobias Greitemeyer, whose research found a direct correlation between listening to songs with prosocial lyrics and positive thinking and behaviours.

> …listening to prosocial (relative to neutral) songs increased the accessibility of prosocial thoughts, led to more empathy, and instigated prosocial action. (2009:189)

Greitemeyer's study suggested that repeated exposure to such songs could have a profound impact on shaping long-term thought patterns and behaviours.

> …repeated encounters with prosocial media may yield long term changes in personality through the development and construction of knowledge structures. In addition, the present results materialized even though participants listened to only two songs. In real life, when people may repeatedly listen to prosocial songs, the positive effects on prosocial behaviour might be even more pronounced. (189-190)

Whilst Greitemeyer's research was not undertaken from the perspective of congregational worship, nor were the songs used in his study (to my knowledge) written from a religious perspective, his findings are relevant to my own research. Greitemeyer's participants'

responses were measured according to the extent to which they demonstrated both pro-social thinking and empathy – not only what they thought about a given situation, but how they felt towards other people, after listening to the pro-social songs. Since the songs I select for congregational worship and the community choir, contain lyrics which promote positive images of creation and humanity, one might propose, based on Greitemeyer's findings, that they too may elicit similarly positive responses among those who don't just listen to such songs (as in Greitemeyer's experiment) but sing them. Greitemeyer's assertion concerning the long-term positive behavioural impact of repeated exposure is also pertinent in a congregational context, particularly in a more contemporary setting, such as the church I lead, where the repetition of songs over the course of several weeks or months is commonplace, to enable people with little or no history of church attendance to develop a sense of familiarity and comfort. A repeat of Greitemeyer's experiment using worship songs rather than simply songs with pro-social lyrics would be required in order to prove this assertion, but as a hypothesis, I contend that it has merit.

In addition to influencing behaviour (per Greitemeyer) and assisting with the memory, recall and significance of words and concepts (per Lamont, Hepper and Inge), congregational singing plays a vital role in bringing diverse people together in a shared quest for divine encounter. Bell notes the significance of songs in the creation and celebration of shared identity (2000:17) and this is certainly true within The Salvation Army, which has even produced songs which specifically reference the experience of being a Salvationist (Appendix J). Singing provides congregations with the unifiers of lyrics, rhythm, melody and harmony, as they seek to understand and find language to express concepts and experiences pertaining to God and the nature of salvation. As Don Saliers affirms; 'understanding language about God and human existence before God is often given to us most profoundly when we sing or hear.' (2007:77)

Nineteenth century art critic, writer, artist and social thinker John Ruskin, reflecting in his autobiography, recalls how his understanding of his existence before God was enhanced by the experience of hearing military music coming from the palace courtyard in Turin. He writes;

> …as the perfect colour and sound gradually asserted their power on me, they seemed finally to fasten me in the old article of Jewish faith, that things done delightfully and rightly, were always done by the help and in the Spirit of God. (Quoted in Bennett 2013:69-70).

That music alone reminded Ruskin of the centrality of the Spirit of God, is testimony to its capacity to illuminate and inspire. It was a powerful melody rather than a theological debate which settled Ruskin's soul and confirmed him in his faith. Timothy Hone observes;

> Music is one of the ways through which we can hope to achieve some sense of inner reconciliation – a first step towards reconciliation with the world in which we live and to the God who brought it into being. For many people music is profoundly revelatory. At the same time it provides a sense of structure, a safe place in which it is acceptable to yield to the revelation. (2000:166-167)

Ruskin's autobiographical recollection of the Turin courtyard experience suggests that music in that moment was both reconciliatory and revelatory for him, experiences echoed by several of my own research participants, some of whom also allude to the 'safe place' which singing provides for them to both experience and yield to the revelation of God to them. (This 'safe place' of revelation resonates with Weston's 'third-space' (2019:91ff), affording singing a significant role in the facilitation of encounters with Christ.)

One might question music's capacity to communicate theological truth as Ruskin and Hone suggest. Don Saliers tackles this issue head-on, asking 'Can music alone, without words, be theologically significant?' (2007:28). Saliers contends that whilst music may not make 'truth claims', it can enhance the meaning and communicability of the texts it accompanies, and even in the absence of lyrics (for instance an instrumental version of a song) music alone can communicate the message by association. But Saliers doesn't limit music's theological potency solely to its lyrical associations. Music, he suggests 'often imitates and evokes how we 'picture' being in the presence of things, or how we experience seeing' (30). Understood in this way, music is undoubtedly theologically and hermeneutically significant, in that it has the power to shape our experience of being in the presence of God and how we understand the implications of living as Christians. Of course, music's power in this regard is highly subjective, since as Begbie writes, 'music of itself does not in any very obvious way 'point' with precision and reliability to particular extra-musical entities' (2000:11), rather its capacity to communicate rests ultimately in its reception by the hearer. What evokes pride and patriotism in one person might engender fear and intimidation in another. The military strains which so convicted Ruskin of the reality of the presence of God might have achieved precisely the opposite effect in the ears of a confirmed atheist or someone living under an oppressive military regime. To quote Begbie again, 'Music always, to some extent, embodies social and cultural reality'

(2000:13), but, as Astley and Savage note, in the right context, music can be ‘a window onto the divine, a glimpse of the transcendent’ (2000:231).

Conclusion

With reference to key writers and studies, this chapter has explored singing’s impact upon the human experience. It has established a context within which to consider the responses of the participants in my own research, who have afforded insight into their own experiences of singing. Many, if not all of them, as we shall see in future chapters, speak of the formative and transformative nature of singing in their experience, reflective of the various physiological, psychological and social processes considered above. Whilst not providing exhaustive analysis of the field of ethnomusicology, the chapter has offered a broad overview of scientific, philosophical and theological understandings of music and in particular singing. Subsequent chapters will bring these theoretical perspectives into dialogue with missiology and analysis of participant data, to suggest insights into Salvationist missiology from practices of communal singing at New Addington Salvation Army Community Church.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

Bennett et al (2018:140ff) propose an approach to practical theological research design, which begins with an awareness and articulation of ontology (more accessibly referred to as 'world-view') and culminates in the selection of the specific research methods to be employed. The process moves between these two points via intellectual and practical decisions concerning epistemology, research paradigms and methodologies. Whilst my own research design didn't follow quite so strategic a path (Bennett et al's *Invitation to Research in Practical Theology* had yet to be published when I commenced) I have nevertheless sought to identify each element in my own journey.

The World-View Underpinning the Research

Previous chapters have detailed my personal context, outlined my missiological perspective, and explored the experiences and ideas which have shaped my thinking, practice and world-view. These insights into the 'who' of the researcher are essential in understanding the 'why', 'how' and 'what' of the research. As a leader in The Salvation Army, I understand my life's purpose to be participation in God's mission of salvation in its fullest sense. As a practical theologian, I seek to ensure that my research is 'rooted and grounded in the contemporary material and embodied world' as I attempt to 'better understand faith and action' (2018:12).

The Place of the Bible in the Research

The first of The Salvation Army's Eleven Articles of Faith (see Appendix G) locates the Bible as the sole source of instruction regarding the 'Divine rule of Christian faith and practice'. In considering the place of the Bible in my research, I first and foremost acknowledge that I do not come innocently to the text, without presuppositions (Bennett 2013:23). My reading of scripture is influenced by my world-view and life experiences, and reciprocally my world-view and understanding of life's experiences are influenced by my reading of scripture, via a process of 'mutual illumination' (78). As a Practical Theologian, I am conscious not to depersonalise my interaction with the text of the Bible. Rather, acknowledging the limitations and caveats which abound, I pursue an 'imaginative engagement' with scripture (2013:78) through the lens of my own experience. Bennett notes, 'our own 'reading history' determines our engagement with the Bible, and our engagement of the Bible in public issues' which in turn 'shapes the ongoing story of our struggle to relate the Bible and contemporary life' (2013:78). My upbringing, family

influences, theological studies and work in a community experiencing the challenges of social deprivation, lead me to read the Bible through a specific set of lenses. These lenses can offer moments of illumination. One such moment, wherein I saw missiological implications in scripture which had hitherto remained hidden from my sight, occurred as I read Psalm 69:30-32 during the process of my research. In perusing biblical references to singing, I saw in this text, connections between singing and the holistic mission in which the Church participates. The Psalmist writes;

> I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving.
> This will please the Lord more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs.
> Let the oppressed see it and be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive.

According to the Psalmist, singing praise pleases God, gladdens the oppressed and revives seekers' hearts, thus serving both the Church's mission ad intra and its mission ad extra. My research reflects a desire to explore the ways in which singing both empowers individuals and communities for missional participation (ad intra) and ameliorates the experience of the oppressed (ad extra). In this Psalm, I saw singing through the lens of mission, which itself is viewed through the lens of my world-view. In seeing the connection between singing and holistic mission in these verses from Psalm 69, I was able, more clearly, to see the path by which I might glimpse insights into Salvationist missiology via reflection upon practices of communal singing in my particular context.

Epistemological Perspectives

At the commencement of the process of research design, I wrote in my journal; 'What theological and historical imperatives underpin my 'grass roots' or 'from below' epistemology?' (10th May 2016). Reflecting on this question, I noted that my own theological journey has shaped the epistemological perspective I bring to this research. Throughout my theological studies, I have often felt like an 'outsider' looking into the world of 'proper' theologians. My route to studying theology at undergraduate level was somewhat circuitous and was not preceded by prior academic study in the subject. As a result, I often felt at a disadvantage to the rest of the class. As a theology graduate, leading a Salvation Army church (prior to training to become an Officer) I have an abiding memory of meeting the local vicar who exclaimed 'A Salvation Army Officer with a theology degree? You don't get many of those do you!' Rather than feeling pleased to be among a perceived minority of theologically educated Salvationists (incidentally, he was wrong), I felt as though my theological education was tempered, in his mind at least, by my Salvationist associations. During my MA studies, I once again felt marginalised by

denominational association, when the Professor teaching ecclesiology asserted that 'the only commonality among all Christian churches are the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist'. Whilst I corrected him, the experience exacerbated my sense of 'outsider-ness' regarding the theological realm. Even as a member of the teaching staff at The Salvation Army's training college, I often experienced 'imposter syndrome', questioning who I was to be teaching anyone else about theology. This feeling of inadequacy was only alleviated when I became a 'Practitioner Tutor'. This role involves teaching students part-time, alongside leading a local corps, and I found that increasingly, I would not only use real-world experiences to illustrate theological concepts, but such experiences shaped my understanding of the theology I was teaching. I now understand this process as Practical Theology. It was only in discovering Practical Theology as a discipline, that I began to feel that I could perhaps consider myself to be a theologian. As a Salvation Army Officer, I was engaged daily in 'critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world with a view to ensuring faithful participation in the continuing mission of the triune God' (Swinton and Mowat 2006:25). My own self-understanding as a Practical Theologian was intrinsically linked to the realisation that bringing my experiences, and those of others (particularly those who experience marginalisation), to bear upon theological themes and concepts has epistemological validity, and is in fact, central to the discipline to which I now understand myself to belong.

Recognition of the epistemological importance of experience in shaping theology, leads Practical Theology to afford intrinsic value to research methodology and methods as well as to outcomes (Bennett et al. 2018:31). The way I approached the research and those participating in it, was therefore theologically significant. The integrity of this process as a work of Practical Theology rested not just upon an ultimate trajectory towards practically applicable outcomes, but also upon an epistemological approach which gave primacy to participant responses. I approached the data as a gift to be received with thanks rather than as a commodity to be exploited. Whilst it would of course ultimately fall to me to interpret the data, I did not want this to be at the expense of allowing participant voices to be heard and for their contributions and reflections to be the primary sources from which knowledge was derived.

A journal extract helps to illustrate my journey regarding epistemology.

JANUARY 2017 – How's the doctorate going?

'How's the doctorate going?' It is a question I'm used to answering and I usually just smile nondescriptly and say 'oh, I'm getting there' or something similarly banal. This time however, my questioner seemed genuinely interested in the answer, so I felt it justified a response with a little more depth.

What this interaction yielded for me was quite insightful. I was able to articulate more clearly than I had before what I actually hope to achieve. In explaining how I plan to analyse the data, I said something to the effect of; 'initially I had hoped to answer the question 'how does singing impact on people's faith journey or understanding of scripture or something similarly specific'. However, I now want to allow the data to lead my reflections on how singing actually functions within our church. Rather than presuming it impacts on aspects of faith development for instance, and seeking to ascertain how, why and to what extent, I now realise that my inquiry is far more open and less prescriptive; I am open to discover that perhaps singing doesn't fulfil the roles which I and others have assumed and perhaps its functions within the church might surprise and challenge prior expectations. Perhaps its role is primarily psychosocial as opposed to didactic; maybe its primary missional function is in the promotion of unity (that they may be one as we are one) rather than the promotion of doctrine or biblical literacy. I wait in eager anticipation to see what the data yields.

This reflection signalled a change in my approach to my research and an embracing of new epistemological perspectives which led to a reframing of my research questions. This shift in methodology from a more deductive to a more inductive approach had theological as well as methodological implications, as I placed my participants and their hitherto (in some cases) marginalised voices at the centre of the research process and listened to what *they* had to say rather than for what *I* hoped to hear. This openness prepared me for what the data eventually demonstrated, which did indeed challenge in some of the ways I'd postulated in the reflection above. Whilst acknowledging that I entered the research process with clear ideas about missiology, it was not my intention to use the data to prove a missiological hypothesis. Rather, I sought to consider the ways in which singing either contributes to or conflicts with a holistic missiology, in order to determine the missiological contribution of singing in our particular context.

Research Paradigm

In considering my research paradigm, I first assert with Swinton and Mowat that 'Christ is the true starting point for all Practical Theology' and my research is therefore 'a response to and recognition of the redemptive actions of God-in-the-world and the human experience which emerges in response to those actions' (2006:11). In seeking to understand those human experiences, my research paradigm is idiographic and person-centred (43) with knowledge and insights derived via interpretation of participants' unique experiences, observations and reflections (Marshall and Rossman 2011:61). In this regard, my research is constructivist, operating on the basis that the insights sought are not concrete, objective realities, but interpretations of experiences, both my own and those of others. As such, an awareness of the potential for different perspectives on similar realities was essential. This research paradigm acknowledges the validity of each respondent's perspective, and meaning is gleaned from careful and faithful listening to each articulated experience, alongside the theoretical insights from missiology and ethnomusicology laid out in chapters two and three (Cameron et al 2005:29). Despite best intentions to afford primacy to participant voices, evidenced by extensive use of direct quotation of their responses, any and all 'insights' claimed, must ultimately be acknowledged as products of 'the inquirer's construction of the constructions of the actors' (Schwandt 1998:222).

Research Methodology

My research methodology is qualitative and, subject to the caveat above, inductive, prioritising, not a hypothesis or theory, but the exploration of singing as experienced by members of the church and choir. Whilst my personal and professional experience lead to a foundational belief that singing contributes to the missional effectiveness of the Church, my research sought less to prove a particular hypothesis than to explore a phenomenon, in order to contribute to the missiological conversation within my own denomination and beyond, and result in transformed actions, not least my own. My research is motivated by and grounded in practical theological concerns, not least the desire to both reflect upon and potentially effect 'change, even transformation' (Bennett et al. 2018:9). It was vital for the process to possess integrity with regard to Practical Theology. Central to this aim was the belief that insights into the mission in which the Church is engaged cannot ethically be derived via means which contravene the values the Church is called to uphold.

The first two of Richard Osmer's four tasks of Practical Theology - Description and Interpretation - form the principle basis of enquiry (Osmer 2008). These processes were initially carried out by the participants themselves, who were invited into a process of

describing and interpreting their relationship with singing. Once that aspect of the process was completed, the task fell to me to first describe and then seek to interpret the data gifted by the participants. Normative and Pragmatic inquiries into the implications of the findings of this research form the latter part of the thesis, wherein the data is considered alongside the theoretical perspectives of Missiology and Ethnomusicology. This serves not only to reflect upon singing's role in a particular church's engagement in the missio Dei, but where appropriate, to speak into a wider conversation concerning singing's role in the mission into which the Church is called, thus ensuring that the project is more than theoretical exploration for its own sake.

Research Method

Background

Singing has featured in my own 'embodied world' for many years, playing a significant role in my own journey of faith and my journeying with others. My own reflections upon singing, alongside those of the fifteen other participants in this process, therefore offer a unique critical space within which to reflect upon the holistic mission described in previous chapters, to which my life has been dedicated.

My research has clear contextual parameters. The Salvation Army is an international organisation, and is highly diverse in its mission and ministry. Even within the United Kingdom there exists a wide range of beliefs and practices which shape and motivate The Army's work, not least concerning its use of music. This study focusses on the particular context of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church to generate a rich description of singing's contribution to local mission, from which to suggest insights which may have wider significance within The Army. Ultimately, as a Practical Theologian, my interest lies in the role of singing in transformation. I believe that the Christian journey begins with transformation and is characterised by a lifetime of being transformed and participating in transformation, processes in which singing often has a profound role. The transformation of all creation lies at the heart of the missio Dei, into which the Church is called, and consequently, in exploring the role of singing in the life of the Church, particular attention must be given to the transformative qualities of singing and songs. Jeremy Begbie notes that music '[transforms] our lives in a range of unconscious and tacit ways' (2000:273). New Addington Salvation Army Community Church's local mission statement expresses a desire to participate in God's work of transformation, therefore it was pertinent to explore the ways in which singing contributes to that aim. In so doing, I also sought to remain alert to any instances in which the negative correlate of music's

transformative capability, that of manipulation or coercion, might also be present within our context. Thankfully, this was not evident in any participant responses.

Selecting Participants

In order to gain as broad a range of perspectives as possible, within manageable limits, I invited 17 people to participate in the research, 2 of whom withdrew on health grounds. I initially considered an open-invitation process to enable participants to self-select, but rejected this on the basis that there may be those whose lack of confidence would prevent them from participating, and I may therefore only hear from those confident enough to put themselves forward. I therefore opted for purposive selection, in which I sought a balance of gender, age, Salvation Army/church experience, educational background and ethnicity. Since one of the primary aims of Practical Theology is to give voice to those whose voices are seldom heard (Cameron and Duce 2013: 38), I invited several adults who might not ordinarily put themselves or their opinions forward, whether due to lack of confidence, sporadic attendance or other reasons which might contribute to the marginalisation of their voice. I endeavoured to ensure that a representative number of such people as exist within the choir and congregation were not only encouraged to participate, but were given opportunity to respond adequately via appropriate methods. One or two invitees required some encouragement regarding their suitability and capability for the task. These people were gently reassured although I was careful to avoid coercion. A scribe was available to assist with any limitations concerning literacy (one participant accepted this support) and an independent pastoral support team was put in place for participants to speak to someone outside of the research process, should such a need arise, which it did not.

Although around 30% of our worshipping congregation is aged 16 or under, giving due consideration both to ethical and time constraints, I chose not to undertake research among minors.

I acknowledge that such purposive selection as I undertook is not without bias and my own assessment of which participants would constitute a representative sample is bound up with my perceptions and expectations of the experiences and contributions of the individuals invited to participate. Thus caveated, however, I feel confident that the fifteen contributors to this research represent a broad cross-section of experience and opinion within the choir and congregation.

Choosing a Creative Method

Recognising that research design 'is a creative process and so likely to be messy with options discarded as well as adopted' (Cameron and Duce 2013: 33) and that the 'parameters of the scope of a study, and information gathering methods and processes, are often flexible and evolving' (Kumar 2014:133) my research design was flexible in the early stages to remain responsive to issues arising once participant involvement was secured. This flexible approach was vital, not only in allowing me to tailor the process to the participants, but in providing them with reassurance that any changes I made on their behalf were not indicative of their disruption of the process, but that the process contained in-built responsiveness to any such circumstances.

I engaged in two primary means of data collection, drawing on aspects of Graham, Walton and Ward's Theology by Heart method (2005:18ff). The first was my own reflexive journal, in which I endeavoured to record my 'actions, reactions and motivations with an analytical honesty' (31). Graham, Walton and Ward (2005) describe reflexivity as 'an acknowledgement of the significance of the self in forming an understanding of the world' (19 & 20) and in my reflexive journaling, I sought to pursue an honest assessment of my own place within the 'world' of singing under examination, not least in relation to my potential influence upon others' experiences of that 'world'.

The second approach to data collection continued in the vein of Theology by Heart, specifically in the creation of Living Human Documents, as respondents' silent selves were 'heard into speech' (42) through creative engagement. Graham, Walton and Ward conclude their chapter on Theology by Heart in critical reflection on the method, critiquing its reliance upon the written word. They ask whether other 'texts' or media might be employed in the production of Living Human Documents. My method sought to do just that, inviting participants into a creative response, with or without words.

Helen Kara, a proponent of creative methods in social scientific research, promotes the use of research methods which are philosophically and ethically integrated (2015:86ff). For my research to have integrity within the Church's mission and purpose, it therefore had to be proactively inclusive (a key tenet of my purposive sampling) and to employ methods which facilitated the participation of those with lower literacy levels, or who communicate more effectively or comfortably without reliance upon the written word. To this end the aforementioned scribe was offered to any who felt unsure of how to commit their thoughts to paper. One participant accepted this offer, and worked with the scribe in

the production of their creative response. The scribe remained neutral regarding content and sought to ensure that what was written accurately reflected the participant's words.

Kara describes the use of drawing in research, in particular the 'draw and write' technique, in which participants draw in response to a stimulus, and then write (or speak) a few words to help describe the drawing (89). Since not everyone is comfortable with drawing (as with writing), I invited participants to develop their own mixed-methods approach to their responses. The participant research method became a three-phase development of Graham, Walton and Ward's Living Human Document, incorporating the mixed-method approach promoted by Kara. In keeping with the overall theme of the research, the three phases were musically named; Solo, Duet and Chorus, each of which is described below.

Solo Phase

Each purposively selected participant from the congregation or choir, was given a blank sheet of card, coloured pencils and pens and a glue-stick. The provision of the stationery was intended to encourage creativity. Participants were asked to produce a creative response entitled 'Songs, Singing, NASA and Me' (NASA is the acronym for New Addington Salvation Army, and is the name by which our church is affectionately known). Participants were given a minimum of two weeks to produce their pieces (some had longer depending on the timing of the next stage). Participants were invited to be as creative as they wanted to be, including words, pictures, poems, songs, collage, mind-maps and so on, as they saw fit. Participants were encouraged to take a few days reflecting on the title, before putting pen, pencil or glue to paper. Each participant received a single-sheet outline which included pictorial representations of each stage of the process (Appendix K). This clarified instructions to allay potential fears.

Participants were informed at the outset that their work would become the basis of further reflections, both by the respondent group and by me. They were given the choice as to whether to locate themselves identifiably within their work. Participant contributions are identified via a pseudonym in the thesis, anonymising responses except where participants included identifying elements in their work. The terms of participation were laid out in a participant information sheet and corresponding agreement which respondents read and signed prior to participation (Appendix L).

Duet Phase

The 'Songs, Singing, NASA and Me' pieces were discussed in semi-structured one-to-one conversations which I undertook with each respondent. The purpose of these

conversations was ‘to elicit rich data that would enable participants freely to relate their personal narratives in ways that are uninhibited by the researcher’s personal agenda and the boundaries of fixed questions’ (Swinton and Mowat 2006:120). Conversations began with an initial invitation to the participant to ‘talk me through’ their creative piece. Participants then described their piece and highlighted areas of particular interest or potential ambiguity as they perceived it. I was able to clarify areas about which I was unsure, as well as exploring certain themes further. Conversations generally lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were recorded. On one or two occasions, after the recording finished and the formal process of the Duet conversation had concluded, participants offered further insights which I deemed to be pertinent. In these instances, participants were asked if they would be happy for recording to resume in order to revisit those areas. In all cases, they agreed.

Chorus Phase

Following the duet phase, participants gathered as a group to view, reflect upon and discuss the creative art pieces, in a phase I referred to as ‘Chorus’. Participants were given the option of not engaging in this aspect of the process, and initially one person requested that their art piece not be shown. This person also felt initially that attending the group gathering itself would be a source of distress, and they were exempted from this stage. However, eventually this person changed their mind, citing the process of producing their art piece and discussing it with me during the duet phase, as having been key in boosting their confidence to the point where they felt able to participate fully. This moment alone made the entire research enterprise worthwhile from my perspective, as it was indicative of the transformative impact of the process itself.

Following an informal, relaxed time of considering each other’s work, participants engaged in a group discussion, in which they were encouraged to identify common themes, contentious elements, and so on. Having been made aware in the participant agreement of this aspect of the process, participants ensured that their pieces only contained such information as they were happy to share in this context. During the ‘Chorus’ phase, an additional, collective art piece was produced, to which all participants contributed, articulating their shared experiences and reflections and summarising the group’s assessment of the salient themes arising from their individual pieces.

Data Analysis

This process generated a large amount of data, which was analysed qualitatively, on a thematic basis. Analysis was multi-layered, beginning from the moment I saw participants’

art pieces and began to consider their potential meanings and make tentative interpretive assessments. Even at this early stage, I noted common themes arising in the data. Taking advice from people familiar with analysing large quantities of interview data, I considered a variety of options at this stage. These included working from the audio recordings rather than written documents, making partial transcripts, or outsourcing transcription. I chose the time-consuming approach of personally transcribing the conversations, in order to immerse myself in the data and hear any inflections, pauses, changes in mood or tempo etc. which impacted upon context and meaning. These were identified in the transcripts via side notes and commentary where necessary. More systematic analysis was undertaken following completion of these Duet phase transcripts. The transcripts became the primary locus of the interpretive process (Swinton and Mowat 2006:117) with the art pieces providing creative expressions of and additional insights into participants' perspectives. Each transcript took many hours to produce, and required me to listen to each conversation multiple times, during which process themes and key concerns became clearer as I grew in familiarity with the data. I began to hear particular words, phrases and thematic repetitions within the context of the whole conversation, and engaging in this hermeneutical cycle of listening to (and typing) small units of text, against the backdrop of an awareness of the content of the whole, enabled my 'hearing' and understanding of participant contributions to become more nuanced and sophisticated.

Transcripts, art pieces and audio recordings were uploaded to NVivo software and through careful reading, looking and listening, I generated both In Vivo (derived directly from the text of the transcript) and Descriptive (derived via interpretation of the participant's meaning) codes. Following Saldaña's approach to working with multiple participants' data (2016:23), I began by coding the first participant's data, assigning codes according to significant words, concepts or disclosures as they arose. Subsequent transcripts were approached in a similar way, with some words, concepts and disclosures being assigned to existing codes and some new codes being generated. This process continued until all fifteen participants' transcripts had been coded. As different participants' contributions were coded, so each code became richer in terms of the breadth and depth of its content. A code such as 'Love' for instance, includes comments ranging from one participant's awareness of God's love for them, to another's love for singing. There was an inevitable subjectivity involved in the coding process, as I made interpretive decisions concerning how I understood certain words and phrases. As Swinton and Mowat note, 'themes do not necessarily represent the experience as initially interpreted and understood by the person themselves, but are a constructive product of the fusion of the researcher's horizons with those of the participants as together they embark upon the

quest for meaning and understanding' (2006:118). The coding process therefore represents interpretive choices on my part, as I engaged in a 'thematic analysis of each of the research transcripts' (119) as I understood it. Where a participant spoke of a change in their attitude towards their own singing ability for instance, I chose to code this against the general descriptive code 'Transformation'. The individual concerned might have felt that transformation was too lofty a word to describe their experience, but I made the interpretive decision to understand all such changes, however small or seemingly insignificant, as transformative in so far as they represent a newness of experience or awareness.

To avoid code proliferation (Saldaña 2016:78), codes were intentionally broad, allowing a range of responses to be coded against them. In Vivo references were used where participants' direct quotations added potential illustrative value to a code. Thirty-eight descriptive codes were generated during the first phase of data analysis. Once all transcripts had been coded, codes were grouped into four categories, taking the higher-frequency codes as category headings, and assigning other codes accordingly. Whilst my four main categories were selected for their frequency of occurrence, I am mindful that qualitative research recognises that 'a code that appears just two or three times across different cases or time periods, may hold important meaning for generating a significant insight in later analysis' (25). This is particularly significant within Practical Theology and in pastoral ministry, where recognising, respecting and responding to the experiences of those 'on the margins' is vital. Such data outliers as might suggest atypicality are of deep significance to the practitioner concerned to avoid compounding feelings of alienation for those who may already feel outside of the norms of experience with regards a particular experience. I therefore ensured that any significant 'outliers' were considered in my reflection and analysis.

Research Parameters

The research parameters potentially allowed for the consideration of the role of singing within a broad range of activities at New Addington Salvation Army Community Church. However, in the interest of retaining manageable scope, these were limited to two key contexts – the Sunday worship gathering and SingCR0nise Community Choir. Some participants sing in both contexts, some in only one. Each context is described below.

Sunday Gathering

Each Sunday, around 80 people (of an overall congregation numbering around 120) gather for worship at New Addington Salvation Army Community Church. The gathering is

relaxed and informal in nature and always includes an element of singing. This is accompanied by a band usually consisting of keyboard, guitars, drums, bass, flute and vocalists. Songs are generally contemporary in nature and are usually grouped towards the beginning of the service, with a song often also used towards the end of the gathering prior to a spoken benediction.

In carrying out research of this nature amongst members of my congregation, I was conscious that sensitivity was essential. Someone finding it hard to sing with conviction might be lifted by the singing of those around them, enabling participation in worship which might otherwise be impossible. However, congregational singing also has the potential to compound an individual's sense of isolation and frustration at such times and I was mindful of this tension when undertaking the research.

SingCR0nise Community Choir

SingCR0nise Community Choir has around 40 active members, including Christians, atheists, agnostics and at least one member of another faith. Around 80% of the repertoire is Contemporary Worship or Gospel music. (I once attempted to be more hospitable to members from non-church backgrounds by increasing the proportion of secular music in our repertoire, but was informed by those same people that they preferred the Christian repertoire). Stacy Horn (2013:78) reflecting on her membership of a choir writes; 'Even though God isn't the answer for me, the music written in His name is…While it sometimes feels as if religion only separates people, the music brings us together.' That this is not universally true was evidenced during the Chorus Phase when one participant stridently asserted that they would like me to add more secular songs to the repertoire. However, overall this was not the sentiment of the group.

Initially my aim in starting SingCR0nise was to provide a space for people to participate in singing in the context of community, engage a dormant or undiscovered creativity, and develop relationships, combatting isolation and loneliness. Whilst these aims remain, the realisation of the significance of Christian songs to non-Christians, and the statement of one member that the choir functions as their church, led to reflection on the choir's purpose and its role in the delivery of missional objectives. Another member of Stacy Horn's choir articulates a feeling which was echoed in several of my own participant responses. She observes;

> I am an agnostic verging on an atheist, but find that sacred music is not antithetical to my beliefs (in the way that sitting through a church service is). I've come to the

> conclusion that music alone (and not the liturgy) represents the essence of what I would find palatable and comforting in religion. (2013:79)

Another area of interest is SingCR0nise's role vis-à-vis the wider community. The choir participates in a number of community activities and due consideration is given to their relationship to the church's mission.

One final area for consideration is SingCR0nise's role in engaging people with other aspects of the church. Some members now participate in other church programmes, notably the pantomime, food bank and Sunday gatherings. Whilst I reject disingenuous appropriation of the community choir model as a means of covert conversion, it undoubtedly functions as a window into the church's life, allowing participants to witness and experience elements of the church's missional activity, disavowing misconceptions or suspicions. In a denomination considering 'open' or 'closed' membership of its musical groups, this aspect of the choir's role is particularly pertinent.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the commencement of research, Anglia Ruskin University's ethical procedures were adhered to. The primary ethical consideration concerned my position as the church/choir leader and the attendant power dynamics. Through a relaxed and informal approach to the process, I sought to minimize power-play and empower participants to share without prejudice. The positive correlate of my position within the church was accessibility, as I am 'gate-keeper' to the research setting. However, it was incumbent upon me to remain sensitive to the circumstances of the individuals in the process, since no third-party was involved in determining who should or should not participate.

I was conscious that the notion of researching worship could cause unease among some people. Whilst this did not appear to be the case amongst my participant group, I remained alert to it throughout the process. Whilst there may have been those who questioned the validity of this research task and its attendant demands, I sought throughout to communicate the value of the research both locally and more widely in The Salvation Army.

Research was undertaken according to Anglia Ruskin University's Research Ethics Policy and The Salvation Army's Safeguarding Adults Policy.
(web.anglia.ac.uk/anet/rido/ethics/New%20Forms_May%202019/Research%20Ethics%20Policy%20Date%201%20May%202019%20Version%201.10.pdf – accessed 20/5/19)

(www.salvationarmy.org.uk/files/salvationarmysafeguardingpdf/download?token=pfirkVQM - accessed 7/10/19)

Limitations

Whilst the creative method was intended to enable those with limited written capacity to contribute on a par with more literate participants, it was not without its challenges. For some participants, my aim of encouraging participation was successful, with one person selecting several pictures of birds and flowers, which represented positive feelings towards singing in the 'here and now' but also evoked more ambivalent memories of singing as one of a very small number of things they perceived themselves to have been any good at as a child. Singing therefore simultaneously both reminds this person of their limitations and affords temporary emancipation from them. These rich insights into the role of singing for this person would have remained incarcerated in inarticulation without a creative means of expression. However, whilst this participant's voice was amplified through liberating, creative engagement, others found the process intimidating, at least initially. Several participants repeatedly asked me what *exactly* I wanted them to do, and found it difficult to accept that the blank page and limited guidelines were intentional and integral aspects of the research process, to allow for diverse responses. Whilst such people typically found it difficult to make a start, almost all ultimately produced creative pieces which expressed their response to the research statement and provided a helpful basis for the ensuing one-to-one conversations. My experience of this aspect of the process bears out Kara's assertion that visual methods can 'make it easier in interviews to discuss sensitive or uncomfortable subjects' (2015:84), as the adage 'a picture speaks a thousand words' often rang true.

During the process of data gathering, one participant suffered a stroke, one began chemotherapy, one was bereaved of their father and another of their father-in-law, one's spouse entered a hospice and another's child was diagnosed with a heart condition. As pastor to these individuals, my primary role was to support them during their time of need. As a researcher, I was keenly aware that these challenging circumstances would impact on their capacity or willingness to participate in the research. Indeed, two participants withdrew on health grounds. The sensitive relational dynamics meant that I sought not to place pressure on these participants. However, neither did I want to assume that their circumstances inevitably meant that they wanted or needed to withdraw, or to suggest that I would prefer them to do so. Sensitive management of such situations added an unanticipated, at times stressful, and time-consuming dynamic to the process of data gathering.

Whilst I am confident that I did not abuse my power in gathering information, at least two participants surprised me by articulating their explicit desire to furnish me with 'useful' or 'helpful' data for my research. While most participants behaved as I anticipated - as contributors to a collection of 'stories', without consciously referencing or suggesting their broader relationship to a process of data-gathering for reflection and analysis - these participants edited such aspects of their story as they felt might best 'serve my purposes'. Both used phrases such as 'this should be useful for your research' or 'is there anything else I can say that would be helpful'. Such statements unfortunately cast shadows over the integrity and authenticity of their responses, in so much as their desire to be 'helpful' may have led them to tailor their contributions in order to answer a question which had in fact not been asked. Fortunately, the emotional vulnerability of at least one of these respondents during the Duet phase mitigated my concerns regarding inauthenticity. These experiences however alerted me to listen for any sycophancy or eagerness to please as I engaged in analysis of the data.

The nature of the purposive sampling I undertook meant embracing the inevitability of challenges regarding meeting with participants, some of whose circumstances (which contributed to my rationale for inviting their participation) impacted upon their reliability. During the research process the church I lead also moved building and changed its service time twice, adding to the complexities of undertaking research alongside a full-time job and family responsibilities.

Conclusion

Research in a single location can only ever be indicative. However, my intention was to inform my own beliefs and practices and potentially identify themes of interest to The Salvation Army's leadership and other practitioners. I am conscious of the fact that having led New Addington Salvation Army Community Church for over eleven years, I may well have played a part in shaping participants' views in such a way as might bias aspects of this study towards a certain missiological perspective. However, irrespective of the source of any such influences, this study represents the views as held and articulated by members of the church and choir, and reflected upon in light of the theoretical perspectives previously noted.

I endeavoured to ensure that my research was relevant, feasible, credible, reflexive, ethical and original, in line with the six criteria for good research identified by Cameron and Duce (2013:1ff). Whilst New Addington Salvation Army Community Church is perhaps untypical of Salvation Army congregations, my research and reflections may encourage

other Salvation Army churches to reflect on their own practices, just as we also consider our own. It was always my hope that this research would itself be a part of the church's mission and that it would be transformative locally as well as farther afield.

CHAPTER FIVE
PRESENTING THE DATA

Introduction

This chapter presents the data which was subsequently analysed and reflected upon. It intentionally allows for participant voices to be heard, whilst also offering some initial commentary on each participant's offering. It also presents the data gathered from the Chorus Phase, when the group considered the themes arising from one another's work.

Summaries of Solo Phase Contributions and Duet Phase Conversations

The fifteen responses gifted to this research process, identified per their pseudonymous creators, are visual representations of the real-life experiences of fifteen people, whose personal perspectives were graciously contributed to this piece of work. Handling of this data-gift is thus undertaken with corresponding care and gratitude. The following summaries (ordered alphabetically according to pseudonym) encapsulate key elements arising from the Duet Phase conversations. They include key phrases extracted from the transcripts, and seek to give an overview of the tenor of the conversations, allowing for participants' voices to be heard. Participants' picture contributions are included for reference. Summaries are not intended to give reflective analysis, which follows later, however, occasional interpretative clarifications are added in [square brackets] and certain key words and concepts are <u>underlined</u>. Transcripts were produced verbatim and no allowances are made for grammatical inaccuracies.

ALICE

Figure 1. Solo Art Piece - Alice

Alice begins positively, addressing the colour-palette and nature-related themes in her work.

I've got some quite nice bright colours in it…

…the birds are <u>good at singing</u>…

However, the conversation quickly turns to Alice's perceived weakness in literacy and some of the other life-challenges she has faced.

Um, not being that good at putting things down [on paper], I feel the singing, it sort of, doesn't involve [writing], yeah, so it is perhaps <u>freedom</u>…

[at school] my subjects were…<u>singing</u> and cooking really…they were <u>my best subjects</u>.

I guess my life's been a bit up and, well, more downs than ups…

Friendship…Laughter…you can forget your problems for a little while.
I just think singing does a lot for me…I think I'm dyslexic, being, I can't put nothing, it is quite embarrassing really, I feel as though I can perhaps forget that bit, and just do what I can.

These extracts offer insight into the connection Alice finds between singing and freedom. Examination of the transcript identifies two key areas of freedom or liberation in Alice's experience. Firstly, as noted above, the freedom from limitations and challenges; a practical liberation resulting from the honing and exercise of a skill – in this case, singing, in the context of a community. Secondly, Alice associates singing with freedom from guilt, expressed both as personal release and liberation from divine judgment.

…things that's happened in my life, I sort of, a lot of things that I keep, keep in, so, in a way, singing is another thing for letting it all out really and still being private…I've got a lot of guilt in me, and I think that [singing] helps to…He's not up there saying 'Oh, no, you, you know, whatever, you shouldn't have done this, shouldn't have done that…'

Alice also connects singing with scripture, although she struggles to articulate why.

I think singing comes, erm, to me, singing, that sounds silly, is more like the Bible, I don't understand, it is a bit strange really.

…singing is my Bible. I don't know whether that's strange to you or not.

It appears that singing circumvents Alice's perceived weakness in literacy by enabling engagement with scripture through song, without reliance upon the written word, connecting her to the Bible, which she otherwise finds inaccessible.

Interpersonal relationships are equally impacted, with singing facilitating elements of community, family and belonging, otherwise missing from Alice's life.

> *I'm not a very good mixer and I spend a lot of time on my own, but I think it is just a little crowd of us, and one can let your hair down really, and have a laugh…it is a bit like being back at school! (laughs)*
>
> *…with losing a lot of my family, and that, you're singing up, so you're, I don't know, I can't explain really…I've always liked singing.*

…when you live on your own…you do keep things in, which isn't always a good thing really, but, as I say, with singing you can belt it out and get it out.

I do feel as though I belong…

ALISON

Figure 2. Solo Art Piece - Alison

From the outset, belonging and inclusivity are key themes in Alison's artwork and Duet Phase conversation. She refers to my role as choir leader in this context.

…I also put you [Matt] in the middle, because you represent for me, you represent the whole thing. The supportive element, the love element, the together element. And you're calm and you have endless patience, and you bring out the best, in, I think, everyone. You're completely non-judgemental about everybody's singing…

…the hands around are the supportive element…embracing and making you feel really, sort of, welcome…from day one, that's how I felt…it didn't matter who you

were, or where you come from, whatever, you, you just were welcomed and felt supported.'

…unity together…

The joy and fun of singing together, in a group, is kind of second to none…

I love the fact that everybody's so warm and friendly…

Alison identifies a relationship between singing and emotion. Noting music's power to evoke both happiness and sadness, she divides her artwork accordingly, with a heart-shaped word-cloud associated with singing, connecting the two.

music for me evokes both [happiness and sadness] of those emotions…

There's something about when you, perhaps don't feel great, and you hear a song that just lifts your, you know, your spirits, and on a Sunday when I come singing …no matter what mood I'm in…I always come back in singing away…it just lifts my mood so dramatically…I never don't want to come…

…it is not just that singing always makes you happy, actually, it can make you quite sad as well.

There are echoes of redemption and healing in Alison's conversation. She refers to open-air performances which the choir has given for several years in Shrublands, a local housing estate which became nationally renowned when 17-year-old Kurdish Iranian asylum-seeker Reker Ahmed was attacked at a bus stop by multiple assailants in April 2017 (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-41933451 - accessed 1/10/19). Speaking just weeks later, Alison says;

I love going to Shrublands actually, because it always does feel, it feels really inclusive…you just embrace 'yeah, bring everybody on!' and small children cycling up and down and people, you know…that for me, is perfect, really. I love that.

The duet conversation preceding this statement, concerned the attack on Reker Ahmed, and Alison's words must be understood in this light. She infers that the choir singing yards from the attack site is an act of inclusivity in a place where some sought to incite division,

thus going some small way towards redeeming the ground on which the attack happened and healing the community living there.

Concerning personal healing, Alison traces the role of one choir song; *Benediction*, within her journey of grief following her mother's death. The song, sung at her mother's funeral, consequently became associated with sadness, but gradually prompted what Alison calls 'a happy cry' as her journey through grief shaped her relationship with the song.

Alison also associates singing with learning and development, which over time has impacted her confidence.

> *…when I came along, all that time ago…it was really quite hard!*
>
> *…however many years later, I finally feel that a sort of a slight penny has dropped…I'm much more intuitive, so I'm learning and…that's really lovely, so that's kind of built on my confidence.*
>
> *the challenge of learning new stuff and sort of, and not wanting…to let the side down…you want to learn it well, because otherwise…it won't sound as good.*

Whilst not attending church services, Alison nevertheless appreciates what she refers to as 'singing praises from your heart'.

> *I don't come to The Salvation Army church…but I do enjoy singing praises…I do enjoy that aspect of it. And, somehow, it is, it is that real kind of sense of singing from your heart.*

Alison alludes to a spiritual experience when singing, which surpasses the physical or human-relational aspects. The choir, it seems, for Alison, fulfils many of the roles one might associate with belonging to a church.

EDDIE

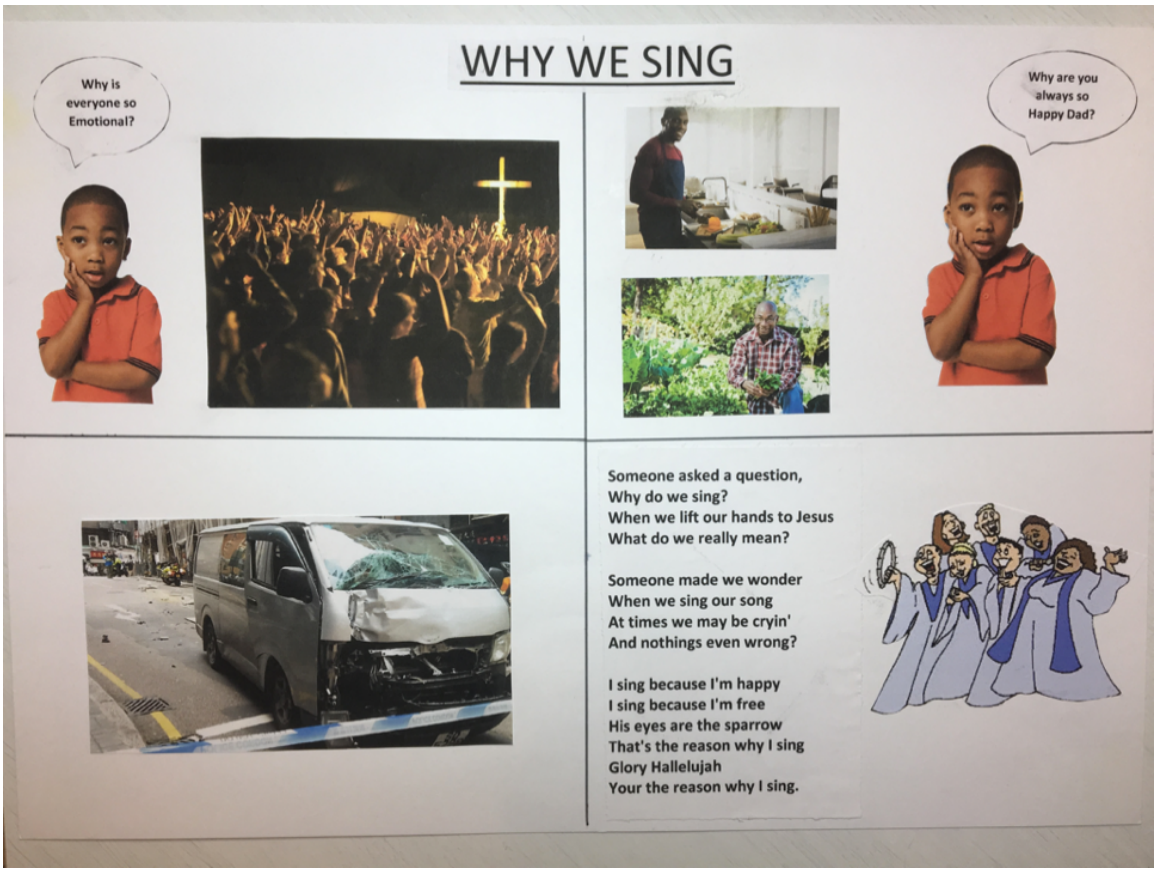


Figure 3. Solo Art Piece - Eddie

Eddie's art piece contrasts pain and joy, and features the repeated question 'why?'. His Pentecostal upbringing was characterised by joyful, emotionally-charged singing both at church and in the home, which, by his own admission, Eddie struggled to understand until later in life.

> *I remember Sunday especially [dad would] just be singing around, singing and cooking away, and, er, dancing and you know, being happy and at times emotional, and this I could never understand.*

Following a serious accident, which he credits with initiating his relationship with The Salvation Army, Eddie began attending both church and choir, from which point he identifies a change in his relationship with singing and emotion and his understanding of his father.

…what I've noticed more so since I've been singing in choir, that songs in choir are songs from the Bible, so it is songs from God, and it is God's word.
And it makes me…appreciate what the words in the song mean, as to why people are emotional…because it is, the songs are to do with words from God, which is to do with everyday life…

There's a lot of the choir songs which I have [in the car], and it really brings it back as to why my dad was always happy, you know, the songs, it is like an everyday relationship with God, and it is your way of expressing everything…

Eddie equates faith-based songs with scripture (which sometimes is literally the case), and he understands scripture as God's word, which he relates directly to his everyday life. When asked whether he feels that he connects with God when singing, Eddie replied *'Yes, definitely'*, indicating that the songs and the emotions they engender both express and facilitate his relationship with God. Considering this, Eddie's statement concerning the distinction between choir and church singing is particularly interesting:

I probably feel more emotional singing in choir as opposed to at church. I think, 'cos it is just singing as opposed to…it hits you more…at certain times it does, it does at church as well, but I do find that at choir it does really, does hit home.

For Eddie as with Alison, it appears that the choir facilitates a spiritual experience beyond the context of a church service.

ELLEN

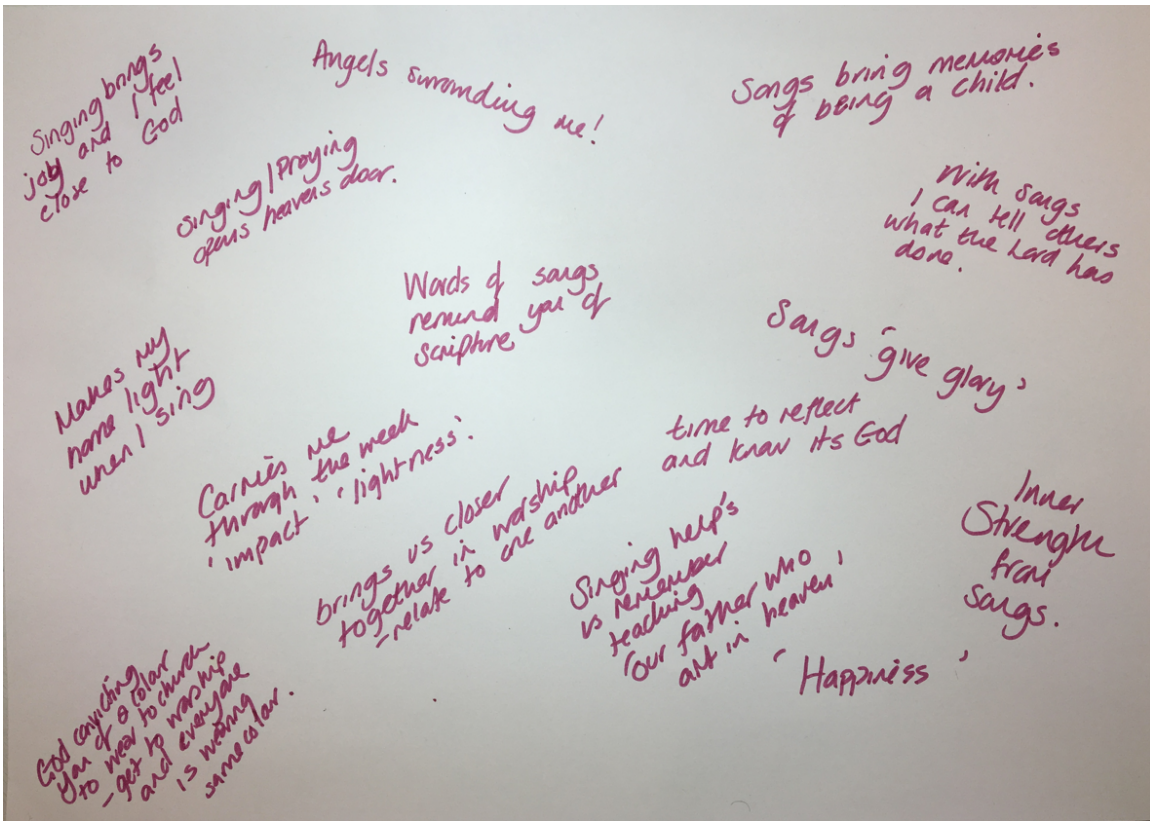


Figure 4. Solo Art Piece - Ellen

From the outset, Ellen connects singing with her personal faith in God, describing it both as a means of freedom from life's troubles and of encountering God.

> *…when I'm singing, sometimes you know, you feel like the world's on top of you and there's no way out…it is like there's a song comes to you and you just start to sing…it is not just the song coming to you, but it is Him, Himself, coming to you why he's showing you; 'sing the songs of joy and I will give you comfort'. And many songs come to me sometimes when I'm feeling so far away, so lonely, so reckless…*
>
> *…these songs come to you when you really need life and the songs gave you life that is joy…you feel very different after the song, you feel like you could jump, you could fly, you could do many things, but it is Him because you sing the song and it bring close the Father to you…that's what He's showing us; sing songs of joys and He will give us comfort.*

…if you feel like there's no way out – how am I gonna do this? How am I gonna get out of that? Just sing a song…and that turn your life around just for a moment.

Ellen ascribes a potency to songs within her experience. She speaks of singing in the same context as the work of the Holy Spirit, with both sating a feeling of emptiness and both being described as 'food'.

…it is very important to sing. I feel songs is food. Songs is joy…it just feed your inside, it full you. Sometimes you feel empty, but when you sing, that's food that it gave unto you, you know, there's a spirit, Holy Spirit, that come inside and fill the body, so that's food for you…you don't feel that emptiness no more, you feel full. And that's what songs done for us. We must believe in songs as well and know what songs can do for us.

In addition to inner nourishment, Ellen credits songs with facilitating freedom and transcendence.

…'Bless the Lord O my soul'…this song opened the door. Most time I listened to it, it is like I'm carried away. We're not ourselves in that moment of time.

Ellen identifies songs as charting the journey of her life and embedding scripture in her mind. This has enabled her not only to express her faith but to share it with others and bring them joy.

I like the songs in England and I like the songs in Jamaica, because when we put them together it make history – it make wonders, you know – it bring back memories. It bring back life.

We sing, we dance, we clap, we feel joyful, we praise the Lord in a marvellous way by singing songs.

In Jamaica we sing songs like, you know, song from the Bible, you know…[sings] 'Our Father, whofore art in heaven…'

I have songs to tell others what the Lord hath done, because he took me from a miry way and he brought me here.

…if someone sad and I'm singing, it is like they just start smiling…I uplift that spirit that was need to be uplift… when you start to sing and dance, they just have to laugh…

HARRY

Figure 5. Solo Art Piece - Harry

In a relatively short conversation, Harry identifies a difference in his response to hymns and contemporary worship songs. Whilst acknowledging the importance of lyrics, he notes that for him, the tune and style of the music is of greater significance.

…most of the songs we sing, they're happy, they're upbeat, they've got a good tune to them…[at certain other churches]…they're too 'hymny' if you like…sometimes they can feel a bit downbeat and not so much fun to sing.

…more the style I'd say. Obviously I do, as I sing the lyrics, I understand what they're saying to me, but more the style of the music, and the er, the beat…

Harry suggests that this preference for upbeat music might also be true for others.

> *…from a music point of view, the upbeat does bring people in I think and make people stay.*

Harry identifies that he lacks confidence in singing, but feels emboldened by participating in the context of a group.

> *…I do feel slightly uncomfortable when I sing…but I don't mind singing in a group, er, as a group I'm ok singing. Not necessarily at choir!*

IMOGEN

Figure 6. Solo Art Piece - Imogen

Imogen's art piece is particularly visceral. She connects a sense of physical ebullience with the emotions evoked when singing, noting a cycle of emotional healing facilitated by singing.

> *My first thought…was the feeling that you get, the physical feeling you get when you're singing. That it comes from your belly and up and out and that is what this [picture] sort of represents…anything that you've got inside you that is…an emotion, comes out when you sing…but then it also, that feeling, then goes back into yourself…So it comes out and it becomes nice and peaceful, happy, collegial and then that feeling then enters back again, and so that's sort of cyclical…*
>
> *…music has always been my solace…*

Having identified the cycle on a personal level, she then considers its impact in a group context.

> *…singing with other people is a completely different thing, that feeling of togetherness and, urm, friendship, urm, and finding other people with a similar or maybe dissimilar, but people with different experiences in life that then have an impact on you…I can give myself to other people and then they influence me.*

Imogen credits belonging to the choir and subsequently singing and playing an instrument in church as having played a significant role in her journey to faith.

> *…when I started choir…it was about meeting other people. I had no faith at the time, and you know, as I've said before, 'angry atheism'…but, um, now the words that we sing have just as much impact as the tunes. It was the music to start with and now the lyrics are also a big part of that.*
>
> *…singing has changed my life. Through singing with The Salvation Army drew me into the pantomime, drew me into the community of people, which eventually drew me into Christianity and my life has changed due to singing.*
>
> *…it felt good to be a part of that community of the singing and then the community of the choir, and um, the community of the pantomime. And now, that same feeling I get now on a Sunday, and actually, it was just Sundays for a while, but now that*

feeling I get most of the week, because I've got that inside me now, so I don't need to be directly with the people that have brought me into this to feel it…

LINDSAY

Figure 7. Solo Art Piece - Lindsay

Lindsay begins by denigrating her vocal abilities.

I can't sing…

I know I'm tone deaf; I've been told that since I was that high…

In spite of this negative start to the conversation, Lindsay identifies singing in the choir as transcending her perceived weaknesses and providing empowerment through unity.

> *I chose the word empowerment…when we're all singing together it is very em…we're all included and even when you say 'let's do ooo this time' and we all manage to do, sing all 'ooo' more or less on, at the same time…that kind of empowerment.*
>
> *…the unity bit is kind of like the drug that makes me keep coming back…it is so lovely to do the same thing with other people, all at the same time…unity was the best word I could think of for that.*
>
> *I've never, ever been able to sing a note, and you all put up with me, and you're all singing something and I'm singing something else, but it doesn't matter! But…it is this thing where; 'You can do it! You will do it! You're not going to be put down!'…that's the empowerment.*

Much of Lindsay's negative self-perception concerning singing stems from childhood experiences and until joining SingCR0nise in 2008, she had not sung for several decades. Lindsay credits the choir with helping her to find her voice again.

LOUISE

Figure 8. Solo Art Piece - Louise

Louise expresses how singing in both gathered worship and SingCR0nise has enabled her to grow in confidence, and experience freedom and happiness. Being afforded the opportunity to lead within a musical context has also been significant for her.

> *…it feels very comfortable singing, and I probably wouldn't have necessarily thought that, um, however many years ago, when I've been at other churches or whatever. It is never perhaps felt quite so easy and comfortable.*
>
> *…I definitely feel like I've grown as a singer, but also, but not really meaning as a voice, grown, in a, just a confidence…*
>
> *…Theresa May is there [in the picture] for leadership, in terms of, just, the step by step feeling that I'm able to also be a leader in that format.*
>
> *…sometimes I do kind of feel like I'm flying…I don't feel like I'm [literally] flying, that's completely rubbish, but just, bit free, I guess, yeah, free.*
>
> *…singing does make me happy.*

Louise also refers to singing in the context of gathered worship inspiring her to pray for people outside of that context. Speaking of a block of flats visible through the window of a building in which the church previously met for worship, she describes how she would pray for the residents as she was singing.

> *…every Sunday that I sang there, I prayed for every person in that block. Just, while I was singing…*

MIKE

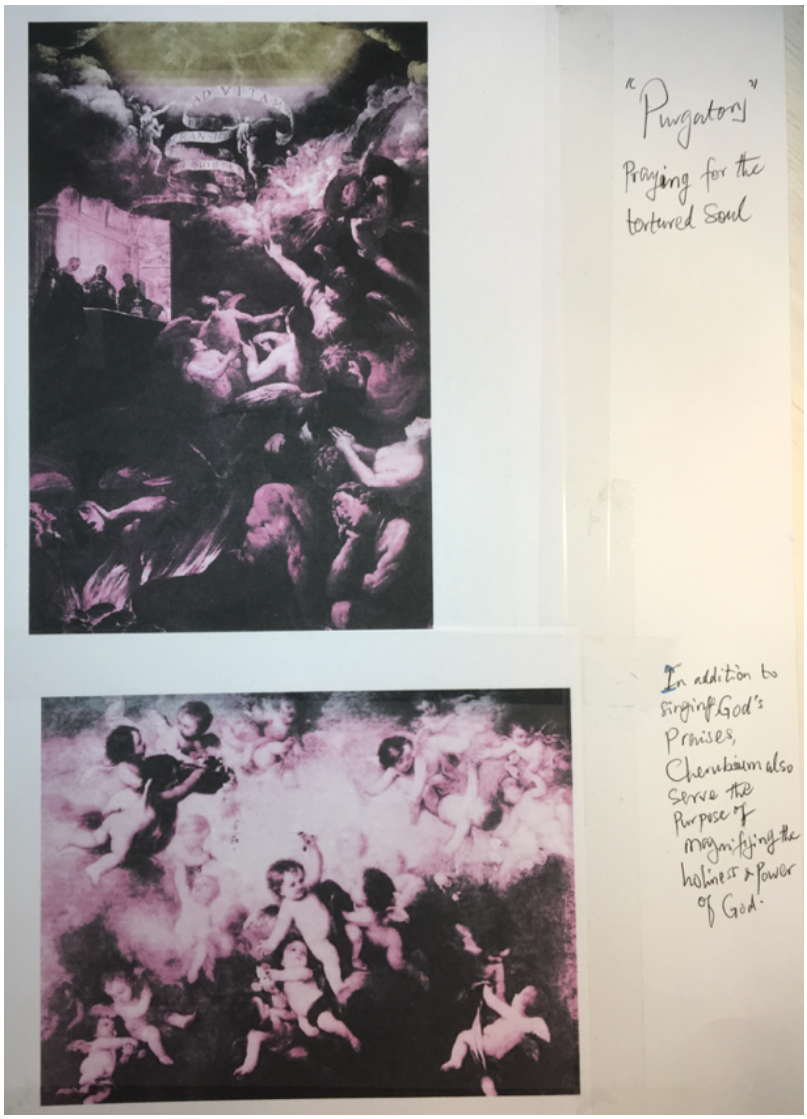


Figure 9. Solo Art Piece - Mike

From the outset, Mike associates singing with prayer, praise, spirituality and angels.

> *I wanted to express or depict, um, my <u>feelings</u> and what goes through my mind when I'm <u>praying</u> or when I'm <u>singing praise</u> to God.*
>
> *…when I'm singing…I always have this…image in my head where I have these floaty <u>angels</u> who are just playing all sorts of instruments…we are singing on earth but they are actually <u>converted to something much more above</u>…*

…that's how I view singing. I feel that the angels convert everybody's singing into a really nice harmonious singing sound…that then, through the power of it, actually gets elevated to God.

…singing is also a form of prayer…especially if…the lyrics are…touching on certain aspects of my life, my thoughts, my current state of mind, then I actually see it as prayer…

…with the church, where I am, the people around me, the music, it just fills me up with so much more that it just…lifts me and…emboldens me to just go 'yeah! You can pray…you can sing out loudly…you contribute…to the atmosphere.'…I'm making a special connection with a higher body.

I find singing is praising…when you're singing a…church-based song, a Christian-based song – to me, it is a form of prayer, so you, so it is connected.

…for me, prayer and singing are intertwined. One and the same.

As was the case with Harry, Mike also notes that musical style impacts his engagement with and participation in singing.

I like to be entertained when I'm singing…I don't like singing boring songs…I feel like the more I'm entertained by the song that I'm singing the more I'm praying – the more I'm into that prayer.

I think if I go to a church that doesn't…fill me with that sense of enthusiasm to participate, it, the music, the singing doesn't get into me to let me be part of it and vocalise myself, then I think…I would become withdrawn from my church and I won't participate.

Mike uses the language of inner transformation in relation to songs:

…the song gets inside me, and then it just transforms me, and then I just burst into it and go for it.

NICHOLAS

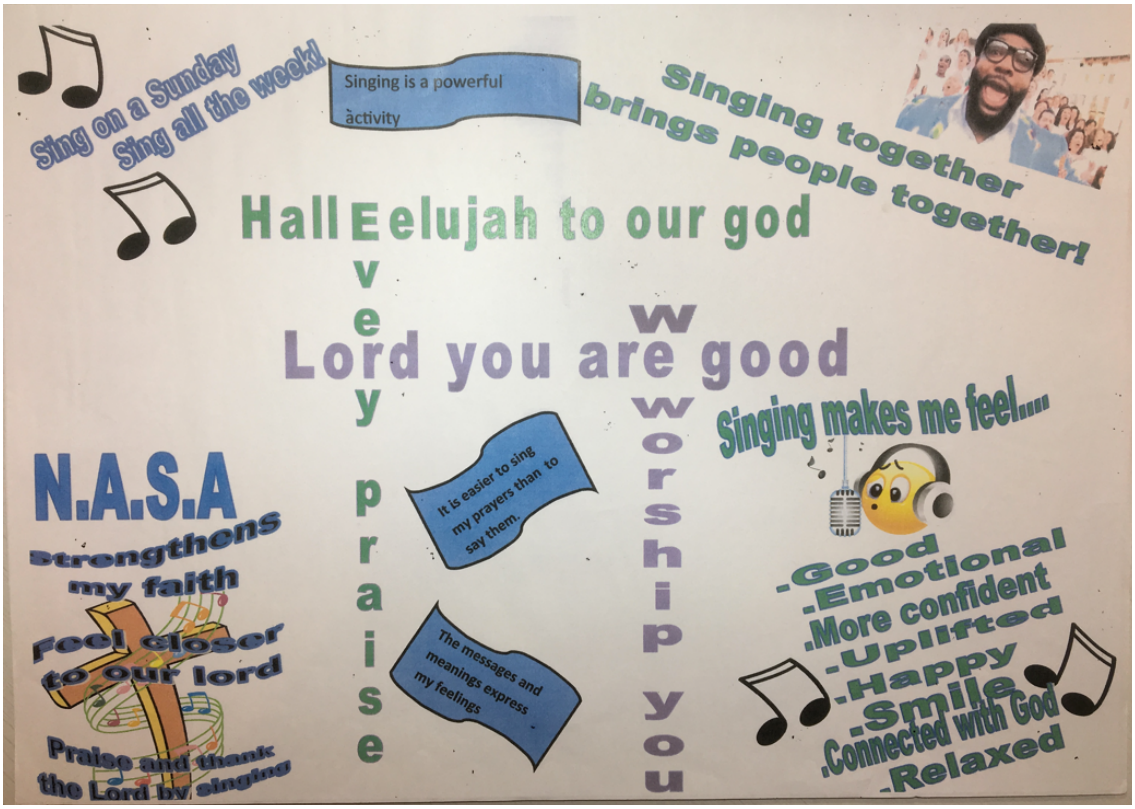


Figure 10. Solo Art Piece - Nicholas

For Nicholas singing evokes all manner of emotions.

> *…when we was at choir, it was extremely uplifting and we would be singing all week.*
>
> *...all week long, it [the song] would…warm the cockles of your heart! It would make you smile. I enjoyed it immensely – just loved it – and it reinforced so much that…I care about, about church actually, and this NASA family.*
>
> *…it [singing] strengthens the heart, it strengthens the conviction, it just uplifts a person…it is just fantastic…I can't describe it any other way!*
>
> *The messages in, the meanings in, the songs that we sing, do express my feelings. They really do express my true emotional feelings. And that's from going way back as a child, from going to, to, um, Sunday School.*

Singing makes me feel, well, good! Absolutely. Emotional. Er, probably too emotional sometimes.

I get a tear comes to my eyes, because we sing about things and I just think how lucky am I because there's so many people out there that aren't. And that upsets me…That's a political thing anyhow.

Nicholas makes frequent mention of singing's power to bring unity within groups of people, and effect transformation for both those singing and those listening.

Singing together brings people together.

…once a year we would do it [sing] for the disabled people…and those people would join in with such bliss and fun and it would make everyone smile and it would make us all happy about what we're seeing…it is uplifting and it brings you back to reality about what life is about and how gifted, you know, and how lucky we are, and how unfortunate some people are, but you can help them, you know, just by that singing, it would uplift their spirits…

In common with a number of participants, Nicholas relates singing to prayer and his own faith journey, highlighting the significance of the choir and church leader.

…it is easier to sing my prayers than to say them…I find that when I put things in music, in my own mind, I can explain them better.

[singing]…Lord we worship you…Lord you are good...is easier than actually sitting down and saying my prayers, which I do do…but it is nice to be able to sing those sort of things.

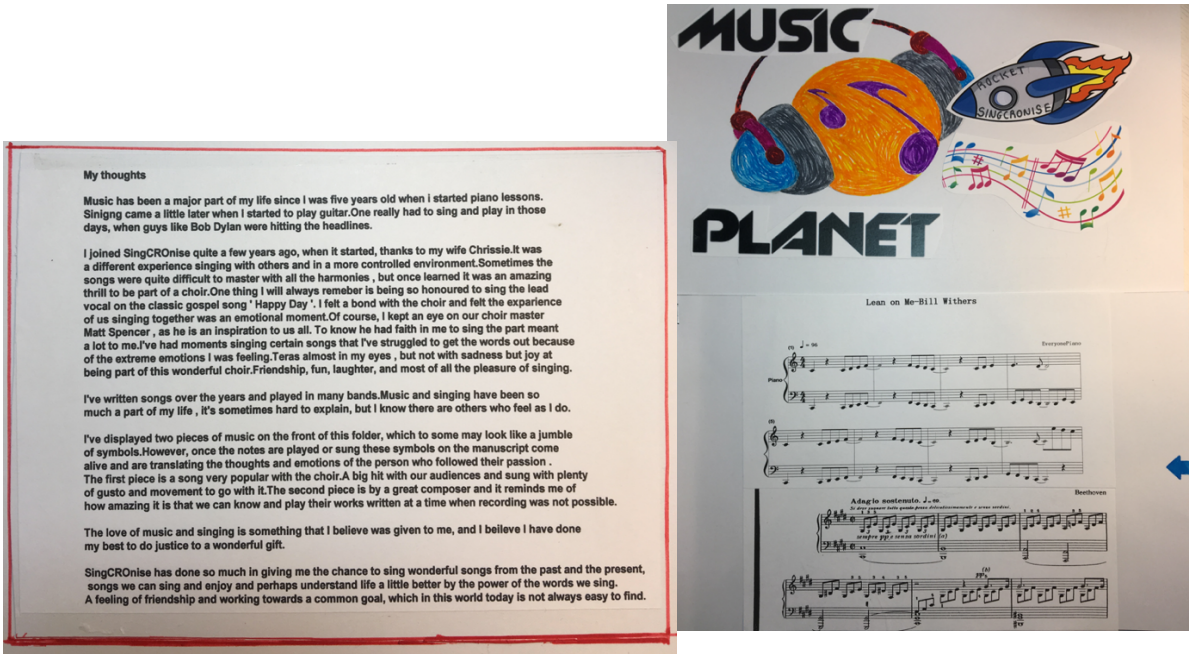
Connected with our Lord. Connected with God, and relaxed…definitely. It brings us back to my Christian roots.

…you [Matt] strengthen…my faith immensely, and everyone around us does. And, I, and thank you for that.

Although self-identifying as a generally confident person, Nicholas notes that his ability to sing in front of people evidences a shift in confidence which singing has produced. He also refers to the physical and emotional relaxation singing facilitates.

> *…we're singing and we're praising and we're saying our prayers, yes, it makes me feel more relaxed…more comfortable with ourselves and with our surroundings and with our fellow people.*

NIGEL



My thoughts

Music has been a major part of my life since I was five years old when i started piano lessons. Sinigng came a little later when I started to play guitar.One really had to sing and play in those days, when guys like Bob Dylan were hitting the headlines.

I joined SingCROnise quite a few years ago, when it started, thanks to my wife Chrissie.It was a different experience singing with others and in a more controlled environment.Sometimes the songs were quite difficult to master with all the harmonies , but once learned it was an amazing thrill to be part of a choir.One thing I will always remeber is being so honoured to sing the lead vocal on the classic gospel song ' Happy Day '. I felt a bond with the choir and felt the experience of us singing together was an emotional moment.Of course, I kept an eye on our choir master Matt Spencer , as he is an inspiration to us all. To know he had faith in me to sing the part meant a lot to me.I've had moments singing certain songs that I've struggled to get the words out because of the extreme emotions I was feeling.Teras almost in my eyes , but not with sadness but joy at being part of this wonderful choir.Friendship, fun, laughter, and most of all the pleasure of singing.

I've written songs over the years and played in many bands.Music and singing have been so much a part of my life , it's sometimes hard to explain, but I know there are others who feel as I do.

I've displayed two pieces of music on the front of this folder, which to some may look like a jumble of symbols.However, once the notes are played or sung these symbols on the manuscript come alive and are translating the thoughts and emotions of the person who followed their passion . The first piece is a song very popular with the choir.A big hit with our audiences and sung with plenty of gusto and movement to go with it.The second piece is by a great composer and it reminds me of how amazing it is that we can know and play their works written at a time when recording was not possible.

The love of music and singing is something that I believe was given to me, and I beileve I have done my best to do justice to a wonderful gift.

SingCROnise has done so much in giving me the chance to sing wonderful songs from the past and the present, songs we can sing and enjoy and perhaps understand life a little better by the power of the words we sing. A feeling of friendship and working towards a common goal, which in this world today is not always easy to find.

Figure 11. Solo Art Piece - Nigel

Nigel describes being transported to another place through listening to or participating in music, which he views as a gift to the world.

> *…when you're singing and playing music, you are <u>taken to another world</u>…*
>
> *I'm definitely <u>transported</u> a lot…*
>
> *…on Sunday…sometimes I'll 'shall I go, shall I?', but I can honestly say, at the end of it, I walk out [of choir rehearsal] and <u>feel different</u>. I really, really do.*

…it is an out of this world kind of thing [music]…where did it come? It was given to us, to give us amazing pleasure.

He explains his experience of singing with the choir using language of community, spirituality and emotion.

…very uplifting at times – very uplifting.

Certain songs…I really struggle to get the words out…you know, the emotion in it, and the feeling when you feel everybody together, um, yeah, amazing, amazing experience…

…we've sung…and then you can feel an, a sort of atmos…a presence there and you're singing and everybody, and you look there, and everybody's as one. And, erm, your thoughts are as one, and it is just extremely uplifting…

…it is not just music, it is, you know, meeting the people, the… spiritual side of it. Yeah, there is a spiritual side. It doesn't matter, um, exactly how far you…there is a spiritual thing there, 100%, yeah, I feel that as well.

…you can connect through music, spiritually.

…I think it is great that you can connect spiritually through music.

Nigel notes how the choir and church has enabled him to express his musical gifting, which he believes is incumbent upon him to do. This participation has been transformative for him.

I'm never gonna be a great singer and I'm never gonna be a great musician, but I've, I've been given some sort of gift, and I'm trying to act on that. And I think people should as much as possible.

…you've got to act on the gift, best you can.

[in the worship band] there's just a lovely warm glow, sort of thing, and kindness around and everybody trying to help everybody else…that definitely changed my life…it is changed my thought, I try to be more patient and kind and

understanding…I do, honestly, through that, yeah, through that one thing, definitely…

Without elaborating, Nigel alludes to music's salvific role in his life.

…I've had lot of things in my [life], yeah, going back, but, without the music that, (sigh), I don't know what, I don't know what I'd have done. Seriously.

Nigel also suggests that in the context of the choir, the leader has been significant for him, particularly with regard to his own self-confidence.

…Matt, you know us…you've gotta have faith in the person that's out there… …sometimes, you know, we're not doing at all well, but you're out, the guy out there, come on, I've gotta keep going, cos Matt's, you know, I've got, great faith in him as well, and that's absolutely part of it. It is got to be. You could have someone else doing it, um, it wouldn't work.

…people think that I've got a lot of confidence and outgoing, but believe me, it is actually possibly the complete opposite…I remember you saying 'I'm looking for someone to have a go at [song]' and I thought, 'there's no way I'm gonna put my hand up'. And nobody did, and you said 'Oh, that's a shame' and I thought, 'oh well, I'll have a go'. But part of that was, you know, I, I looked at you the whole, every time I sing it, and, and to have, you know, I'm thinking 'Matt's got faith in me to carry this through'…I think that is possibly the high spot of all my musical things – given the opportunity to do that, with, with you out front and the choir, and er, it is just, just amazing.

…Matt…your patience is beyond belief.

NORMAN

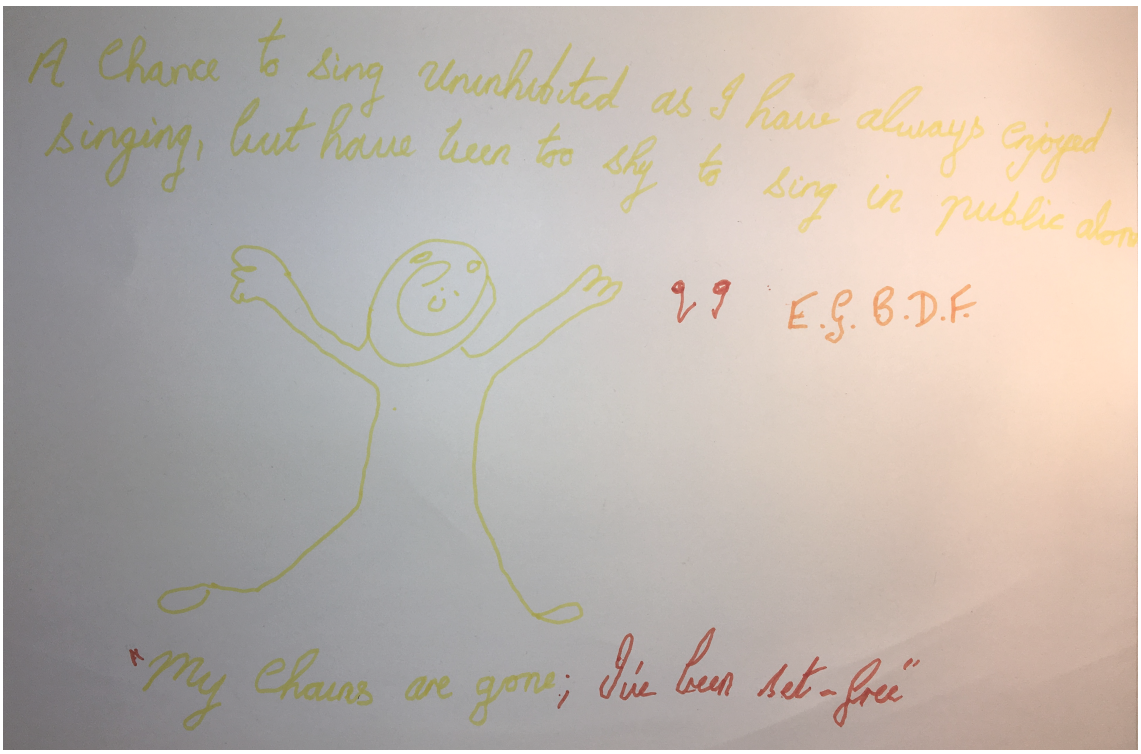


Figure 12. Solo Art Piece - Norman

Norman begins by apologising for writing in yellow, before reading aloud the 'offending' words, which reference a lack of confidence around singing in public, which singing in the choir and church services has gone some way towards addressing.

> *A chance to sing uninhibited. I've always loved singing – enjoyed singing – sorry, but have been too shy to sing in public.*
>
> *I'm always very…stage fright, if you know, sort of thing. But there's nothing I like better than getting up and singing in front of an audience.*
>
> *it [choir/church] brought it out, cos, erm, no one would notice me.*

Speaking of the lyric 'My chains are gone; I've been set free', from Chris Tomlin's 'Amazing Grace', Norman says;

> *…it is just liberated me to be able to sing in public.*

He goes on to elaborate further on his experience of liberation from shyness and loneliness.

> *Shyness – that was all it was.*
>
> *I've never been a particularly good mixer, but it is changing since I've been coming to the Sally Army.*
>
> *…I always find music and singing a great release.*
>
> *It makes me happy, I mean, I've always been, liked singing. But I, I…terrible stage fright at one time. But that seems to have gone away.*
>
> *…it is improved my life, you might say. My quality of life.*
>
> *Getting involved with other people as well.*
>
> *Making friends.*
>
> *…you've all got something in common haven't you.*

TANYA

Figure 13. Solo Art Piece - Tanya

Tanya expresses a deeply personal engagement with singing from the outset.

> *…with the choir and with church, it just uplifts me and it makes me feel happy.*
>
> *…when I sing, when I hear music, it sort of makes me come out of me…*
>
> *…it makes me feel quite joyful, and I always come away afterwards feeling better than when I came in.*
>
> *Singing makes me happy. Yes, it does. But I should say, also, it makes me quite thoughtful. Um, not thoughtful…what word am I looking for? When you, you, it actually makes you stop and think about…*

She acknowledges that it took time for her to gain confidence concerning choral singing.

> *…when I first joined the choir, I wasn't even sure I could be a part of a choir, because it sounded quite grand to be part of a choir. And over the years, partly due to you and partly due to the people that are in the choir, I just think it is become a big part of my life…*
>
> *…now, I think, well 'oh yeah, I can do it' whereas before I thought 'oh, I can't do this. I'll sing quietly in case I sing off key, or I don't do it right.' Whereas, now I think, 'well, if I go wrong, it doesn't matter'…I think that comes with getting to know the people, and thinking, oh, maybe though it doesn't matter if you go wrong.*
>
> *…all my life, I've been, I mustn't make mistakes, cos I'm expected to be a certain way…it is quite nice sometimes to think 'can I just be me, and not be who you think I should be?'…and perhaps if it is through music, that's er, quite nice actually!*
>
> *I've always wanted singing to be a bigger part of my life…even though I wasn't sure, I was, I don't know, suitable for a choir…but it was the confidence that grew through it, because I wasn't confident at all beforehand…*

As with several other participants, Tanya refers to distinctions regarding musical style and tempo. However, generally, it seems that lyrics are of greater significance for her.

> *…the lyrics, I think, are very important. I mean, I like the upbeat ones, because you can really sort of move and get into them. Er, but also sometimes the lyrics of the slower songs you have more of a time to listen to them and they can be quite touching.*
>
> *…some of the music sometimes can touch you even more than the words, can't they, and vice versa. It depends doesn't it…how you're feeling.*
>
> *…you could have the same lyrics from one week to another, and one week it'll mean one thing and perhaps the next week it'll mean something else, depending on how you feel…*

Continuing her reflections, Tanya draws a connection between singing and prayer.

…they [lyrics] can almost be like a prayer, some of them.

…I find it difficult to stand up and pray…but, I think with music and song, it doesn't matter, because you sort of 'go with it'…I find it easier than to stand up in front of someone, and, er, express how you feel, cos that's quite, quite intimate.

…with music, that, I think it takes that [lack of confidence] away from you…you're singing it, you're probably getting your meaning through, but it is not too personal, it is not too intimate of what's happening to you, although the emotions may be coming out.

She also makes frequent mention of her struggles with scripture which are alleviated by singing.

…sometimes you can read the Bible, and you're reading it, but you're reading it, it is not actually making an impact, and you're not actually getting to the meaning of it. Whereas with words and with music to the words, I think they can touch you and you can feel them in a different way.

…you can read in the Bible and you're reading it and at the end of it, you think 'well, what have I read?' Whereas with words and music together, I dunno, it just makes more of an impact I think.

Referring to my song 'In Quietness and Trust' (Appendix M), the lyrics of which are taken directly from the Bible, Tanya notes the difference for her between reading and singing the scripture.

…you're singing…about the Bible, and you're reading it, but it has a completely different…to reading it as a passage from the Bible.

…if you put those words to, perhaps a different type of music…it may not have had the same impact…

Tanya refers to the transformative power of group singing, not only for herself but for others.

…more people should sing…it would help a lot of people in different situations, to have that feeling of being part of the group…music and singing would really make a difference…it can change your life...if it can change it in a little, small way, then that sort of knocks on to lots of other parts if you like…and it makes me happy!

…it [singing chorally] can change, change your outlook on things and change your mood and change how you see things.

…you go [to choir] because you think, 'ah!', you know, it makes you come out, and you think 'ah!' that sets you up, as you say, it sets you up for the week and you think 'well, whatever happens, you know, bring it on, we can deal with it!'.

…I tend to think 'oh no, you know, pull yourself together…' Whereas, I suppose with music, you sort of, you can let that out in a different way can't you.

…when you look at people and how it is affected their lives and how they've changed…it can only be a good thing, can't it.

Tanya distinguishes between her experiences of singing in church and in choir, suggesting perhaps a feeling of greater freedom of expression when singing in the context of the choir.

I think I'm two different people from church to choir…

I feel in church I should be more of a certain way. More composed perhaps, or like, because it is a religious…we're listening to a sermon, we're…it is a different thing. But when you're in choir, feel more like, sort of light and it is a fun time. It is perhaps, you know, I just look at it differently.

…I think perhaps I look at the songs that I sing at church as more of the sermon and what the topic's about…you can get the song connected…that's the aim anyway, to the sermon.

…after you've sung the song, you hear the sermon and you think 'ah', you know, you can connect that and I think it can touch you in a different way.

…at choir I come thinking 'oh, I can have a good sing here'…I come with a…different outlook, and it is my 'oh, I really enjoy it!' Whereas I enjoy singing at church, but it is, I just find it two different things.

…at the choir it is more sociable, you're talking in between, we probably shouldn't be…we're talking in between songs, and it is more a social thing…whereas with church, I still, I suppose it is the old, old sort of fashioned way, you're here to, to pray and you're here to, to sing, but it is in a different, different context.

…I do think it is, it is, a bit different, the songs we sing at, er, choir, to the ones we sing at church, but I think that's possibly me in a different frame of mind when I'm at one to the other.

Whilst acknowledging the differences she experiences between church and choir, Tanya identifies that for some, choir provides elements of church which they might otherwise not experience.

…some people…the choir is their, um, their faith of the week…They may not have a particular faith or they may not come to church, but coming and singing the gospel songs, um…obviously touches them in a certain way that they keep wanting to come back, otherwise they would join a different type of choir if they just wanted to sing.

WAYNE

Figure 14. Solo Art Piece - Wayne

Wayne identifies a mix of emotions and experiences stemming from his choir involvement.

> *…the emotions that come out of choir, of like, singing, well…sometimes it is frustration…and it comes back to 'can I sing?' I have trouble remembering words…*
>
> *…who I am and who I've become in both the last, probably ten years. And a lot of that is because of the choir, has forced me out of my comfort zone…*
>
> *I've gotten friends out of the choir…it is about the chat and the stuff and the listening and the sharing…*
>
> *…I've made some really, really good friends because of it…*
>
> *I think the family's become stronger because both [wife] and I sing in the choir and it is something we do together.*

It is very hard on a Sunday evening, to kind of drag my arse out, off the sofa…but I come back and I'm completely energised...because of the words…because the camaraderie and because of the, just sense of, of fun really.

Wayne refers to my leadership style as being significant in his engagement with choir.

…you [Matt] can take a lot of credit for – you probably wouldn't, but you should…you turn up and you feel like we're having a laugh…we have a laugh, and that's what it is about. Anyone can learn anything if you have fun…the older you get, the less you wanna learn if you're not having fun.

Choir has not only reengaged Wayne with church, but he understands it as functioning as his church.

…it all spills out of choir ultimately…

Choir has sort of brought church back to me, and NASA has sort of, within, has come via the choir effectively, I've become more involved in NASA because of the choir and it is like an extended family.

…choir gives me a sense of refreshed start of the week…

…I didn't have a tick [on the drawing] going back to church from choir…because choir is my church…Choir is my extension of church…that's my, um, way of expressing my beliefs and my, kind of, um, thoughts and outlook on life I think. You know, I was born and raised a Christian by my parents, but I didn't really understand what that meant at the tender age of 'x'. It certainly didn't mean to me that you had to go to a strange, innocuous building twice every Sunday, and sit around and not make any noise and, um, be seen and not heard, and not express yourself through song or anything like that. So, church to me, is, is certainly not going somewhere on the appointed hour and, um, going through the motions…It certainly would never work for me. Choir works.

ZARA

Figure 15. Solo Art Piece - Zara

Zara's is another art-piece featuring two distinct 'halves'. One expresses her lack of confidence in singing, the other is characterised by healing and liberation.

> *Here's my black area…a big, black area of self-confidence…singing in the past…I don't feel overly confident…*
>
> *There is a, a positive side, when the Holy Spirit comes into play when I'm singing. And that just touches me and it is gentle and it opens doors, it heals.*
>
> *I think my ability sometimes limits my enjoyment. I'm sure I would get more out of the worship side and God touching me from the songs if I wasn't so conscious…I worry about what other people think…*
>
> *…last year I hit a very bad stage where I actually stopped singing completely and didn't even sing in church…but I sing again now…*

I wish I could sing better than I do. I wish I could sing in tune. I wish I could sing what I hear.

A bit of healing as well, going on, I think there definitely can be healing in songs and even though you find yourself crying, and sometimes it is tears of joy even though it is quite deep sometimes…

At the time of the Solo and Duet phases of the process, Zara felt that the dark side of the art piece typified her experience of singing. However, shortly after the Duet Phase, she noted that the process itself had had a healing effect, leading her to a much more positive place in her relationship with singing. From the perspective of a Practical Theologian engaging in person-centred research, there could not have been a better outcome than the research process itself being so instrumental in an individual's liberation and healing.

Summary Of Chorus Phase Discussion And Creative Contribution

Figure 16. Chorus Art Piece

The group discussion was somewhat chaotic and was characterised by multiple voices speaking simultaneously. Consequently, it was challenging to hear much of what was said

on the recording. The group art piece above summarises the discussion, and the selected quotes below offer insight into what was said.

> *I think a lot of people have a lot of relief…(Yeah) it takes them from one place to another. Whether it is Christianity or…it takes you from where you're at to another…*
>
> *Release and relief…*
>
> *It is gentle and it is lovely…*
>
> *I joined it for fun…but the rest of it grew…*
>
> *[I was seeking] spiritual wellbeing, rather than God*
>
> *Even though I wasn't looking for it and I didn't want it, it was still there.*
>
> *We all have our stories…it is a great leveller, the choir…we come from everywhere and we're all different, but we're all the same when we're at choir…*
>
> *…lots of individuals coming together as one…*
>
> *…it wouldn't be the same without Matt…I don't want Gareth Malone, I think I prefer Matt!*
>
> *My plea to Matt is that if we could have at least one or two songs that aren't religious, I would really, really appreciate it.*

(Hereafter followed a discussion concerning repertoire, into which was interjected the fact that a number of years earlier, several non-Christian members of the choir requested that the choir not sing 'secular' songs as they didn't enjoy them as much as the 'religious' ones.)

> *We're very diverse*
>
> *Unity, that's the point though*

…what does it do to everyone that sings on a Sunday night? It is uplifting!...

…you guys all put confident…are you guys, when you come to choir completely confident about how you sing, how you sound? (multiple 'No!' responses) …I'm sitting there going [sharp intake of breath], I'm so…(others comment 'by the end…', '…I'm like you') …my self-confidence is not 'whoosh!'

…I think it's made me more confident…when I first came I thought 'I can't sing. I've never sung in a choir'…but no one says you've got to be a certain…I thought 'oh no, I can do this. I am good enough to be part of this choir!'…and it flows off into other parts of your life as well.

…confident to be who you are…

…it is the fact that it doesn't matter!

No! Enjoy it!

You don't have to know how to sing!

It doesn't matter if you can't sing!

it is about being part of something good.

…being part of something bigger.

Because it's a 'church' centre to it and it's got lyrics that are…it made me feel less judged, because in my experience people were less likely to be negatively judging, because we were sort of being nice to each other, so for me, I don't really worry about making a mistake, whereas if it had been a choir that was just like a glee club or something, singing 'Frozen' songs, then there was the expectation that it is all about who's the best, whereas this is clearly not about who's the best.

It is funny that we put 'fun' in the middle.

Yeah. I think fun is quite important.

I don't think I'd have started if there wasn't an element of [fun]…there might be some people I see from the art, you know, it was a way of becoming more confident in yourself, you know, almost like facing a fear, but, um, I don't think you would start…

There's no pressure.

There's a lot of laughter in choir

I think laughter's a really positive thing

There's a lot of power on the table…

During the Chorus Phase, the group identified and explored what they felt to be the key themes emerging from their own art pieces and their knowledge of one another's. The purpose of this phase was to produce supplementary data to confirm or correct my assessment of emergent themes, and as such, despite the challenges of deciphering cacophonous conversations, it served its purpose. Many of the key words both on the group art piece and evident in the group discussion mirror those arising from the Solo art pieces and Duet Phase conversations.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the data gifted by the fifteen participants in this process. It gave priority to participants' voices via direct quotations from the Duet Phase conversations and the inclusion of the Solo art pieces. The Chorus Phase discussion was summarised and similarly, direct (unattributed) quotations were included in the order in which they arose in the discussion. Some preliminary reflection upon participant responses is evident, but this is explored further in the following chapter which considers the themes arising from the data.

CHAPTER SIX
THEMATIC INTERPRETATION

Introduction

This chapter considers the data presented in the previous chapter according to key themes arising from it. Four overarching categories are identified from participant responses, and these are discussed in relation to the data underpinning them. My own place within participants' responses is also acknowledged.

Emergent Themes

Saldaña (2016:289) speaks of looking for 'buried treasure' in his students' work; remaining alert to 'remarkable analytic insight' which may have gone unnoticed. For such buried treasure to be discovered and its worth realised, it must first be unearthed, and in the case of my own data analysis, this was done via the process of undertaking, listening to, transcribing and reading participant duet conversations, alongside reflection upon their individual and collective creative art pieces. As previously noted, this process generated 38 codes, which were subsequently ordered by frequency of occurrence before being grouped according to general theme (Appendix N). This process, whilst not unsystematic, was somewhat free-form, stemming from immersion in the data over several months of conversations, transcriptions and analysis. Viewing the four most frequently occurring codes, it became apparent that each of the other codes related to them thematically. These four codes were therefore adopted as primary categories under which the themes emerging from the data could be considered. The four categories are belonging, emotion, spirituality and transformation. I propose that singing in the context of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church engenders belonging, elicits emotions, enriches spirituality and enables transformation. The significance of these categories within the context of the church will be considered later, but first each is presented according to the data underpinning it.

Singing Engenders Belonging

> *…singing with other people is a completely different thing, that feeling of* ***togetherness*** *and urm,* ***friendship****, urm, and* ***finding other people*** *with a similar or maybe dissimilar, but people with different experiences in life that then have an impact on you.*
> *(Imogen)*

Imogen articulates a sense of belonging engendered by singing. Her case is considered in greater depth in the section on Transformation, but it is worthy of note that her journey of transformation began with belonging. A self-proclaimed former 'angry atheist', Imogen's coming to choir was *'about meeting other people'*, not a search for anything of a spiritual nature. Her journey began with '*feeling good'* singing in the choir.

> *…it **felt good** to be a part of that community of the singing and then the community of the choir, and um, the community of the pantomime. And now, that **same feeling** I get now on a Sunday, and actually, it was just Sundays for a while, but now **that feeling** I get most of the week, because I've got that **inside me** now, so I don't need to be directly with the people that have brought me into this to **feel it**…*
> *(Imogen)*

Imogen's experience typifies that expressed by several participants. 14 of the 15 participants made multiple references to the role of singing in their sense of belonging to a group. Belonging was also a prominent theme during the Chorus Phase discussion. That this is a central finding of this research is unsurprising. Susan Hallam writes;

> Participating in musical groups promotes friendships with like-minded people; self-confidence; social skills; social networking; a sense of belonging; team work; self-discipline; a sense of accomplishment; co-operation; responsibility; commitment; mutual support; bonding to meet group goals; increased concentration and provides an outlet for relaxation. (2010:2)

My participants similarly highlighted their own sense of inclusion and fellowship resulting from the relationships they developed, particularly within the community choir.

> *I've gotten friends out of the choir – you know – I mean, it is about the chat and the stuff and the listening and the sharing and the kind of all of that…*
> *(Wayne)*

As Wayne notes, the sense of belonging engendered within the choir comes as much from peripheral activities - chatting, listening, sharing etc. - as from singing itself, and yet it is for the primary purpose of singing that the group gathers, thus singing directly and indirectly facilitates the initiation and development of relationships and thereby engenders belonging.

The shared experience of overcoming challenges and insecurities relating to singing appears to be particularly significant in engendering belonging, with one participant, Lindsay, describing it in terms of *'empowerment'* and *'unity'* which she calls *'the drug that makes me keep coming back'*. A self-professed tone-deaf atheist, Lindsay nonetheless says, of participating in a church-run community choir, which primarily sings gospel music; *'when we're all singing together…we're all included…It is so lovely to do the same thing with other people, all at the same time…'*. This *drug* of *unity* which Lindsay experiences through participation in choral singing, seems to be so potent as to surmount any obstacles potentially posed by either musical limitations - real or perceived - or reservations concerning issues of faith.

Whilst Lindsay remains a convinced atheist who limits her involvement to the choir, for several other participants, belonging to the choir has broadened their sense of belonging to the wider context of the church and changed their perception of The Salvation Army itself.

Alice described her initial opinion of The Salvation Army as being characterised by exclusivity and inaccessibility.

> *…they're a bit, can I say, upmarket…they wouldn't really wanna speak to me…you think, oh well, you know, they're a bit above, you know…they always look very smart and I thought, oo, I don't know, I'm not really, um, you know, I'm a bit… (Alice)*

As an external observer, Alice, whilst not hostile towards The Salvation Army, certainly didn't view it as something to which she could belong, alluding to aspects such as formal deportment and uniform as barriers to her potential participation. Whilst evidently not being insurmountable obstacles - Alice has been a (non-uniformed) member of The Salvation Army for well over a decade - these initial impressions clearly impeded her journey towards engagement with The Army. Although Alice's involvement with The Salvation Army predates the choir, participation in the choir has facilitated a deepening sense of belonging for her, even as the church congregation has grown over the years.

> *I think perhaps, 'cos [the choir is] a smaller community, it perhaps makes you feel that bit closer really, I think, cos, I, I did used to find that when, like, we went from*

a small church to a big church, you used to walk out of there and think 'Oh, I didn't say hello to so and so'.
(Alice)

Whilst for Alice, singing with the choir produces a deeper sense of belonging to the wider church, for several other respondents belonging to the choir is significant in itself, indeed they describe the choir, both implicitly and explicitly, as being a form of church.

…I don't come to The Salvation Army church as you know, but I do enjoy ***singing praises****, and I do enjoy that aspect of it. And, somehow, it is, it is that real kind of sense of* ***singing from your heart****.*
(Alison)

*…The biggest bug-bear I have is the Church…Church is not a building to me. Church is everywhere. And when you pigeonhole it and put it in a building, I don't want to go to that building, because…that's not who I am or how I feel…****choir is my church****…****Choir is, is my extension of church****. And that's my, um,* ***way of expressing my beliefs*** *and my, kind of, um,* ***thoughts*** *and* ***outlook on life*** *I think…church to me is certainly not going somewhere on the appointed hour and going through the motions…it certainly would never work for me.* ***Choir works****.*
(Wayne)

Whilst the concept of Church as a place or particular practice is not something which either Alison or Wayne embrace, they describe the choir as fulfilling certain roles - singing praises from the heart, expressing beliefs etc. – which are more commonly associated with belonging to a church, without any of the associated stigma, which Wayne in particular finds repellent. Wayne's childhood experiences of the Church as a place to be *'seen and not heard'* and to *'go through the motions'* and *'repeat after me',* shape his adult feelings concerning Church, resulting in an adamance that it is not for him. His feelings towards choir however are quite different, expressed in such words as *'refreshed', 'enjoyment'*, *'energised'*, *'camaraderie'* and *'fun'*. Despite knowing that *church* in the context of New Addington Salvation Army is far from his childhood experience, Wayne retains his negative feelings towards Church as a concept, and yet acknowledges that *'choir…sort of brought Church back to me…I've become more involved in NASA because of the choir and it is like an extended family.'* Because of his involvement in the choir, Wayne feels that he belongs to the church family notwithstanding his reservations about Church conceptually. To paraphrase his words, where Church has failed, choir works.

Wayne alludes to the role of singing in the creation and development of community and in individuals' physical, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing (Judd and Pooley 2014). In considering his and others' responses, it is therefore vital that physical, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing are understood as being within the remit of the missio Dei. Otherwise, to further paraphrase Wayne, where choir works, Church will fail.

Singing Elicits Emotions

> *When I sing, when I hear music, it sort of makes me come out of me.*
> *(Tanya)*

This section considers the lived experiences of participants, regarding the emotions elicited when singing in church and choir. It is not concerned with philosophical, psychological or physiological theories of emotion as experienced through music (See Appendix B).

Tanya's comment above encapsulates the experience - to which several participants allude - of singing unearthing and releasing something of her essence as a person and enabling the expression of deep-rooted emotions. She goes on to describe how singing engages areas of vulnerability, facilitating the expression of emotions she might otherwise suppress.

> *…perhaps it is good to feel vulnerable at times. I tend to think 'Oh, no, you know, pull yourself together' sort of thing, get on. Whereas I suppose with music, you sort of,* ***you can let that out*** *in a different way, can't you?*
> *(Tanya)*

The outcome of this experience of release for Tanya, is joy.

> *…it makes me feel quite* ***joyful****, and I always come away afterwards* ***feeling better*** *than when I came in.*
> *(Tanya)*

Like Tanya, Imogen also notes singing's emotive potency, although where Tanya speaks of a conscious '*letting out'* of emotions through singing, Imogen implies a more involuntary release.

*…anything that you've got inside you that is….an emotion, **comes out** when you sing.*
(Imogen)

The notion of group singing creating a comfortable, safe space within which emotions are expressed, whether by choice or by chance, is a recurrent theme in participant responses.

*Certain songs…I really struggle to get the words out, which is, seems quite ridiculous at the time, but…the **emotion** in it, and the **feeling** when you **feel** everybody together…amazing experience...*
(Nigel)

*…the people around me, the music, it just fills me up with so much more that it just, it just **lifts me** and it just **emboldens me** to just go 'yeah'!*
(Mike)

*…it feels very **comfortable** singing, and I probably wouldn't have necessarily thought that, um, however many years ago, when I've been at other churches or whatever. It's never perhaps **felt quite so easy and comfortable**. And that's probably the same, whether it is choir or church. And both up the front or as part of the congregation.*
(Louise)

Louise reports that irrespective of context – church or choir, leader or congregant – she feels comfortable and safe to express her emotions through singing. This notion of a safe-space is extremely important if singers are to open themselves up to the potentially emotional experience of singing, and both Mike and Nigel suggest that there is something emboldening about singing in a group in which other people are similarly emotionally vulnerable. However, this experience was not universally true among participants. Zara describes how self-consciousness singing alongside those she perceived to be better singers, effectively silenced rather than liberated her own voice.

*I think having very good people next to you **knocks your confidence**, and even though they don't ever say anything, last year I hit a very bad stage where I actually stopped singing completely and didn't even sing in church. Um, but that was just a lot of self-conscience (sic) and other things going on. But I sing again now... (Zara)*

Wayne experiences a similar lack of confidence in his own singing ability, which he finds frustrating.

> *…the rehearsals and kind of the emotions that come out of it, sometimes it is frustration, because I really feel that, kind of, oh, and it comes back to 'can I sing?' I have trouble remembering words – I'm terrible.*
> *(Wayne)*

That some singers feel emboldened and others feel intimidated or frustrated within the same group, indicates that the relationship between singing and emotion may not be as straightforward as some participants imply. Singing is not a universal key to unlocking and releasing pent-up emotions - indeed, one person's emboldened singing may compound another's sense of limitation and inhibition. That said, for both Zara and Wayne, the experience of singing was still highly emotive, albeit negatively, and they were not alone in associating singing with negative emotions. Several participants reported that singing enables them to engage constructively with the negative emotions associated with past experiences.

> *…things that's happened in my life I, I sort of, a lot of things that I keep, keep in, so, in a way, singing is another thing for letting it all out really, and still being private…*
> *(Alice)*

> *I've had lots of things in my, yeah, going back, but, without the music that, (sigh) I don't know what, I don't know what I'd have done. Seriously.*
> *(Nigel)*

> *It is sort of bitter-sweet really. I've got my, a picture of my mum, and, um, she, um [daughter] sang at her funeral, the benediction, which, so, for me, I find it emotionally sad, but also very happy, because it was just beautiful and it was lovely.*
> *(Alison)*

Alice, Nigel and Alison allude to events in their past which singing helps them to deal with in the present. For Alison, there are mixed emotions when the choir sings a song which her daughter also sang at her mother's funeral. The song simultaneously elicits both sadness and happiness within Alison as it connects with the breadth of experiences with

which she associates it. Alison does not elucidate as to whether the singing of the song with the choir helps her in her grief, but she speaks of a beauty, albeit bitter-sweet, in the way in which the song holds a range of (seemingly) conflicting emotions in tension.

Alice and Nigel credit singing with providing a safe outlet for emotions stemming from negative life experiences. Neither would appear outwardly emotional when observed as participants in the choir, and yet both speak of singing playing a significant part in their emotional wellbeing, with Alice alluding to singing's role in her releasing such emotions as might otherwise remain suppressed. Such insights into the complex relationship which singers have with the songs they sing, (many of whom I've observed singing in the choir for years, without having any awareness of the emotional impact the songs had on them) would have remained hidden had they not been gifted to this process of data gathering.

Singing Enriches Spirituality

> *The whole package…it's not just music, it's you know, meeting the people, …the **spiritual side** of it. Yeah, there is **a spiritual side**. It doesn't matter exactly how far you…there is a **spiritual thing** there, 100%, yeah, **I feel that** as well. (Nigel)*

In engaging with the concept of spirituality, I am intentionally taking my lead from the participants in this process, as opposed to any particular definition. Spirituality is understood as an umbrella term encompassing references to personal faith, prayer, transcendence, the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, the Bible and the nebulous concept described by Nigel as a 'spiritual thing'. For participants identifying as Christians, references to spirituality relate almost exclusively to their Christian faith. However, references to a non-material otherness, felt and experienced through singing were not unique to those who profess a faith, as demonstrated by Nigel's statement above. Nigel, who is not a regular church-goer, makes a direct reference to connecting 'spiritually through music' (though, to what or whom, he doesn't say). He uses terms such as 'atmosphere' and 'presence' to describe the otherness he encounters. It is not the purpose of this thesis to debate the nature of Nigel's experience - pitting psychology against theology – but rather to acknowledge that however Nigel and other participants understand their own spirituality, they consider singing as having an enriching impact upon it.

Zara, who is referenced above concerning her experience of negative emotions when singing, nevertheless also associates singing with positive spiritual encounters.

> *There is a positive side when the Holy Spirit comes into play when I'm singing. And that just touches me and it is gentle, and it opens doors, it heals.*
> *(Zara)*

> *On Sunday morning, the final song, absolutely beautiful, lovely wave of Holy Spirit, and I do feel it and that's absolutely great. So actually I do get stuff out of singing.*
> *(Zara)*

Zara describes singing as facilitating encounters with the Holy Spirit – a concept familiar to her due to her Christian faith. Despite the insecurities she experiences when singing, Zara continues to understand singing as a key conduit in her relationship with God. Alice too describes her personal insecurities and credits singing with transcending her dyslexia and enabling her to encounter God and pray, despite her perceived limitations in that regard. She intimates that singing enables her to 'forget that bit' (dyslexia) and 'just do what I can' – the songs enable her to give voice to that which she would struggle to articulate on her own.

Like Alice, Mike refers to singing's role in his prayer life. He also describes his own theology of singing;

> *I feel that the angels convert everybody's singing into a really nice harmonious singing sound, um, that then, through the power of it actually gets elevated to God. …I also feel like* ***singing is also a form of prayer****…especially if the, if the lyrics are…touching on certain aspects of my life, my thoughts, my current state of mind, then* ***I actually see it as prayer****...*
> *(Mike)*

> *I'm making a* ***special connection with a higher body****, and that's, that's why I'm here, and that's what the church does for me and that's what the singing, and the prayer, that's what it does for me. (Mike)*

> *…to me,* ***prayer and singing are intertwined****. One and the same. (Mike)*

Mike understands singing as a form of prayer which facilitates a connection with what he refers to here as a *higher body* and elsewhere in his interview, as God. Fascinating as it might be to explore Mike's 'angelic conversion' theory of singing, of greater pertinence is his conflation of singing with prayer. Mike is speaking of singing in the context of gathered worship, and it is apparent that for him, encountering and communicating with God is facilitated through singing. He makes no reference to singing as teaching him about God (*pedagogy*), bearing witness to his faith in God (*proclamation*), seeking to convince others about God (*proselytisation*) or even expressing positive sentiments about or to God (*praise*). For Mike, singing in the context of gathered worship is a profoundly personal spiritual experience, through which he meets and speaks with God.

Ellen articulates a similarly profound experience of encountering God through singing.

> *So, you know these songs come to you when you really need life and the songs gave you life that is joy and life comes unto you so you feel very different after the song, you feel like you could jump, you could fly, you could do many things, but it is Him because you sing the song and* ***it bring close the Father to you****…*
> *(Ellen)*

> *…there's many songs that we sing to open,* ***open the heaven's door*** *– let show those* ***angels to come*** *around the church and dance with us and this is how you* ***feel the Spirit, Holy Spirit****…*
> *(Ellen)*

Ellen relates singing to a variety of spiritual experiences, including bringing God close to her; opening heaven's door; facilitating the presence of angels; and encountering the Holy Spirit. She describes singing as opening a door between the divine and human realms, enabling the two realities to interact and interrelate.

This idea of singing facilitating relationship with God is also alluded to by Eddie, who notes;

> *…the songs, it's like an* ***everyday relationship with God****… and it's your way of expressing everything.*
> *(Eddie)*

For Mike, Ellen and Eddie, singing is much more than an enjoyable experience which facilitates belonging and elicits a variety of emotional responses, it is intrinsically linked to their relationship with God – the space in which they encounter God and the means by which they communicate with God.

A number of participants who would identify as Christians made reference to singing's relationship to the Bible and in turn, the Bible's relationship to their own spirituality.

> *…songs in choir are songs from the bible, so it's songs from God, and it's God's word. And it makes me, especially with my accident, appreciate what the words in the song mean…the songs are to do with words from God, which is to do with everyday life… (Eddie)*

Singing songs with scriptural lyrics and connecting emotionally with the song through the lens of a life-changing event *('my accident'*) enables Eddie to relate scripture to the realities of his everyday life. Tanya describes a similar experience as evidenced in quotations in the previous chapter. She juxtaposes reading scripture with singing scripturally based lyrics, concluding that she finds singing to be more effective in terms of her understanding of the meaning, and in the facilitation of a spiritually meaningful encounter with scripture ('[the Bible's words] can touch you and you can feel them'). Alice, mentioned earlier regarding singing elevating her above her perceived dyslexia, makes two direct references to singing as 'her bible', both times clarifying that even to her, that concept seems, in her words 'a bit strange'. Whilst Alice struggles to understand exactly what she means by singing being her bible, I would conjecture that she is articulating singing's role in informing her life as a Christian via the lyrics of songs which are either directly or indirectly related to scriptural passages or themes, which characterises many of the songs used in our gathered worship and in SingCR0nise's repertoire. Alice is describing a similar experience to Tanya, whereby singing facilitates access to scripture which reading alone does not, or cannot achieve. In a similar way, Zara describes singing a song based on the Aaronic blessing (Numbers 6:24-26) as facilitating an encounter with God. She credits the song with opening 'things to me', suggesting that in singing it, barriers were removed which enabled a spiritual experience which had previously been lacking.

Singing Enables Transformation

> *…the song gets inside me, and then it just transforms me, and then I just burst into it and go for it!*
> *(Mike)*

The participants in this process made multiple references to the role of singing in transformation. Mike speaks above of the transformation he experiences, as a song enables him to express himself, something to which Nigel also attests;

> *…sometimes when you're singing and playing music, you are taken to another world.*
> *(Nigel)*

These momentary experiences of transformation are significant contributors to the enhancement of wellbeing to which both men allude. The transformative impact of these experiences is not diminished by their transience. In a similar vein, Tanya speaks of singing making 'me come out of me' – a transformative experience in which she is able to connect with and express something of the essence of who she is. Tanya goes on to say of singing;

> *…it can change, change your outlook on things and change your mood, and change how you see things.*
> *(Tanya)*

A change of mood, whilst significant, is essentially transitory, but a change of outlook can have a more enduring impact, influencing behaviours and relationships beyond the initial moment of transformation. Tanya describes her altered mindset concerning her abilities;

> *I think, now, well 'oh yeah, I can do it' whereas before I thought 'oh, I can't do this'…now I think, well if I go wrong, it doesn't matter.*
> *(Tanya)*

This transformation stemming from Tanya's experience of singing has wider-reaching implications for her approach to life in general, and she alludes to a sense of liberation from ways of thinking which have dominated her past.

…all my life, I've been, 'I mustn't make mistakes, 'cos I'm expected to be a certain way'. So, course, you live up to what people expect you to be, so it is quite nice sometimes to think 'can I just be me, and not be who you think I should be?' (Tanya)

Singing has provided a space in which Tanya feels liberated from expectations of conformity and perfection. In a similar vein, Norman describes how his participation in the choir liberated him to sing in public, which alleviated feelings of shyness and enabled him to mix with people more comfortably in other contexts. Whilst singing initiated the transformation, the impact on Norman was far-reaching, to the point where he could say;

Yeah, it is improved my life, you might say. My quality of life. (Norman)

Like Norman, Mike also describes singing's transformative impact, particularly with regard to his expression of faith in a public context. He notes that through singing he is emboldened in voicing his prayers, gains a sense of participation in something greater than himself, and connects with God, all of which he finds harder outside the context of corporate singing.

Louise speaks of her growth as a singer, not necessarily vocally, but in terms of the transformation she's experienced in her confidence in singing. This theme is echoed by Lindsay who refers to the sense of empowerment she's felt through singing in the choir. Alison too describes singing's role in her growth in confidence;

[choir has] actually built on my confidence, 'cos although I, perhaps some people think I might come across as being confident, and I talk a lot and all that, actually I'm not, and I think singing has really built on that confidence for me… (Alison)

Like Alison, Nigel feels that others perceive him to be more confident than he is, and he credits being afforded the opportunity to sing a solo with the choir with boosting his confidence. He notes;

…people think that I've got a lot of confidence and outgoing, but believe me, it is actually possibly the complete opposite…I'm thinking 'Matt's got faith in me to carry this through!' (Nigel)

For each of these individuals, singing, particularly in the choir, has had a transformative impact on their confidence, both in terms of their singing and in other aspects of their lives.

By contrast, Ellen experiences transformation through singing's role in bringing comfort during challenging times in her life.

> *…sing the songs of joy and I will give you comfort.*
> *(Ellen)*

> *…these songs come to you when you really need life and the songs gave you life that is joy and life comes unto you so you feel very different after the song…*
> *(Ellen)*

> *...if you feel like there's no way out – how am I gonna do this? How am I gonna get out of that? Just sing a song – any song – and that turn you life around just for a moment.*
> *(Ellen)*

For Ellen, songs themselves can be conduits of life, joy, and freedom. She asserts that the singing of joyful songs lifts the spirits of the singer, makes way for the comfort of God and 'turns your life around for a moment'; all of which are transformative experiences that fuel Ellen's desire to share her experience of transformation with others.

> *I have songs to tell others what the Lord hath done, because he took me from a miry way and he brought me here.*
> *(Ellen)*

> *…if someone sad and I'm singing, it is like they just start smiling like, you know, I uplift that spirit that was need to be uplift because, you know, sometimes someone feel down, but when you start to sing and dance, they just have to laugh.*
> *(Ellen)*

Imogen also credits singing with transforming her life.

> *Singing has changed my life. Through singing with The Salvation Army drew me into the pantomime, drew me into the community of people, which eventually drew me into Christianity and my life has changed due to singing.*
> *(Imogen)*

For Imogen, the physical experience of singing was a vital part of her transformation.

> *It is a physical thing as well, you know, you feel good when you've sung.*

Imogen credits the feel-good experience of singing as being 'completely instrumental' in initiating and characterising her transition from atheism to Christian faith. By her reckoning, the simple act of participating in singing, and the feelings it evoked in her, played a significant part in her faith journey. In addition to this, singing also provided a reason for gathering with people whose lives Imogen credits with influencing her own.

> *…people with different experiences in life that then have an impact on you…it's not only the physical voice going in and out and the feelings going in and out, but the effect of other people…I can give myself to other people and they then influence me.*
> *(Imogen)*

Like Imogen, Wayne identifies the significant role which singing in the choir has played in his life. Unlike Imogen, Wayne doesn't speak of a journey from atheism to faith but rather one from antipathy towards Church to participation in it. Wayne credits singing with the choir with reconnecting him with Church;

> *Choir has sort of brought Church back to me, and NASA has sort of, within, has come via the choir effectively, I've become more involved in NASA because of the choir and it is like an extended family.*
> *(Wayne)*

Unlike Imogen, Wayne's involvement in the choir has not led to Sunday morning attendance, but that is not to say that he does not consider New Addington Salvation Army to be his church. On the contrary, for Wayne, the choir facilitates fellowship and provides opportunities for worship, prayer, service and encounter with God, without the

formal label of ‘Church’ with which he struggles. In spite of the negative connotations of the concept of Church for Wayne, he is nevertheless happy to say of SingCR0nise; ‘choir is my church’.

Whilst Imogen’s experience of whole-life transformation, Wayne’s declaration that ‘choir is my church’ and the accounts of singing’s transformative impact on aspects of other participants’ lives command particular attention, it is important to note the many seemingly insignificant transformations to which participants make reference. Tanya describes choir’s transformative impact on her mood, saying; ‘I always come away afterwards feeling better than when I came in’. Nicholas states that the last song of a choir rehearsal sticks in his head all week and ‘warm[s] the cockles of your heart’. And Wayne notes that ‘the choir gives me a sense of refreshed start of the week’.

Several participants also referred to the transformative role of singing beyond their own lives. Nicholas recalls the choir giving concerts for Croydon Mencap, noting;

> *…once a year we would do it for the disabled people…and those people would join in with such bliss and fun and it would make everyone smile and it would make us all happy about what we’re seeing…It was lovely. Singing together brings people together.*
> *(Nicholas)*

Nicholas identifies transformation taking place on two fronts. The audience experienced what he describes as ‘bliss and fun’ as they listened to and joined in with the music of the choir. In turn, choir members were heartened by their part in bringing joy to others. Beyond this temporary emotional lift, these concerts also had the transformative impact of broadening choir members’ understanding and experience of disability through the encounter which singing facilitated.

Alison describes another of the choir’s public performances, this time an annual outdoor concert in the community of Shrublands. She credits this informal concert as being ‘really inclusive’ and notes that she loves the fact that a diverse and sometimes disruptive audience are not merely tolerated but embraced within the performance. Alison also alludes to the transformative power of singing to bring joy, love and inclusion to a place where such hatred as the attack on Reker Ahmed was manifested.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the data gifted by participants through the Solo, Duet and Chorus phases and has summarised the codes which were generated according to four categories. These were, that singing in the context of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church Engenders Belonging, Elicits Emotions, Enriches Spirituality and Enables Transformation. In the next chapter these categories are considered according to their corresponding relationship to the missio Dei.

CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This thesis began by asking two questions: What is the lived experience of singing for members of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church? and What are the implications for Salvationist missiology and practice arising from analysis of that experience? In seeking answers to these questions, the theoretical perspectives of missiology and ethnomusicology provide the basis of a conceptual framework. The ethnomusicological literature demonstrated ways in which singing contributes to the human experience; physiologically, psychologically, socially and spiritually. The missiological literature described the expansive scope of the missio Dei and the holistic nature of the Church's participation in it. I have located myself within a holistic understanding of the Church's role in the missio Dei and proposed five missional 'ways of being', which are; the facilitation and nurture of community, the empowerment for and engagement in ministry, the integration of internal structures with external action, the authentic communication of the truth and the embodiment and enactment of Christian hope. Analysis of the participant data resulted in four primary categories; singing engenders belonging, elicits emotions, enriches spirituality and enables transformation. The participant data addresses the first research question concerning participants' lived experiences of singing. This penultimate chapter brings these lived experiences, as evidenced and discussed in chapters five and six, into dialogue with the theoretical perspectives of missiology and ethnomusicology, to propose conceptual conclusions concerning the interrelationship between them, preparing the way for the final chapter which addresses the second research question concerning the implications for theology and practice. Each of the five missional 'ways of being' is considered in turn, in relation to the role which singing plays within it.

Singing and the Facilitation and Nurture of Community

The notion of community lies at the heart of the Trinitarian relationship between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The outworking of God's communal nature is further evidenced in the incarnational 'dwelling among' of Jesus with humanity (John 1:14) and permeates the missio Dei, which seeks the restoration of relationship, both divine and human, which is God's will for creation. S. Mark Heim describes the Christian understanding of salvation as 'communion all the way down…with God…with other persons and with Christ' (Heim 2015:138). The Church engaged in the missio Dei will therefore embody ways of being which facilitate and nurture such communion.

Cathy Ross affords this relationality a critical role in the Church's existence, noting that 'Church or community is sustained by a way of life that acknowledges our lives and our ways of knowing are inherently relational' (Ross 2015:73). This section considers the ways in which singing, particularly in the context of the community choir, facilitates and nurtures community.

Participant responses in this research have demonstrated that the community choir in particular, provides a physical and experiential space for the nurture and facilitation of relationships. One of the key findings arising from the research presented in the previous chapter, is that singing engenders belonging. A sense of belonging is integral to healthy, functioning communities and thus singing, in engendering such belonging, plays a significant role in the facilitation of community. The shared experience of singing is able to draw disparate individuals into life-enhancing community as the emotions which singing elicits (the second significant research finding discussed in the previous chapter) create an environment of both shared vulnerability and exuberance. Such shared emotional experiences have a galvanising effect upon the singers, further aiding the facilitation and nurture of the community. As Nicholas, Alison, Lindsay and Imogen assert;

> *Singing together brings people together. Absolutely.*
> *(Nicholas)*
>
> *The joy and fun of singing together, in a group, is kind of second to none, really.*
> *(Alison)*
>
> *It is so lovely to do the same thing with other people, all at the same time…*
> *When we're all singing together… we're all included.*
> *(Lindsay)*
>
> *…singing with other people…that feeling of togetherness and…friendship…finding other people with a similar or maybe dissimilar…people with different experiences in life that then have an impact on you.*
> *(Imogen)*

This bringing together of diverse individuals from different walks of life, with different reasons for participation and different ways of understanding the world, provides opportunities for what Ross refers to as 'seeing otherwise' to occur (2015:75). In 'seeing otherwise' individuals are introduced to new ways of viewing and understanding the world

via experiencing and seeking to understand another's perspective. The nurture of community relies upon the existence of spaces in which people who 'see otherwise' might interact, enlightening one another with their differing viewpoints. The community choir provides such a space, as people with divergent worldviews gather for the shared purpose of singing in which a sense of belonging is engendered as emotions are elicited, expressed and often shared. In this regard, the choir represents what Paul Weston refers to as a 'Third-space' (Male and Weston 2019:103), wherein disparate parties pursue a common aim, with the potential outcome of together discovering something new, not only musically, but through the convergence of a diverse range of worldviews, backgrounds and experiences, about life itself. The community choir is not preoccupied with internal ecclesial concerns nor is it a space to which unbelievers are invited to hear the gospel. Rather, it is a community of hospitality and welcome, in which Christ is present by his Spirit, wherein everyone, from the leader to the newcomer, can experience something of the community of belonging which lies at the heart of the missio Dei.

Lesslie Newbigin similarly asserts that the life of the community of believers is central to the Church's effective engagement in the mission of God.

> The central reality is neither word nor act, but the total life of a community enabled by the Spirit to live in Christ, sharing his passion and the power of his resurrection. Both the words and the acts of that community may at any time provide the occasion through which the living Christ challenges the ruling powers. (1989:137).

This focus upon both the words and actions of the community of faith in God's mission, highlights the Church's calling to facilitate and nurture loving fellowship among its members and to be hospitable and proactive in reaching beyond itself to enable those outside the Church to also experience the benefits of belonging. The faithful witness of the community as it lives in and lives out Christ, is both attractive and honest. There is no need for an underlying, hidden agenda behind such actions as seek to challenge loneliness, isolation and so on, as such actions are both driven by and bear witness to Christ whose victory over such evils is already assured. A holistic soteriology and missiology encompasses that which might be considered to be 'small victories', within the breadth of Christ's saving work. The lonely person finding friendship through belonging to a choir, and connection with other human beings via the intimate actions of listening to others' voices, breathing in unison with them, moving in time with the group, and engaging in collective expressions of deep emotions, can experience the transformative defeat of the evils of loneliness and isolation. Singing's role in engendering belonging and the

resulting transformations which occur in people's lives, must be understood within the context of a holistic understanding of salvation. Alice and Norman both attest to singing's role in this respect.

> *…when you live on your own…there's lots of things…you do keep things in, which isn't always a good thing really, but…with singing you can belt it out and get it out.*
> *(Alice)*

> *I've never been a particularly good mixer, but it's changing since I've been coming to the Sally Army…it's improved my life, you might say. My quality of life…Getting involved with other people as well…Making friends…you've all got something in common haven't you.*
> *(Norman)*

For Alice, singing provides an outlet for emotions which are otherwise unexpressed due to the social isolation she experiences. Singing with the choir represents both a forum in which to release these emotions, and the means by which to express them. Alice refers to being able to 'belt out' in song, things which she would otherwise internalise. According to Sloboda (Astley, Hone and Savage eds. 2000:123) Alice's release of pent-up emotion is not only facilitated but amplified through participation in the choir, as her emotional experience is joined with that of all the other singers. This experience is all the more potent for Alice given her perceived isolation in other areas of her life. For Norman, the choir provides a space in which his interpersonal skills and confidence have grown and his quality of life has improved through the development of relationships around a common purpose. His experience resonates with Anthony Storr's assertion that music 'is able to draw groups together and create a sense of unity' (1993:24). In both examples participation in the community of the choir mediates an aspect of salvation, in providing a space in which loneliness and isolation are defeated. Such victories as these, which the choir facilitates, are, according to Newbigin 'an authentic part of the victory of the Lamb' in that they are evidence of the gathered community both sharing in and bearing 'the pain of those who suffer' (1995:108).

The drawing together of individuals into a unified whole such as Storr contends music achieves, places musical enterprises such as a community choir at the heart of the missional aim of facilitating and nurturing community. Alison, Lindsay and Nicholas (amongst others) speak of their experiences of singing as promoting togetherness, an experience which Lindsay describes as 'lovely'. Whilst lovely experiences do not

automatically equate to loving ones, several participants referred to singing's role in gathering people around a common cause, resulting in the deepening of interpersonal relationships. This purposeful gathering of people to sing achieves the goal of facilitating and nurturing loving fellowship in several ways. As people gather to sing, particularly in the context of the community choir, wherein singing is the primary purpose for gathering, they place themselves within an environment in which there is a shared purpose, shared learning and perhaps shared anxieties and vulnerabilities. Sharing such potentially intense experiences effectively 'fast-tracks' relationships as people not only sing, but laugh and sometimes even cry together.

> *The last song that we sung at NASA at choir…seemed to be in my head all week, until the next Sunday. (Laughs) And through that, all week long, it would (big sigh), it would warm the cockles of your heart! It would make you smile. I enjoyed it immensely – just loved it – and it reinforced so much that (wife) and I care about, about church actually, and this NASA family.*
> *(Nicholas)*

Nicholas describes the heightened emotional state which singing, particularly with the choir, elicits for him. Sharing in such experiences with others has the potential to deepen relationships such that the scope and impact of such benefits as are derived extends beyond the specific musical gathering. Nicholas describes how the recurring memory of the last song sung at the choir rehearsal, prompts positive emotions throughout the week. These positive emotions stem not only from a memorable melody or uplifting lyrics, but, according to Nicholas, from the song's association with the church and choir communities he so values. Nicholas' experience resonates with Jeremy Begbie's description of music's capacity to be 'projected beyond the final cadence into the ensuing silence' (2011:126), as the memory of the song enables the impact of communal singing to extend beyond the temporal bounds of the gathering in which it took place. Nicholas' experience also represents an extension of Leonard B. Meyer's theory of 'sound terms' (1956:129) or short fragments of music or songs representing the whole phrase or song in its completeness (see chapter three). For Nicholas, however, the repeated musical motif, which occupies his thoughts during the week, represents not just a larger musical phrase or even whole piece; it represents his entire experience of belonging to the choir, and all that entails, including the relationships he values. Thus, the song has the impact of further binding Nicholas into the fabric of the community.

The significant number of participants who credit singing with facilitating their own sense of belonging to a group, affirm Sloboda's contention (noted in chapter three) that a sense of belonging is engendered through musical participation in a group. Sloboda asserts that 'any relationship is more than the sum of the two individuals. Something new and valuable is realised in the meeting of persons…some of the profoundest theological concepts are attempts to grasp just what the newness consists in' (2000:124). He underlines the importance of music within healthy Christian communities, suggesting that, in such contexts 'music in worship deepens and strengthens mutual commitments'.
This deepening and strengthening of relationships is certainly evident in participant responses (such as Nicholas, who uses the word 'reinforced' to describe what singing does for his relationship with the church community). In some cases (notably Imogen), singing not only deepened existing relationships, but provided the initial impetus and purpose which led to ultimately belonging to the community. Sloboda warns that whilst 'music cannot, in and of itself, create community' (2000:124), it can provide a purpose – such as a choir for instance - around which a community gathers and therefore to which others might belong. It is in the creation of this space for belonging that singing is particularly powerful. As Sloboda notes and my research confirms, participation in a group such as a choir, in which melody, countermelody, harmony and rhythmic synchronicity play an important part, can draw people together not only in terms of their physical presence in the same space, but in terms of their shared encounter with the music and lyrics, their shared identification with the group and the ensuing affirmation of a common humanity. Group singing not only combats isolation, it provides a context in which disparate human beings find their place within a purposeful whole, which becomes something of beauty and unity, the uniqueness of which is entirely due to each individual's participation. This unity in diversity both reflects the Trinitarian nature of God-in-community and exemplifies the Church's call to nurture and facilitate community as it participates in the missio Dei.

Whilst musical groups undoubtedly contain the potential for community described above, they do so only to the extent that they are hospitable entities. In his book on Community Music, Lee Higgins considers the relationship between the nurturing of a musical community and the act of hospitality. He notes;

> …as an action, hospitality begins with the welcome…the welcome becomes a preparation for the incoming of the potential participant, generating a porous, permeable, open-ended affirmation of and for those who wish to experience creative music making.' (2012:137)

Higgins describes a welcome which invites newcomers into community, not conformity, and celebrates and affirms the creative reshaping of the whole, which the new participant brings. This picture of openness resonates with Cathy Ross' depiction of the Church as the place 'where we welcome the stranger with doors wide open where there is a place for everyone' (2015:73). SingCR0nise member Alison identified the importance of this inclusive welcome to her own sense of belonging to the choir.

> *…it didn't matter who you were, or where you come from, whatever, you, you just were welcome and felt supported…*
>
> *…You're completely non-judgmental about everybody's singing…*
>
> *…if I'd had to audition for a choir…well, A: I probably wouldn't have got in, but B: I wouldn't have gone along to do that, because it would have been too, too hard for for me to do something like that.*
> *(Alison)*

Alison's experience of belonging was facilitated by an unconditional welcome, non-judgmentalism and absence of obstacles to entry. Hospitality of this nature implies risk; what if she couldn't sing? What if she swayed out of time? The significance of such risks dissipates when participation is prioritised over professionalism. The risk level correlates with the desired standard of performance. The lower the expectations on the group, the lower the risk of a newcomer negatively impacting it. It seems appropriate then, in the context of mission, for the bar of entry into a musical group such as a community choir, to be as low as possible to facilitate participation by as many as so desire.

The concept of hospitality as it pertains to singing's role in the facilitation of community also extends to repertoire, both in the choir and equally in the context of worship. One of my journal reflections is pertinent here.

> **APRIL 2017 – Song Selection**
>
> When it comes to choosing songs, my approach could be described as being somewhat utilitarian: Will the congregation know it? Will that week's band be able to play it? What's the key like? Is it an 'easy sing'? Is it new? Have we sung it recently? Is it one we overuse? (But then, does familiarity breed contempt or contentment?) What's the tempo like? And so on. Only once these and similar

> questions have been addressed will I move onto what might be considered to be the 'higher level' questions: What is the lyrical theme? Does the song support the key biblical text or theme of the service? Is it primarily worshipful, didactic or confessional?
>
> I put 'higher level' in inverted commas because I've come to wonder whether their seemingly spiritual nature lends them a gravitas disproportionate to their importance. After all, what does it matter if a song's lyrics perfectly support the bible theme if the tune is too high or the rhythm too complex for people to grasp? Or how easy is it for someone to connect with God in a worshipfully significant way if they're struggling to sing an unfamiliar song or conversely experiencing the ennui of an overused one? The utilitarian questions are perhaps not so unimportant after all.

There is, evident in this reflection, an acknowledgment of the importance of the form and function of songs in creating a hospitable environment. Where once I had been drawn towards lyrical and theological depth, experience has taught me that unless matched with accessibility and inclusivity, such goals are essentially pointless. Accessibility and inclusivity also extends to the method by which songs are taught to the choir. Recognising that many people are not musically literate and some struggle even to read words, sheet music is never used and written lyrics are rarely given out, (except to those who specifically ask for them or, for instance to newcomers whose inclusion might be expedited by them having written words to follow). Participation in the choir is free of charge, ensuring that no one is excluded on financial grounds. There is no audition or expectation of musical knowledge or ability. Sporadic attendance and 'loose' commitment is also met with understanding rather than judgement, with individuals free to participate according to their own priorities and pressures, rather than a demand for a particular level of commitment to the choir.

Such intentional efforts to facilitate and nurture community through hospitality, reflect the biblical concept of reconciliation. In Ephesians 2, Paul states Christ's purpose;

> …He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.' (Ephesians 2:15-16).

Weston asserts that in Ephesians, Paul presents the 'all embracing scope of God's missionary purposes for the world' (Male and Weston 2019:99). The Gospel, according to Paul, is that Jesus' death broke down the walls of hostility, suspicion and animosity between people of different worldviews and lifestyles, in order that the whole of humanity might be reconciled and unified both to God and to one another, restoring God's intended community of unity. For Paul, the Gospel message was one of reconciliation – human and divine. Similarly, Jesus, when asked which commandment was the greatest, replied that it was to love God and to love neighbour as self (Mark 12:29-30). This statement relates to the reconciliation of relationship between humanity and God, between disconnected individuals and communities, and within individuals who for whatever reasons experience an inharmonious sense of self, or internal dissonance. For many people, the concept of loving God is anathema as it relies upon a theistic worldview, however, even an atheistic worldview allows for loving neighbour and loving self as important aspects of the human experience. Participants in this research process have confirmed that belonging to the community of the choir, facilitates for them, aspects of the reconciliatory purpose for which Christ came. Some speak of a deep connection with God, some of the development of relationships with others and some of the restoration of their own sense of self-worth and confidence. Through group singing, disparate individuals are connected via mutual participation, many experience a range of emotions which can help to reintegrate their inner selves, and for some, this ultimately results in a connection with the Divine, as evidenced by Imogen in her Duet conversation assertion that singing 'eventually drew me into Christianity'.

The choir is more than a space in which non-Christians might encounter God, or even a space in which Christians might come to know more of God through the experience of community, although it is clear from my research that both take place. When, within a holistic missiology, the facilitation and nurture of community are understood as legitimate missional aims, the 'third-space' community of the choir, which may not resemble Church in terms of form and structure, participates in the missio Dei through combatting isolation and loneliness, promoting physical and mental wellbeing, and facilitating harmonious relationships amongst disparate groups of people. There is also, inherent in this 'third-space', a blurring of the boundaries concerning participation in mission, since God works his purposes through the choir in its entirety, whose members do not all identify as Christians.

This section has demonstrated that singing contributes to the facilitation and nurture of community in the context of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church through

an intentional commitment to inclusivity and accessibility. This is characterised by a hospitable community of belonging, with a low entry bar, accessible repertoire, inclusive means of teaching, and the acceptance of a variety of levels of ability and commitment. My research demonstrates that when singing is undertaken in an inclusive and accessible context, it facilitates and nurtures community through the provision of a hospitable 'third-space' wherein the attendant physical, psychosocial and spiritual benefits (of group singing) combat the evils of exclusion and isolation, transforming the lives of those most affected by them. Choral singing in a context such as SingCR0nise also contributes to the nurturing of community beyond itself through its engagement in wider community contexts, such as the New Addington carnival, Shrublands Community Day and Mencap concerts.

Singing and Empowerment for and Engagement in Ministry

This aspect of mission centres around the ways in which members of the church express and live out their Christian experience. Effective engagement in ministry relies upon both empowerment and opportunities. Whilst the Christian's primary source of power is the Holy Spirit, through whom all forms of ministry are undertaken, empowerment understood more broadly encompasses the motivation to engage in ministry, and the physical, emotional and intellectual strengthening of individuals in order that they possess the resilience and resources required to effectively participate in it. This section describes the ways in which singing in the specific contexts considered relates to ministry.

Regarding motivation for ministry, the choir has provided at least one participant with such.

> *When I'm singing, and you get certain words and certain phrases and certain songs, and you can relate to them and think 'how lucky am I to be able to be doing all this, when there's people out there that are not as lucky as I am, that actually live in abject poverty', and, and, forgive me for saying it, but where we live is quite affluent, and I come back up to Addington here, and I see so many sad, beaten faces. Grey. Downtrodden…that's unacceptable to me…as human beings, that's completely unacceptable to me.*
> *(Nicholas)*

The physical location in which the choir is based and the contexts in which it often performs, elicit strong emotions in Nicholas, particularly concerning the political and spiritual imperatives which motivate him to engage in ministry. In this regard, Nicholas'

experience is comparable to Greitemeyer's findings considered in chapter three, that 'listening to prosocial songs increased the accessibility of prosocial thoughts, led to more empathy, and instigated prosocial action' (2009:189). Whereas Greitemeyer's participants simply listened to songs, Nicholas' experience encompasses both the songs themselves and the contexts in which they are sung. His participation in the choir increases prosocial thoughts, deepens empathy and fuels a desire for transformative action, both through singing songs which remind him of his own circumstances relative to others, and through the opportunities for ministry in contexts which evoke feelings of injustice, which membership of the choir affords.

Whilst Nicholas refers to the choir's role in providing motivation and opportunities for ministry, such engagement requires appropriate physical, emotional and spiritual empowerment.

Romans 12:1b-2a states;

> …present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds…

These verses acknowledge the importance of an integrated and holistic understanding of the nature of Christian living. Body, mind and spirit are implicated in the Christian's offering to God, and body, mind and spirit are involved in mission and ministry. Whilst I hesitate to press the internal imagery beyond appropriate boundaries of the intended language of this passage, I would suggest that a tacit inference of this verse is that an activity such as singing, which positively impacts upon bodily wellbeing and plays a part in the literal renewal and transformation of the mind via the kind of brain processes mentioned elsewhere in this thesis (see Altenmüller and Schlaug) is consequently implicated in preparing and empowering individuals for ministry. Several participants referred to feeling empowered and emboldened through singing, either with the choir or during the worship service.

> *I've never, ever been able to sing a note, and you all put up with me, and you're all singing something and I'm singing something else, but it doesn't matter! (laughs) But it, it, it's this thing where 'you can do it! You will do it!' You're not going to be put down. That's, that's the empowerment.*
> *(Lindsay)*

…the music, it just fills me up with so much more that it just…lifts me and… emboldens me to just go 'yeah'. You can pray…you can sing out loudly and no one is gonna go 'why are you singing so loudly?' You…contribute…to the atmosphere.
(Mike)

'Singing is a powerful activity'…YES! It's extremely powerful. It really strengthens the heart, it strengthens the conviction, it just uplifts a person…
(Nicholas)

…it's just liberated me to be able to sing in public.
(Norman)

Both Lindsay and Mike use the phrase 'you can'. Lindsay relates her belief that she can sing to a sense of security she feels as a result of belonging to the group – a knowledge that she is 'not going to be put down'. This security relies upon the underlying philosophy of participation over performance embraced within the choir; Lindsey's belonging is not contingent upon her ability; and the corresponding empowerment she feels, enables her uninhibited participation. For Mike, it appears to be the process of singing itself which emboldens and encourages him to engage in other activities, such as prayer. He describes his powerful emotional response to singing as it uplifts him, elevating his mood and his corresponding desire to engage in other aspects of ministry. The communal element of singing is also alluded to, as he asserts that singing affirms his contribution to the overall atmosphere in the room. Mike's experience reflects findings discussed in chapter three concerning group singing's impact on wellbeing and behaviour, and in chapter six, concerning its impact on the emotions, by virtue of both the physiological and social benefits which singing provides. Nicholas similarly refers to singing's role in 'strengthening the heart' and 'the conviction'. Whilst he does not elaborate further regarding what conviction means for him, his comments concerning poverty and injustice discussed above, must be considered within this context, and his response to singing encompasses the emotions engendered for him concerning such issues. Norman quotes a lyric from Chris Tomlin's version of Amazing Grace; 'My chains are gone, I've been set free'. He describes his 'chains' as shyness, and credits singing at The Salvation Army with liberating him to sing in other contexts, which negative childhood experiences of singing had rendered difficult for him. As with Lindsay, Norman's experience of the choir providing a safe, non-judgmental space in which to sing, results in an overflow of confidence in

other aspects of his life, which includes participating in ministry opportunities with the group. In all four cases, access to singing has empowered engagement in ministry, as individuals' participation in singing emboldens and encourages them in other aspects of their lives. In the context of this research, the empowerment to which these participants refer is recognised as a form of transformation, enabled by singing. The individuals who make reference to such empowerment in their own experiences note a 'before and after' dynamic, which differentiates between their sense of confidence and willingness to move outside of their 'comfort zones' before and after their engagement in group singing, particularly in the choir. Singing plays a pivotal role in these individuals' transformations, and as such must be understood as playing an equally significant role in empowering people for ministry, through their new-found confidence which results from singing.

Singing in the community choir provides members with opportunities for ministry, such as has been previously noted (New Addington carnival, Shrublands Community Day, Mencap). It also empowers members to engage in these opportunities through the emboldening impact of participating as part of a group, and the individual building up of confidence and self-esteem to which many members attest. Several participants referred directly or indirectly to an improved sense of emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing resulting from their involvement in the choir. Nicholas articulates this clearly;

> *…if I could make everyone as happy as I could, that's a blessing for me, that would be an absolute blessing.*
> *(Nicholas)*

Singing with the choir not only positively impacts Nicholas through the experience of singing itself, he also derives a sense of spiritual blessing and encouragement from making others happy through his participation in the ministry of singing.

These transformations in participants' lives, however insignificant they might seem, are evidence that these individuals are beneficiaries of the very ministry in which they are engaged. This building up of confidence, improvement in wellbeing and sense of being blessed through blessing others, has implications for their engagement in ministry beyond the immediate context of the choir, as such individuals are emboldened to participate in opportunities for ministry which may arise more widely.

For Imogen, initially singing with the choir as an 'angry atheist' provided a route into participation in the ministry of the church (as an atheist engaged in the church's ministry of

singing at events in the community for instance). Her experience of inclusion and welcome within the community of the choir led to her joining the cast of the pantomime and then coming to Sunday worship and eventually replacing her atheistic worldview with a Christian one. At all points along her journey, Imogen was participating in the ministry of the church, whether or not she understood her involvement in those terms. Since becoming a Christian, Imogen speaks of her day-to-day working life using the language of ministry, evidencing a shift in her self-understanding of her role in ministry. Nevertheless, her participation in the ministry of the choir began when she first joined.

The choir facilitates a blurring of the boundaries concerning participation in ministry, akin to that identified above concerning the facilitation and nurture of community. The involvement of non-Christians in the ministry of the choir invites reflection on the notion of 'The Priesthood of All Believers' and William Booth's ordination into ministry of those who had 'received the new life', as discussed in chapter two. As unbelievers, both Imogen and Lindsay added their voices and presence to the choir's ministry. As atheists, they not only demonstrated solidarity with the ministry of the choir but also participated in it. In this regard one might suggest a comparison with the Gentiles whom Paul describes as doing 'by nature things required by the law…even though they do not have the law' (Romans 2:14). In drawing this comparison, I am not referring to salvation, but to ministry. Those who do not possess the Spirit of Christ by faith may still act in ways which contribute to the advancement of the Kingdom of God, which is the definition of ministry proposed in chapter two. If ministry is only understood as service motivated by Christian faith, then the actions of those not possessing such a faith are clearly unable to be considered within its scope. However, the undeniable contribution of non-Christians to the overall ministry of the choir complexifies the definition of ministry, encouraging a broadening of its boundaries beyond 'The Priesthood of Believers' to include those unbelievers who participate in ministry unaware that they are contributing to the advancement of God's Kingdom.

This section has demonstrated that singing contributes to the empowerment for and engagement in ministry within the context of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church in several ways. The choir's ministry to its members has involved the building up of confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing. It has also, through the provision of a safe 'third-space' provided a context within which at least one member has encountered Christ in a life-transforming way. The choir also provides opportunities for members to engage in ministry to and in the wider community. This 'whole-choir' engagement in ministry necessitates an enlargement of the parameters of ministry, beyond 'The Priesthood of

Believers', to encompass unbelievers who participate in the choir's ministry, and in so doing, contribute to the ministry of the Church in the world.

Singing and the Integration of Internal Structures with External Action

In chapter one I referred to William Booth's instruction to Salvationists to 'Sing so as to make the world hear' (Salvation Army Song Book 1986: Foreword), and I observed that singing in The Salvation Army has historically served the primary purposes of performance, proclamation, proselytisation, pedagogy, praise and pastoral ministry. In this context, singing fulfils 'first-space' and 'second-space' purposes (Male and Weston 2019:91ff). In the 'first-space' people are invited to 'come and hear' songs about God's goodness, love and salvation. In the 'second-space' singers 'go and tell' the message outside the context of the church, for instance in an 'Open Air Service'. These two approaches might be understood as the church engaging in both its 'ad intra' and 'ad extra' callings. However, I contend that true integration of internal structures and external actions requires 'third-space' approaches, such as the community choir provides. In the context of the community choir, there is no 'them and us', only 'we', and participation, inclusivity and accessibility are key. The choir is a truly integrated space, which both strengthens the internal life of the church, improves the emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing of choir members, be they Christians or not, and engages in external actions which are of transformative benefit to communities beyond the choir. This section details ways in which participant responses evidence this integration between 'ad intra' and 'ad extra' mission in the context of the choir.

Worship, teaching, prayer, testimony, fellowship and order are vitally important in the development of healthy communities of disciples, committed to holy living. Part of the role and function of the Church as a missional entity is to invest in such structures in order that the Church is fit for purpose. We have seen in participant responses that singing enables people to express worship and offer prayer, and that it also plays a role in participants' engagement with the Bible. Singing's role in the facilitation and nurture of community is discussed above, and this also applies to the nurture of fellowship, one of the Church's most important internal structures, which singing, particularly in the context of the choir, plays a key role in developing. The integration of internal structures with external action as a missional way of being, requires that such internal benefits as singing provides, find outward means of expression. This section not only demonstrates that this takes place, but suggests that singing provides an example to the wider Church in this respect.

In chapter three the biochemical and physiological evidence of singing's capacity to positively impact mental and physical health and wellbeing was considered (Stone et al. 2018, Altenmüller and Schlaug 2012). Such benefits are, in the most literal sense, internal, and yet they are generated and experienced through the external action of singing. There is an inherent integration between the internal physiological responses to singing and the outward physical and social manifestation of it. The old Spiritual which says 'I sing because I'm happy' could equally, according to the scientific and experiential evidence, say 'I'm happy because I sing'. The positive feelings which singing engenders can in turn lead to positive actions, as evidenced in participant responses (in line with Tobias Greitemeyer's research outlined in chapter three). The human response to the internal release of chemicals which singing generates is often to feel differently inwardly and to act differently outwardly. This is in a sense analogous to the Christian's and indeed the Church's response to the internal activity of God which both inspires and requires outward missional responses.

Nicholas was cited earlier regarding the choir's role in motivating him to action concerning the injustices he perceives in the local community. Here he refers to SingCR0nise's concerts for a local Mencap group.

> *…once a year we would do it for the disabled people…and those people would join in with such bliss and fun and it would make everyone smile and it would make us all happy about what we're seeing and there it is in front of our eyes, and it's uplifting and it brings you back to reality about what life is about and how gifted, you know, and how lucky we are, and how unfortunate some people are, but you can help them, you know, just by that singing, it would lift their spirits and lift everyone's spirits.*
> *(Nicholas)*

Nicholas describes here the outward expression of the church and choir's internal practice of inclusion. This event was challenging for some members of the choir who found certain audience members' behaviour disturbing. However, as Nicholas notes, the concert brought joy to the audience, engendered gratitude amongst choir members and ultimately lifted everyone's spirits. Jeremy Begbie was cited in chapter three, noting that music can illuminate doctrinal truths and play a part in the 'life, worship and witness of Christians' (2000:127) as it creates tension, suggests incompleteness and moves towards resolution. Whilst Begbie is speaking of music itself, I would expand his contention to include the performance of music, such as took place at the Mencap concerts. It was singing which

led the choir into an environment in which they experienced tension and disquiet, as some members felt dis-ease not only with the unfamiliar behaviours they encountered, but perhaps also with their own responses to them. Singing brought choir members face to face with difference and challenged their perceptions of wholeness, as the happiness with which many of the Mencap members received the choir was juxtaposed with some choir members' discomfort. For some singers, this experience elicited powerful emotions which proved to be transformative, as an activity as seemingly innocuous as giving a concert with a community choir opened their eyes to a world which they had never seen, and shone a light on their own responses to it. This experience illustrates that integrating internal structures and philosophies (such as inclusion) with external actions which reflect them, can generate tension and challenge. The choir's 'ad extra' activity of singing for the Mencap group is both reflective of its internal commitment to inclusivity and challenging to it; thus serving the 'ad intra' function of strengthening such internal values as are tested in practice.

It is evident that singing can integrate the vital internal life of the Church with an outward-focussed activism which recognises that the Church exists for the world and not for its own satisfaction. This is further demonstrated by Tanya, who recognises the potential role which choral singing can play in the process of transformation to which the Church is called.

> *…I think more people should sing… it would help a lot of people in different situations, to have that feeling of being part of the group…music and singing would really make a difference. I always say to people 'give it a go'…it can change your life… if it can change it in a little, small way, then that sort of knocks on to lots of other parts…*
> *(Tanya)*

Tanya's words echo Bosch's assertion that 'salvation is as coherent, broad, and deep as the needs and exigencies of human existence' (2011:410). Perhaps considering some of these various needs and exigencies (loneliness, isolation, mental dis-ease and so on) Tanya refers to singing and belonging to a group such as the choir helping 'a lot of people in different situations' in small but potentially life-changing ways. The physiological and psychosocial benefits of group singing as have been outlined previously are integral to singing's role in the Church's 'mission ad extra'. Whilst increased endocannabinoid levels (Stone et al. 2018), for instance, might seem outside the concerns of mission, the opposite is true if physical and emotional wellbeing, mental health, cognition and memory

are encompassed within mission's scope. It must then be incumbent upon the church which has at its disposal the capacity and skill to offer opportunities for people to experience such physical and mental health benefits as singing provides, to make such available to the communities it serves. To do otherwise is to fail to integrate internal structures, in which singing plays a significant part, with external action. The Salvation Army's Older People's Services department has embraced this missional imperative in its recently launched 'Singing by Heart' programme, which provides singing groups for people with dementia in which they can 'connect with others and bring back memories' (salvationarmy.org.uk/salvation-army-launches-group-singing-programme-people-living-dementia). In recognising singing's capacity to enhance the lived experiences of people with dementia and their carers, this programme evidences an embrace of the missional significance of such benefits.

This section has demonstrated that singing, particularly in the 'third-space' context of SingCR0nise Community Choir, provides a model of the integration of internal structures with external action through the provision of physiological, psychological, social and spiritual benefits which challenge, equip and motivate the singer for further outward actions, either through singing with the choir in concerts and public events, or other means of engagement in the world. These outward actions, particularly those involving singing, then contribute further to the physiological, psychological, social and spiritual benefits derived by the singers as they not only experience the direct benefits of singing, but also an increased sense of self-worth as they participate in activities which are of benefit to others.

Singing and the Authentic Communication of the Truth

The first of The Salvation Army's Eleven Articles of Faith states;

> We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice. (Appendix G)

This statement asserts that the Bible is the Salvationist's primary (if not only) source of truth concerning Christian living. In his research into UK Christians' relationship to Scripture, Andrew Village identified that almost a third of Christians read the Bible only a few times a year or only at church (2007:44). With roughly 1:3 Christians relying on the church to communicate and interpret scripture, I expected the relationship between scripture and song, particularly in the context of the Sunday worship gathering to be

evident. Whilst 1:3 of my participants referred to the Bible in their responses, it would be unfair to suggest that for these individuals their only interaction with Scripture is through singing. However, it is certainly the case (see chapter six) that they each credit singing with enabling them to better understand and engage with the Bible and relate the truths they perceive within it to their everyday lives, and thus there is an interrelationship between singing's ability to communicate biblical truths, and the spiritual enrichment to which several singers attest, as explored in chapter six.

The singing of songs with scripturally-based lyrics evidently assists in the communication of biblical truth to the singer, but singing also has a wider reach in terms of truth communication. When SingCR0nise sang opposite the location of the racially-motivated attack on Reker Ahmed, witness was borne to the truth that love conquers evil. Performing songs such as 'One Love', 'Lord You Are Good', 'Lean on Me', 'Better' and 'Brighter Day', the choir literally sang words of love and truth over the ground. On that occasion SingCR0nise embodied the 'glad and spirited and peaceful' expression of the gospel for which Karl Barth once praised The Salvation Army (Barth IV:3:874). Barth's entreaty to the Church to proclaim freedom, not law; the promise of life, not the threat of hell; and 'the artless indication of the truth' rather than 'clever or attractive apologetic', (IV:3:874) was evident in SingCR0nise's activity. If scripture's central claim about God is that God is love (1 John 4:8) then singing of love in a place where an act of hatred has taken place is an authentic witness to the truth of who God is.

I noted in chapter two, that as it participates in the mission Dei, the Church bears witness to the whole truth of the whole gospel – salvation in its fullest sense; spiritual, physical, emotional, psychological, relational, structural, economic and political. Singing can engage with each of these elements in multiple ways. The example above in one sense describes an act of political engagement – a demonstration of defiant love which challenged the hate-filled ideology that fuelled the attack on Reker Ahmed. In communicating the truth of God's love on and over that ground, the choir also brought emotional and relational healing to those gathered, and contributed to a wider work of restoring trust and social cohesion in a community in pain.

Whilst the lyrics sung on the occasion described above were undoubtedly at odds with the hatred which had motivated the attack, the choir's very presence also represented an embodied, authentic witness to the truth of God's love. The ethnic, socioeconomic and generational diversity inherent in the choir testified to an inclusivity which stood in opposition to the worldview of those who had beaten up a young asylum seeker just days

earlier in the same space. According to Barth, 'Christians are either the messengers of God (with or without words)…or else they are not Christians at all' (III:3:64). Whilst not all the members of SingCR0nise are Christians, the choir is a ministry of the church and as such, seeks to be a messenger of God which authentically communicates gospel truth. Barth asserts that this communication may be undertaken by means other than words. Where actions are commonly contrasted with words, I would suggest that in the context of the community choir, 'essence' is a more appropriate concept. It is by its very essence that the choir authentically communicated the truth of the gospel on the occasion described above.

The inclusive hospitality, focus upon participation, and building up of singers' confidence and self-worth, which characterise the choir's ethos, are reflective of the 'free act of the free grace of the free God' which Barth calls 'good news' (IV:3:462) and of which Newbigin calls the Church to be a living hermeneutic (2007:227). Singing opposite the bus stop, the choir did not need to speak of what had taken place – its presence was a prophetic witness against it. Barth describes the goal of mission not as conversion to personal salvation (which is the work of God alone) but as attesting to the work and Word of God (IV:3:876). Barth further notes that the work of mission must 'lead the heathen themselves to become witnesses'. Whilst Barth may have understood the 'heathen' (a word which sits uncomfortably on modern ears) as those who are not Christians, his words might be understood as coming to fulfilment in a way other than that which he might have expected, as non-Christian members of the choir - 'the heathen' as Barth might call them - did indeed become witnesses to the truth. The entire choir, Christians and non-Christians alike, was, on that occasion, a 'credible and attractive manifestation and embodiment of the gospel', which, as noted in chapter two, is the means by which the authentic communication of the truth takes place. Through love-filled lyrics and the testimony of its own diversity and inclusivity, SingCR0nise undertook the prophetic act of restoring dignity and justice to a place of anger and aggression (Beckford 2004:120) and in so doing, blurred the boundaries of participation in the communication of eternal truth.

This thesis has demonstrated that a group such as a choir can positively impact upon wellbeing in many different ways, indeed most of my research participants expressed this in their responses. In providing a purpose around which people can gather, singing not only communicates the truth of the good news that the Gospel of Christ involves the salvation of the whole person and the restoration of the whole creation, but it enables people to experience elements of salvation for themselves. Some choir members seem to sing Christian lyrics, even many taken directly from scripture, without them impacting upon

their belief system, and yet if in gathering to sing, they feel less isolated, lonely, anxious or depressed and more connected with other human beings, then an aspect of the truth of the gospel is being communicated to them and they in turn are part of communicating it to others. Such truth encounters are transformative, whether or not singers recognise them as such.

There is another sense in which singing contributes to the authentic communication of the truth, which is alluded to by Tanya;

> *When I sing, when I hear music, it sort of makes me come out of me…*
> *(Tanya)*

Tanya suggests that in singing, she somehow becomes a more authentic version of herself. Tanya is not alone in describing this experience. It appears that through its capacity to elicit emotions, singing has a disinhibiting effect which enables her to 'let down her guard' and express feelings which are otherwise hidden. The truth which Tanya communicates through singing is the authentic expression of who she really is. Not all participants however, expressed the positive response to singing Tanya describes. A significant minority referred to their perceived vocal inadequacies, which for some, stemmed from negative childhood experiences.

> *I know I'm tone deaf, I've been told that since I was that high.*
> *(Lindsay)*

> *…when I was at Junior School I was gonna sing one of the solos in 'We Three Kings of Orient Are' and when it come to the crunch, I just lost my voice…*
> *…it was very, very embarrassing for me…*
> *(Norman)*

> *I'm sure I could psychoanalyse it and find reasons and probably say 'well I was in the choir at school but I didn't get in first time, it took the second bash', you know, things like that…*
> *(Zara)*

For Lindsay, repeated negative messaging from childhood reinforced her belief in her inability to sing in tune. For Norman, a specific embarrassing childhood experience undermined his confidence in singing even in late adulthood. For Zara, even though she

was accepted into the school choir on the second round, the initial rejection stuck with her, negatively impacting her relationship with singing for decades. Having heard all three of these people singing in the choir, I am convinced that their vocal disenfranchisement (Bell 2000:95ff) owes more to their negative childhood experiences than to any genuine vocal deficiency. According to John Bell, such vocal disenfranchisement is combatted by exposing individuals to a different 'truth' concerning their singing ability in order to nullify the negative messaging which undermines their confidence. He refers to the speaking of this different truth as 'renaming' (103). Bell notes that 'God is in the renaming business' (Abram-Abraham; Sarai-Sarah; Simon-Peter) and as such, God 'delights to get rid of the rumours, nicknames and debilitating labels of the past'. Bell contends that 'Church musicians, in God's name, have to rename all the self-confessed groaners as apprentice angels, and to believe that they will begin to sing' (104). I noted in chapters five and six that Mike, in his response, also describes a connection he perceives between singing and angels. He speaks of his belief in angels 'converting' human singing into a 'harmonious singing sound' which reaches to God. Whilst I would question Mike's theory of angelic vocal conversion, and Bell's 'apprentice angels' concept might inadvertently reinforce a 'pop theology' of the afterlife in which humans are translated into angels, sitting on clouds with harps etc. (although I suspect Bell intends no such theological implication), the underlying message of both is that even those with low opinions of their singing ability might be encouraged to understand their singing from a divine perspective. This reimagining of singing as something of worth to God speaks a new and transformative truth over the belief that their singing was of limited value, due to any real or perceived limitations concerning its standard.

Whilst in the context of SingCR0nise the process of renaming is not quite so explicit, Lindsay, Norman and to an extent Zara, have, through gradual encouragement and participation in the collective experience of singing with the choir (and even through participation in this research process), begun to understand their singing ability in more positive terms, going from 'non-singers' to 'Choir Members'. This process has facilitated the replacement of the negative voices of their childhood with a more accurate understanding of the truth of their vocal abilities which liberates them to sing with greater confidence and rediscover the joy of singing which for some, was lost many years ago. The transformative impact of this experience for the individuals concerned must not be underestimated, as it extends beyond their relationship with singing to encompass their entire sense of self-worth.

This section has demonstrated singing's role in the authentic communication of the truth. Firstly, songs themselves are recognised as being effective tools for communication, making challenging concepts accessible in ways which words alone may not. As these concepts are accessed and understood by singers who might otherwise not have encountered them, the impact can be spiritually transformative. Secondly, the act of singing in itself, particularly by a diverse group of people, can be a prophetic witness to an alternative truth, to that which motivates hatred and anger. Thirdly, it can speak transformative truths over previously held beliefs which impact upon confidence and self-worth, via a process of renaming 'non-singers' as Choir Members, thus restoring and transforming those individuals' understanding of their true selves. Finally, singing, particularly in the context of the choir, blurs the boundaries of participation in truth communication, embracing non-Christians within the embodied witness, as they both communicate and encounter the truth of the Gospel.

Singing and the Embodiment and Enactment of Christian Hope

In chapter two Christian hope was described as the hope for 'God's renewal of all things, for his overcoming of corruption, decay and death, for his filling of the whole cosmos with his love and grace, his power and glory' (Wright 2007:282). Christians frequently sing about this hope. Indeed, many of the songs sung by SingCR0nise contain such lyrics. However, the embodiment and enactment of Christian hope goes beyond singing about it. Embodied and enacted hope is hope lived out – hope evidenced and glimpsed. Hope, by its very nature is not fulfilled, and yet there are actions into which God invites the Church in mission to participate, which offer insights into the ultimate hope described above. Many of the participants in this research process spoke of experiences of transformation through singing in the choir, indeed the enabling of transformation is one of the four key research findings, alongside the engendering of belonging, the eliciting of emotions and the enriching of spirituality. Participants testified to overcoming shyness and anxiety; addressing long-held insecurities around their capabilities and becoming stronger and more confident. Such experiences of transformation bear witness to the transformation of all creation for which Christians hope – glimpses of God's transformative activity in the present which is a precursor to the promised hope for the future.

For some participants, the choir represents hope in a very simple, yet profound way. Alice articulates this well;

… things that's happened in my life I, I sort of, a lot of things that I keep, keep in, so, in a way, singing is another thing for letting it all out really, and still being private.

… you can forget your problems for a little while.

… I think I'm dyslexic, being, I can't put nothing, it's quite embarrassing really, I feel as though I can perhaps forget that bit, and just do what I can.
(Alice)

Whilst Alice still lives with many challenges, the emotions which singing elicits and the sense of belonging that she experiences through the choir, enable her to temporarily forget some of the issues she faces. Alice's experience mirrors the now and not yet of Christian hope. In belonging to the choir, she glimpses something of the future liberation from earthly suffering for which Christians hope, when 'there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain' (Revelation 21:4). During the time when she is singing with the choir, Alice is temporarily distanced from the problems of her life. She experiences momentarily, a hint of that for which Christians hope eternally. In chapter two, I cited Tomlin's description of the Church's mission of 'bringing life to drabness' (Tomlin 2013: Loc.576) and Newbigin's assertion that it is 'impossible to give faithful witness to the gospel while being indifferent to the situation of the hungry, the sick, the victims of human inhumanity' (1989:136). It is clear from participant responses and the ethnomusicological literature that singing has the life-giving capacity to feed the need for community, promote physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing and restore human dignity and self-worth, and thus singing is a means by which the Church can bring hope into situations such as those to which Tomlin and Newbigin refer.

Singing's capacity to speak hope into seemingly hopeless situations was evidenced on a large scale in April 2019. It is considered in the journal reflection which follows.

APRIL 2019 – A Hopeful Song?

The world held its breath last night as one of its greatest monuments of faith was engulfed in flames. The images of the fire which ravaged the cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris were hard to watch, as the iconic spire collapsed, ancient windows exploded and a building whose construction began over 850 years ago threatened to succumb to the inferno. Notre-Dame has heard countless hymns and songs over the centuries – its Gothic walls resounding with the prayers and praises of the

> ages. In 1944, the liberation of Paris from Nazi occupation was celebrated with the singing of The Magnificat inside the great cathedral, but yesterday a more sombre song was heard on the streets as Parisiens and visitors together lamented the building's destruction. News agencies across the globe shared the scene of hundreds of people singing hymns and songs, often in four-part harmony, their music an incongruously serene soundtrack to the images of devastation on the screen. Of the various songs I heard, all were in a minor key, and whilst I couldn't make out the lyrics, the haunting sound reached my ears as a lament. And yet, just as the Bible's Song of Lament allows for a glimmer of hope to shine through the darkness (Lamentations 3:21-26) so too, despite its mournful tone, this act of singing as the flames tore through the ancient walls, sounded for me, a hopeful note that the human spirit, exemplified by love 'bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things' and ultimately, 'never ends' (1 Corinthians 13:7-8).

In reflecting on the phenomenon described above, I found helpful insight from Gary Ansdell, who shares the story of Christina, a patient he worked with in music therapy (2014:82). Ansdell describes how, unable to 'find her 'own' internal orientation' following brain surgery, Christina appropriated music as an 'orientating device' (83), which took her beyond just the 'physical' world, 'reorientating and reconnecting her with other dimensions of her lifeworld' creating 'another world than the one immediately around' her (84-85). Christina describes the significance of the physical spaces in which the music was recorded, noting;

> …you can feel the space where it originated. And I felt the spaces of this music were nice spaces, large…they didn't make me feel small or hemmed in. They were expansive and allowed me to grow, like in a cathedral or a big Victorian railway station I knew this was religious music…and it was this that helped me feel something about people as wonderful and enabled. (2014:85)

In the time of her physical and emotional trauma, listening to sacred music connected Christina not only with the physical space from which it originated, but with an experiential 'space' beyond the limitations and challenges of her immediate circumstances. Christina's reorientation was not only bound in time, limited to the moment of the specific experience, but it offered the hope that despite her physical restrictions, there remained, through music, the possibility of transcendence – a knowledge which begat more hope. Ansdell reflects upon the relationship between music and hope, asserting from his experience as

a music therapist that 'hope is perhaps the most common if mysterious affordance of musicking – whether in everyday or more extreme situations' (275-276). He cites the experience of the mother of a profoundly disabled child, who sees the 'sudden hope of future possibility' as her child responds 'with joy in a music therapy session' (276). Such experiences, Ansdell sees as evidence of music's ability to 'carry us forward hopefully' pointing to 'a future that is both possible and, despite all signs to the contrary, benign'.

Returning to the streets of Paris, it strikes me that alongside lament, perhaps it was to experience or testify to hope that the people sang. Ansdell contends that 'hope becomes important in our lives when we face a physical, psychological or spiritual threat. Hope counters despair' (276). As the people watched in despair as Notre Dame burned, their hopelessness to act to prevent its destruction was both expressed in and countered by a turn to the hopefulness of song. The crowd reached backwards into their shared repertoire of sacred songs - some of which may have been sung many times within the cathedral itself – in order, together, to transcend the disorientation of the present and sing into being a new, hopeful orientation. Some months after the singing on the streets of Paris, Hong Kong also experienced singing as a means of expressing hope. In the midst of conflict with the Chinese authorities, the song 'Glory to Hong Kong' was adopted by protesters, and sung by thousands in shopping malls, football stadia and on the streets. The song's composer and lyricist wrote the song to 'unite people and boost morale' (BBC News 14th September 2019). He observes that through singing the song, 'people seem to have been reenergised and there's a new energy in the movement'. This resonates with Anthony Storr's assertion that 'Music has the effect of intensifying or underlining the emotion which a particular event calls forth' (1993:24) and confirms his contention that music can be 'a source of reconciliation, exhilaration, and hope' (187-8). Protesters spoke of singing the song as a unifying experience which has drawn more people into public expression of solidarity with the movement. The song has become an anthem of hope, inspiring and galvanising a movement. This experience and that of the singers in Paris, resonates with SingCR0nise's performance in Shrublands, opposite the site of the attack on Reker Ahmed, and reflects Alice's description of the relief from the difficult realities of life, which singing affords. In each situation, whether through the sense of belonging it creates, the emotions it elicits in both singers and listeners, its enriching impact upon spirituality or through the transformation, however small, of people and places, singing mediates hope.

This section has considered the role of singing in the embodiment and enactment of hope. It has described the means by which the hoped-for transformation of human experience can be glimpsed through the act of singing, as the singer is transported, albeit temporarily,

into an experiential space in which singing overwhelms such things as stifle hope. In the cases of the Notre Dame fire, the concert in Shrublands and Alice's personal experience, the singing of Christian lyrics is of particular significance in bringing hope to situations of despair, thus affirming singing's unique capacity to communicate, embody and enact the hope at the centre of the Christian faith.

Conclusion

This chapter has brought the experiences of the participants in the research process into dialogue with the theoretical perspectives of ethnomusicology and missiology, through the specific lens of the five missional 'ways of being' identified in chapter two. It has described how singing relates and contributes to these 'ways of being', using participant data to provide insights into the role of singing in the missional context of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church. The specific conclusions drawn can be summarised thus;

- Singing engenders belonging and contributes to the facilitation and nurture of community through a commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, characterised by the facilitation of a hospitable 'third-space', which benefits both the community of the choir and the wider community.

- Singing facilitates empowerment for and engagement in ministry through its transformative impact on singers' confidence and wellbeing, and the provision of ministry opportunities to both Christians and non-Christians who contribute to the choir's ministry.

- Singing exemplifies the integration of internal structures with external action through a virtuous circle of physical, social, emotional and spiritual benefits, which motivate, equip and enable singers for outward actions, which benefit the wider community and further contribute to the singers' sense of fulfilment, confidence and self-worth.

- Singing facilitates the authentic communication of the truth through songs' capacity to make complex concepts more accessible. Singing prophetically communicates transformative truths over individuals and situations, embracing non-Christians within the embodied witness, as they both encounter and communicate the transformative truth of the Gospel.

- Singing contributes to the embodiment and enactment of hope through the creation of experiential spaces in which the act of singing produces physical, psychological, social and spiritual benefits which overwhelm such things as stifle hope.

Together, these conceptual conclusions, underscored by holistic understandings of soteriology and missiology, lead to the central conclusion that the more holistic one's view of mission and salvation, the greater the blurring of boundaries between the Church and the world and the more an activity such as a community choir can be understood to contribute to the missio Dei. The final chapter considers the implications for practice of these conclusions.

CHAPTER EIGHT
IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

'One of the main critical tasks of Practical Theology is to recognise distorted practice and to call the Church back to the theological significance of its practices and to enable it to engage faithfully with the mission of God' (Swinton and Mowat 2006:25). The aim of this thesis has been to contribute to the conversation concerning faithful engagement with God's mission. My analysis of participant responses has demonstrated that the more holistic one's missiology, the more blurred the boundaries of missional participation become, and the more an activity such as a community choir fits within the concept of the missio Dei. This poses challenges to theory and practice which are considered in this chapter, with reference to implications for my own practice and the wider Salvation Army.

Personal Implications

In chapter two, I declared my desire for my research to afford me greater understanding of my own practice through deeper appreciation of the experiences of those in my sphere of influence. One notable point of learning for me as both church and choir leader, concerns participants' blurring of the boundaries between choir and church. When I initially began to analyse the participant data, I noticed that several people spoke of the choir in language one might expect to hear used of the church. Wayne even stated that the choir is his church. I initially adopted the phrase 'in loco ecclesiae' to describe the role of the choir, acting, in many ways, in the place of the church. However, during the course of my reflections, I came to the realisation that 'in loco ecclesiae' underplays the reality. For Wayne, the choir isn't 'in the place of the church', it is church. It provides community and fellowship, opportunities for worship and service, space for learning, development, spiritual encounter and enrichment, and ultimately the facilitation of myriad social, political, emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual transformations. The choir is not a stepping stone towards future church involvement (not that that was ever its intended purpose) but it is understood by several participants to be church in its own right.

Wayne, crediting the choir with deepening his relationships with others, states;

> *I've gotten friends out of the choir…it's about the chat…and the listening and the sharing and the kind of all of that.*
> *(Wayne)*

It is interesting to note that Wayne does not even mention singing in his description of the benefit he derives from participation in the choir. Whilst this is perhaps tacit in his statement, it is significant that friendship, conversation, listening and sharing are aspects of the choir which he highlights. When coupled with Wayne's assertion that 'choir is my church', this statement takes on even greater significance. If Wayne was only to experience an hour of intensive singing during a choir rehearsal, he would doubtless profit from many of the benefits of singing regarding his health and wellbeing. However, as is the case in music, the rests between the notes are just as important for Wayne as the notes themselves. That is to say, the times between songs when conversation ensues, relationships are built and lives are shared, are as important as the times of singing, if not more so. The Sunday morning worship gathering features singing, scripture, prayer and sharing. The Sunday evening choir rehearsal contains the same elements, but presented in a way which Wayne finds more palatable. The result is that Wayne, who struggles with the traditional concept of church, is able to assert that 'choir is my church'.

Tanya identifies a similar relationship to the choir existing for a number of other members.

> *Some people…the choir is their…faith of the week, isn't it. They may not have a particular faith or they may not come to church, but coming and singing the gospel songs…obviously touches them…otherwise they would join a different type of choir if they just wanted to sing.*
> *(Tanya)*

This knowledge has transformed my understanding of the role of the choir and my own place within it. Without journeying through this process with participants like Wayne, I would have been ignorant of the significance of the choir to them. That Wayne and potentially others view the choir as their church, places a pastoral responsibility upon me as the choir leader which is every bit as significant as the responsibility I have for the members of the Sunday morning congregation. Paul Weston describes pastoral ministry as encompassing 'the work of teaching and feeding the flock…but also searching for the lost' (2019:97). Whilst 'lostness' is a broad concept, it must surely include those for whom traditional methods of church have failed, and yet who find themselves searching for a community in which to ground and explore their innate spirituality. SingCR0nise represents a space in which this might take place, and thus all three aspects of pastoral ministry are necessary in the context of my leadership of the choir. This insight has changed the way I understand and structure choir rehearsals. Since these gatherings represent some members' weekly 'church service', I have sought to provide a loosely

‘liturgical arc’ to rehearsals. Rehearsals begin with an opportunity for conversation and fellowship, vocal warm-ups, and the singing of something celebratory and familiar which enables engagement and fosters an atmosphere of unity and shared enjoyment. This is followed by the learning and development of repertoire (which is predominantly contemporary Christian, by popular demand) and the final song is usually something of a more reflective or benedictory nature. I always close rehearsals with a spoken prayer, thanking God for the gift of music and the gift of the choir, thus connecting the physical and psychosocial benefits of singing with their Divine originator. Following the rehearsal, all choir members are encouraged to participate in packing up the rehearsal space, which serves as a reminder of our shared responsibilities as a community. When the choir is rehearsing for an event, I intentionally speak of the choir bringing encouragement and blessing to the audience, embracing all members (Christians and non-Christians) within the scope of the choir’s ministry.

Another insight I have taken from this process specifically concerns my leadership and my role within participants’ experiences of singing. Humility, tinged with embarrassment blinded me to the significance of this theme, until I was encouraged to engage with it by those supervising me in this process.

There are 13 direct references to me in the data, which relate in some way to my role in participants’ experiences of singing. Alison for instance states;

> *…I also put you in the middle, because you represent for me, you represent the whole thing. The supportive element, the love element, the together element. And you’re calm and you have endless patience, and you bring out the best, in, I think, everyone. You’re completely non-judgmental about everybody’s singing, and I think that’s lovely.*
> *(Alison)*

Whilst (fortunately) not crediting me with all her positive experiences relating to singing, Alison nonetheless cites me as representing certain benefits with which the choir as a whole provides her; support, love, togetherness etc. In identifying certain characteristics she perceives me to possess (calmness, patience, non-judgmentalism) Alison suggests that they play a role in creating an environment in which she feels enabled to enjoy singing and its related benefits without fear of judgment.

Nigel too alludes to me enhancing the benefit he gains from choir participation. He describes his lack of confidence, and suggests that when performing, he relies on a belief that I have faith in his abilities, despite his lack of faith in himself.

> *…people think that I've got a lot of confidence and outgoing, but believe me, it's actually possibly the complete opposite…*
>
> *…I'm thinking 'Matt's got faith in me to carry this through!'*
> *(Nigel)*

Nigel's issues of confidence in his own ability are alleviated by his trust in my belief that he is able for the task. This places a responsibility upon me as leader to temper encouragement with realism, to support people like Nigel in discovering and utilising their gifts and skills, whilst not giving anyone an unrealistically elevated view of their own abilities which results in overconfidence and potential hurt. It is of interest to note that the choir's belief in me as leader is of less importance than their belief in my belief in them. This releases me from the need for perfection in my musical leadership and challenges me rather to channel my energies into the convincing and authentic communication of my belief in the choir's ability to achieve, which is of far greater benefit to them. This resonates with John Bell's process of 'renaming' unconfident singers (2000:103ff), and having embraced the implications of Bell's theory, I now seek to consciously encourage those I sense have low self-belief regarding their singing, through such simple acts as a smile, nod or 'thumbs-up' in acknowledgement of their effort or achievement at opportune moments during a rehearsal.

Both Alison and Nigel refer to patience as a quality which they appreciate in my choir leadership.

> *…your patience is beyond belief…that's had an effect...it's changed my thought, I try to be more patient and kind and understanding (laughs) my family, Matt…but I do, honestly, through that, yeah, through that one thing, definitely.*
> *(Nigel)*

For Nigel, witnessing patience, a quality which is central to the Christian life (1 Corinthians 13:4, Colossians 3:12, Galatians 5:22) and reflective of the character and example of Christ (1 Timothy 1:16, 2 Peter 3:15) has had a positive impact beyond his enjoyment of the choir. It has resulted in the transformation of his own thinking and his behaviour

towards his family. As Greitemeyer discovered that the singing of songs with prosocial lyrics affected prosocial behaviours (2009:186ff), so too for Nigel at least, participation in the choir has engendered positive behaviours in other areas of his life. Unlike in Greitemeyer's experiment however, it is not the songs themselves which impact upon Nigel's behaviour, but witnessing and emulating behaviours identified in me as the leader. The challenge to my own practice here is clear; my behaviour and character is of greater significance than my musical ability, and it is incumbent upon me to remember that others are influenced by my example.

Wayne, whose comments concerning choir as church are quoted earlier in the chapter, refers to my philosophy of choral singing being fun, as something he appreciates. I have always maintained that having fun should lie at the heart of our singing together, and that the choir which has fun and inclusivity as its goal may also have the corresponding outcome of sounding good, but the choir which prioritises sounding good won't necessarily have fun or be particularly inclusive. This 'sitting lightly' to musical excellence enables choir members to experience a sense of freedom in their singing, unencumbered by fear of ridicule or reproach. This philosophy has wide-ranging ramifications in facilitating environments in which individuals can be authentically 'less-than-perfect', which is essential in creating hospitable 'third-spaces' to which all-comers are welcome and each person contributes to a shared journey. Listening to participants such as Wayne has galvanised my commitment to the creation of such spaces, not only in the choir but in the context of my wider church leadership.

A final personal implication concerns succession planning. Emma and I have led New Addington corps for over 11 years, which, in The Salvation Army represents a fairly lengthy appointment. Whilst we have no reason to believe that our departure is in any way imminent, it is ultimately inevitable, raising questions concerning succession planning regarding the choral ministries which I currently lead or am hoping to explore. It may be that such programmes are 'for such a time as this', and relate specifically to my particular skill-set and calling, rather than needing to be continued indefinitely. Singing programmes could certainly be written into the 'Corps Profile' to be taken into consideration in future appointments to the corps, but there is no guarantee that the officers to follow us would possess the relevant skills, nor would I want to assert that such should be considered an essential requirement. I have identified within the choir a suitable candidate for leadership, who has already begun to teach and lead the group in a song, though I do not know whether this person would want to assume full leadership. I am alert to this issue of future planning, and its potential implications, but am minded that the church's ministry reflects

its membership (of which I am a part), and changes to membership may well result in corresponding changes to ministry as the church adapts accordingly.

This process has raised specific challenges for future ministry to be considered in our local context. Already under discussion are a 'Singing by Heart' programme for people affected by dementia, a choir for parents and carers who attend our Toddler group, and the reimagining of our community youth music engagement (until recently, I ran a choir in the local secondary school, but staff changes at the school resulted in the end of that programme). I am also reflecting on the role which singing might be able to play in the existing programme of support extending from The Vine Food Bank which our church operates. The Vine has 'More Than a Food Bank' as its strapline, and given communal singing's psychosocial benefits, it could contribute to The Vine's 'More Than' aspirations by improving the lives of some of those who present at the food bank. The vulnerability of The Vine's clientele and the sensitive nature of many of their situations adds a level of complexity to considerations of this nature, but I believe it to be an area worth exploring.

Similarly complex and no less important is the area of mental health and wellbeing. The *Campaign to end Loneliness* asserts that over 9 million people in the UK say that they are always or often lonely, and that lacking social connections is a comparable risk factor for early death as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and is worse for us than well-known risk factors such as obesity and physical inactivity (www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/ - accessed 8/10/19). Whilst it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine this assertion further, it seems reasonable to accept the premise that loneliness and isolation are key factors affecting many people in the UK. Singing facilitates the engagement of otherwise isolated individuals in a corporate activity, which we have seen elsewhere in this study, has significant health and wellbeing benefits. 43% of adults state that they have experienced a 'common mental disorder' (CMD) at some point in their life (McManus et al. 2016:8 & 51), but only 60% of people with CMD are in receipt of treatment. Unemployment, economic inactivity, being in receipt of state benefits, and living alone are all contributory factors in mental disorder (54ff). Considering such statistics, any missional desire to 'serve suffering humanity' must engage with mental health disorders. Västfjäll, Juslin and Hartig (2012:406) describe mental ill-health as a sign that 'an individual is unable to recover adequately from stressors'. They suggest that in addition to facilitating (where possible) the reduction of stressors, the provision of opportunities for recovery from exposure to stressors is key to the enhancement of individual and public health. As is the case with so many of the social ills against which the Church fights, a two-pronged

attack is required. Addressing the circumstances which result in people's exposure to stressors (poverty, economic inactivity, life pressures, isolation etc.) is essential, but where the local church comes into its own is in the provision of such opportunities for recovery as Västfjäll, Juslin and Hartig (2012) describe. In chapter one, I identified New Addington as having the highest incidence of serious mental illness in the borough of Croydon. Croydon Council's 2015 Annual Public Health Report lists 'five actions that individuals can take to improve mental wellbeing: Connect; Be Active; Take Notice; Keep Learning; Give' (Croydon.gov.uk 2015:18). Singing with the community choir facilitates these, through the provision of social interaction, the physicality of breathing and moving in synchronicity, increased physical activity, improved self-confidence, the defeat of personal fears and insecurities, the intimate connection of listening for the voice of the other, the acquisition of a new skill, the shared sense of achievement and the opportunity to give back to others through community performances (attributes which also resonate with the 'five missional ways of being'). Singing's role in the stimulation of bodily responses which positively influence mood (increased levels of endocannabinoids, serotonin, dopamine etc.) has already been discussed, and combined with the above, singing is ideally placed to combat key features of mental health dis-ease. Stone et al. conclude from their research that; 'Activities like singing could be recommended to individuals suffering from mood disorders such as anxiety and depression' (2018). It is therefore incumbent upon a church community such as ours, which has at its disposal a resource such as choral singing, to employ singing in the alleviation of human suffering, particularly with regard to mental ill-health, if we are to take seriously the call to nurture healthy, interconnected communities of individuals, empowered to live their lives to the full.

Reflecting on the positive responses from male participants in this research process, I am particularly challenged regarding men's mental health. Men are significantly less likely to pursue and be in receipt of treatment for Common Mental Disorders than women (McManus et al. 2016:91). They are 'less likely to disclose their mental health issues to family members or friends, and more likely to use potentially harmful coping methods such as drugs or alcohol in response to distress' (www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/m/men-and-mental-health - accessed 7/10/19). Suicide is the largest cause of death for men under 50, with men representing 75% of all suicides in the UK. Suicide is particularly prevalent among men from lower socioeconomic communities such as New Addington. Despite the prevalence of mental health issues among men and the treatment gap which exists, The Mental Health Foundation asserts that 'there is research to suggest that men will seek and

access help when they feel that the help being offered meets their preferences, and is easily accessed, meaningful, and engaging'. I feel challenged at a local church level, to explore ways in which communal singing might be employed as an accessible, meaningful and engaging means of supporting and helping men experiencing mental health challenges, many of whom are already connected with our church fellowship either directly or indirectly.

Whilst this thesis has affirmed singing's multiple physical and psychosocial benefits, and I have advocated for more opportunities for participation in singing, I note the experiences of Harry and Zara, which, whilst statistical outliers, are none the less significant. Harry says of singing:

> *I suppose I do feel slightly uncomfortable when I do sing…*
> *(Harry)*

Doubtless Harry is not alone in this regard, and his experience is pertinent to the context of gathered worship. Whilst the choir (to which Harry does not belong) meets for the purpose of singing, singing is but one element of the church service, which for Harry must be endured if he is to benefit from the other aspects of the gathering. Harry's discomfort has not caused him to stop attending church services, and he would have no expectation of singing ceasing to feature within gathered worship, but it is significant that for Harry, singing engenders discomfort rather than a rush of endorphins or sense of euphoria. Zara describes her experience even more starkly. She speaks of a lack of confidence, heightened self-consciousness and deep frustration regarding singing, which led her to stop singing for some time. Despite being a capable singer, singing represents for Zara, an area of vulnerability and anxiety. Harry and Zara represent a minority response among my participants, but their experiences are reminders that the benefits of singing are not universally experienced by all, and sensitivity is required, particularly as I plan and lead gathered worship, to ensure the inclusion of those for whom singing is a less positive experience.

Implications for The Salvation Army

This thesis has demonstrated that singing facilitates and fulfils many of the aims and purposes of the missio Dei. It follows therefore that there are implications for The Salvation Army regarding how singing is understood and engaged with.

I propose that singing functions in one of three distinct ways within The Salvation Army in the UK today. Firstly, there are contexts wherein it is primarily reserved for those who are already within the category of the 'saved' and used for purposes of performance, proclamation, proselytisation, praise, pedagogy and pastoral ministry. This is evidenced in locations where singing takes place primarily within the contexts of worship, evangelism or celebration, and is undertaken by congregations and choirs, with membership of the latter contingent upon a proclamation of faith. Secondly, there are contexts in which singing, particularly chorally (a tradition in which The Salvation Army is rich), is opened to 'The Whosoever' with the aim and in the hope that it will serve as a stepping stone or gateway to an encounter with Christ and conversion to faith. This model of 'stealth evangelism' flows from a place of sincere belief that what people ultimately need is spiritual salvation and thus any and all means can legitimately be engaged in the pursuit of this highest of goals. The third possible response, and the one proposed in this thesis, recognises the holistic benefits of singing and embraces a holistic understanding of mission, beyond, though not excluding, individual spiritual salvation. In this context, participation in singing is facilitated and encouraged because of its capacity to improve the lived experiences of humankind and contribute to the overall betterment of the world, which is understood as being within the remit of the missio Dei, in which the Church (to which The Salvation Army belongs) is invited to participate.

The Salvation Army has a long history of taking singing to the streets in order to communicate the gospel beyond the walls of the church. The street ministry of formally recognised Salvation Army musical groups often (though not always) involves uniform-wearing Salvation Army soldiers playing music and singing to those who have gathered to listen or are passing by. Lyric sheets might be handed to listeners in order that they might participate, but even where people are thus included, there remains a distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', and any listener who finds themselves drawn to want to belong to such musical groups as a result of the encounter must jump through numerous theological and institutional hoops before such belonging can take place.

The findings of the research undertaken among the participants in this process pose a challenge to the traditional Salvation Army model of 'closed sections' (the policy of limiting formal membership of and participation in Army musical groups to (usually) uniformed soldiers) which is governed by The Army's Regulations and Guidelines for Musicians, which state;

> Officially recognised music sections/groups will be made up of Salvationist commissioned musicians who work together in accordance with regulations… All commissioned musicians must: Be soldiers of The Salvation Army… Be committed to regular financial support of their corps through the systematic giving scheme…Conform to the required uniform code…Be prepared to speak, sing, play or pray as opportunity arises (2000:8&9).

Although in our local context in New Addington, we operate an open policy of musical participation and do not 'commission' any of our musicians, it remains the case that many Salvation Army corps still adhere to the formal regulations with regard to participation in music. Whilst recognising that many Salvationists consider their participation in the Army's musical 'sections' to be a sacred honour, I would contend that this sanctity is not undermined by opening participation more widely. Rather, musical participation is undertaken within the context of a form of music-making which better reflects and is more fully aligned with the missio Dei, rendering the Salvationists' participation all the more sacred.

In chapter seven, I cited Lee Higgins' work on community music, in which he described the welcome of potential participants in musical enterprises as 'generating a porous, permeable, open-ended affirmation of and for' newcomers (2012:137). Higgins asserts that 'in this context, the welcome of the community musician refutes the closure inherent within notions of the gated community, enclaves that contain restrictive perimeters that are tightly controlled and which monitor participants' entrances and exits' (138). Higgins' words are replete with challenge to the notion of 'closed sections' within The Salvation Army.

This exclusivist stance on membership, is in many ways, consistent with The Salvation Army's stated 'Supreme Aim' of music making: 'The aim of all music making is to proclaim the gospel and help to accomplish The Salvation Army's mission' (2000:5). The 48 pages of regulations and guidelines which follow give theological context and practical instruction as to how this 'Supreme Aim' is to be understood and outworked. They leave little room for creative theological interpretation of how the proclamation of the gospel and the accomplishment of The Salvation Army's mission might potentially include not only non-Salvationists, but even non-Christians. The regulations are clear – music making within The Salvation Army is to be undertaken primarily by Salvationists for the purposes of performance, proclamation, proselytisation, pedagogy, praise. Whilst a minimal concession is made, acknowledging that 'informal groups exist in many corps and

divisions outside the officially recognised music sections/groups' (40), the stated purpose even of these groups is;

> a) To proclaim the gospel and help to accomplish The Salvation Army's mission.
> b) To create opportunity for corporate evangelical activity which might not otherwise be possible.
> c) Where non-Salvationists participate, to provide an opportunity for service within an environment wherein all concerned will come actively under the influence of the gospel and an entry point to the corps fellowship. (40)

SingCR0nise community choir is not viewed locally as an 'entry point to the corps fellowship' but as an intrinsic part of the life of the church, and as such, participants in the choir are not in some kind of 'holding tank' pending elevation to some greater status. Neither do they understand their place within the church in that way; as Wayne declared during his Duet Phase conversation 'choir is my church'. That these groups are described as existing 'outside the officially recognised music sections/groups' (40) is indicative of their status and perceived importance within The Army. Whilst these 'outsider' groups are tasked with evangelism, they are equally described as 'entry points' and places where people will come 'under the influence of the gospel'. Notwithstanding the problematic nature of this language, the absence of any acknowledgment of music's role in human flourishing, and such flourishing's place within the Missio Dei is indicative of a narrowness of missional thinking, which neglects the potential for participation in music making to achieve either The Army's missional objective of serving suffering humanity or the mission statement for all musicians within The Salvation Army, which is 'To bring glory to God and to make him known' (4).

Amos 5:23-24 serves as a stark reminder of the need to maintain a proper sense of perspective regarding music making within the Church; 'Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.' According to these verses, glory is given to God, first and foremost not through our music but through the enactment of justice and righteousness. These qualities must be present in the context of our music-making or it will fall upon divinely deaf ears. I would contend that there is an inherent injustice in excluding people from participating in a gift of God which has the capacity to engender belonging, elicit emotion, enrich spirituality and enable transformation. Such exclusion, even for reasons of compliance with the aims and objectives stated in the

Regulations and Guidelines for Musicians in The Salvation Army, strikes me as falling short of the aim of bringing glory to God and making him known.

For The Army to defend its musical sections as internal groups for the purpose of supporting in worship and engaging in evangelism, rather than community groups with a focus on participation and inclusion, such a contention must withstand theological scrutiny. To quote Higgins again; 'As an initial gesture given by community musicians to those who wish to participate in musical doing, the welcome invites and causes a reflecting on hospitable action' (2012:138). Any theological reflection concerning the notion of closedness with regard to musical sections must include such reflection on hospitable action as Higgins describes and in so doing, answer the question of whether placing conditions upon hospitality is ever theologically justifiable. Higgins notes the challenges posed by unconditional hospitality in a musical context, stating; 'This type of hospitality suggests unconditionality, a welcome without reservation, without previous calculation, and, in the context of community music, an unlimited display of reception toward a potential music participant' (139). Hospitality of this nature is a lofty goal, and not easily achieved even by the most intentional of groups. Higgins even describes it as 'a transcendental idea, one toward which we might aspire, even though it remains inaccessible' (139). However, I would argue that such unconditional hospitality represents a more missional view of musical groups than that which is articulated in The Salvation Army's Regulations and Guidelines, which suggests a somewhat utilitarian view of music as something to be used in the delivery of narrow missional aims rather than as a gift in and through which humanity can experience transformation.

Whilst membership of 'officially recognised music sections/groups' is only (officially) open to 'Salvationist commissioned musicians', Salvationist musicians are permitted to participate in non-Army musical groups, provided that 'membership of such does not conflict with Salvation Army principles and service' (2000:12). The influence of Salvation Army music-making could thus reach even farther were Salvationist musicians encouraged to exercise their freedom to use their musical gifts in local choirs, bands and other musical expressions. In so doing, Salvationists could support such community endeavours as might otherwise struggle and a corps' musical mission and ministry could extend beyond the confines of its own musical sections as Salvationist musicians are deployed in a range of different musical contexts in the local community.

In our local context, we operate an intentionally inclusive and hospitable approach to participation in music-making, which I contend is wholly consistent with The Salvation

Army's 'Supreme Aim' of music making, which is 'to proclaim the gospel and help to accomplish The Salvation Army's mission' (5). This thesis has claimed that the boundaries concerning participation in mission become increasingly blurred when mission is understood in increasingly holistic terms. I have asserted that all participants in the community choir, including those without a Christian faith, participate in the proclamation of the gospel (The Authentic Communication of the Truth) and help to accomplish The Army's mission through meeting human needs and serving suffering humanity as part of the choir's ministry, and therefore one need not be a commissioned musician, or even a Christian, to contribute positively to The Salvation Army's missional aims in music-making.

In addition to the above contention, I would advocate for a reimagining of The Army's position concerning musical participation on the grounds that 'closed' or 'exclusivist' policies lend themselves to 'first-space' and 'second-space' approaches to missional engagement as either 'come and see' or 'go and tell' (Male and Weston 2019:91ff). Viewing music as a potential 'third-space' of hospitality and welcome repositions mission not as something which musical groups do, but as something which they embody. This missiological implication has ecclesiological applications within The Salvation Army. Many corps go to great lengths to make their music ministry accessible and 'missional'. In opening themselves up to inclusive participation, these groups could instantly become mission-focussed and transformative, both for the new participants, for the musical groups themselves, and for the corps and communities in which they're located, as new gifts and talents, beyond music, are brought into the fellowship and new opportunities for ministry arise.

Contribution to Knowledge

The aim of this research was to generate a rich understanding of the role of singing in the lives of members of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church. The research data, considered in light of the theoretical perspectives of missiology and ethnomusicology, provided a unique and original insight into singing's role in participants' lives. Significant conclusions are that singing facilitates and nurtures community through the provision of a hospitable 'third-space'; its impact on singers' wellbeing empowers them to participate in such ministry opportunities as the choir provides; singing integrates internal structures with external action through a virtuous circle of benefits which motivate, equip and enable singers for outward actions, which benefit the community and singers alike; singing can make biblical truths more accessible, facilitate renewed self-understanding and confidence, and embrace non-Christians within the embodied witness

to the gospel; and singing provides physical, psychological and social benefits which provide hope in the present and offer glimpses of a future hope.

My research contributes to the missiological conversation within The Salvation Army, demonstrating that the broader and more holistic one's missiology, the more blurred the boundaries of participation in the missio Dei become, with Christians and non-Christians embraced within its scope, as both participants and beneficiaries. As practical theology, the research process and conclusions have provided me with new insights into my ministry and highlighted specific ways in which I can develop my practice, most notably, the challenge of engaging singing's psychosocial benefits in combatting issues pertaining to wellbeing and mental health, which I embrace within my understanding of holistic soteriology and missiology. My research also advocates an inclusive approach to singing (and indeed all forms of music-making) within The Salvation Army, in order to maximise its potential contribution to the missio Dei.

This research process has confirmed in me a commitment to intentionality regarding seeking and critically reflecting upon the views and experiences of those with whom I am in mission and ministry. It has convinced me of the transformative potential of academic research and processes aimed at intellectual development. The research journey has resulted in the transformation of my current practice and presented specific challenges for the future as I seek to respond appropriately to the new knowledge I have gained concerning singing's capacity to effect substantive positive change in people's lives, consistent with the Church's call to participation in God's mission.

This thesis has addressed two questions: What is the lived experience of singing for members of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church? What are the implications for Salvationist missiology and practice arising from analysis of that experience? The lived experiences of singing have been creatively and articulately expressed by the participants in this process, providing a rich source of data from which to consider the implications for Salvationist missiology and practice. Participants' descriptions of the physical, psychological, social and spiritual influence of singing on their lives have demonstrated singing's role within the context of a holistic missiology, which encompasses such life-impacting experiences within its scope. Such knowledge has challenged me in my own practice to proactively seek to further engage singing as an effective means of transformation within the missio Dei.

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APPENDIX A

AN INTRODUCTION TO MY CONTEXT AND APPROACH AS A SONG WRITER; USING SPECIFIC EXAMPLES.

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Paper 1

October 2014

ABSTRACT

In beginning my exploration of the role of congregational songs in the life of the church which I lead, it made sense to start with an exploration of songs which I have written myself for use in congregational contexts. First outlining my context, then reflecting upon a selection of my songs and finally exploring my hermeneutical approach with reference to writers in this field, this paper attempts to lay the foundations for my future research. The deeply personal insights upon which I reflect in this paper, lead me to the conclusion that my song-writing is both a creative expression of my understanding of the life of the Christian as a life in pursuit of social justice and a response to my specific experiential context at the times when these songs were written.

INTRODUCTION

It has been said that the song '*Here is Love, vast as the ocean*' fuelled the Welsh Revival. I am convinced that songs still play a key role in shaping a church's atmosphere, theology and missiological outlook. A recent first-time attender at my church commented to me after the service what a significant part the songs had played in her experience that day and I believe this to be the case for many who have begun attending church with us.

My professional context is that of a Salvation Army Officer. I lead a local Salvation Army congregation and singing is an integral part of our gathered worship. I also lead three choirs, one of which is a community choir which is open to people of all faiths and none and which sings songs with both 'Christian' and 'secular' lyrics. It has been interesting to note how, particularly some of those members who have attended churches in the past but who no longer choose to do so, respond to some of the 'worship songs' which the choir sings. A number have commented to me that they view the choir rehearsals as their 'worship service' and the choir itself as their 'congregation'. Their closed and occasionally moist eyes as they sing particular songs would certainly testify to them responding in some kind of emotional or spiritual way as they sing.

In addition to my roles as a church leader and choir master, I am also a songwriter and was recently involved in convening a song-writing group within The Salvation Army. Working with this particular group of songwriters on a collaborative project to produce songs relating to a theological symposium, I witnessed first-hand the need for rigour in terms of the appropriateness of the lyrical as well as musical content, and the temptation for songwriters to sacrifice theology on the alluring altars of rhythm and rhyme. I also experienced collaborative song-writing itself as a grace-based practice, relying, as it does, upon humility, sacrifice, cooperation, compromise, mutual inspiration, respect and love, all of which become enshrined into the song-writing process if it is to be successful.

Another relevant area of professional context is my teaching role at William Booth College. One of the classes I teach concerns the use of songs in gathered worship. Having taught this class for a number of years, and most recently adapted it for use with Methodist Ordinands at Wesley House, Cambridge, I have seen how it invariably stimulates both conversation and controversy, suggesting that there is considerable appetite for discussion and debate amongst people training for ordained ministry

concerning this topic. I also teach a class in which the process of biblical exegesis and sermon writing is likened to the musical Sonata form (Exposition, Development and Recapitulation). It strikes me that perhaps this musical form might equally be applied to Christian song-writing as a means of engaging with concepts and texts lyrically in a theologically astute way.

The aim and focus of this essay is to reflect upon a small representative sample of my own songs and to seek to draw out any common threads in terms of my hermeneutic approach to song-writing in general. I will then attempt to set this in a broader context within the sung worship of The Salvation Army and wider church, and in terms of specific approaches to Biblical Hermeneutics. My song lyrics will be included for reference purposes.

Pastoral Theologian Charles Gerkin developed a model of pastoral leadership in which he described the pastor as an 'interpretive guide', whose role was to accompany the congregation into new territory, whilst offering an interpretation thereof from her/his own experience. (Gerkin 1997:113-114). I understand the role of the Christian song or hymn writer in a similar vein, although unlike the pastor, the songwriter does not generally journey with all, if any, of those who will ultimately sing the song. Eventually, however, the song becomes the vehicle which serves to transport the congregation on a journey into a territory in which new insights might be gained, old insights might be refreshed, personal faith confirmed or challenged, and corporate faith articulated and proclaimed. With songs playing such an important part in the formation of a community of faith, the song-writer's role as 'interpretive guide' (or at least, the creator of songs which themselves become interpretive guides) is a vital one.

THE UNEXAMINED SONG IS NOT WORTH SINGING

To adapt the words of Socrates, one might suggest that the unexamined song is not worth singing. This next section will examine three of my songs which arose out of very distinct circumstances, and which offer insights into some of the theological themes and hermeneutical approaches which characterise my work.

FAITH

Matt Spencer © The Salvation Army 2014

There are times in life when the foundations of our beliefs are shaken.
For some, Salvation Army Officer training is one of those times.
This song was written as a reflection on the experiences of some of the 'Witnesses for Christ' Session as they journeyed through a mixture of emotions whilst studying the Creation stories in Genesis.
In the midst of the questions and theories, discussions and disputes lay one simple but sometimes elusive truth: In the beginning, God.
We can debate the details all we like – but in reality, accepting that there was a purposeful mind behind the creation of the universe and that the same creator
has a unique and purposeful plan for each and every one of us takes faith.
Martin Luther King Jr. said "Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." It's my prayer for the Witnesses for Christ that they will keep climbing, one step at a time, by faith.

Matt Spencer, William Booth College, May 2009

FAITH

By faith I know your word brought forth creation
And the universe was formed
at your command.
So by faith I'll follow you
Into the world that you have made
For I know you hold the future in your hands.

I have faith, mountain-moving faith,
God-believing faith
that you will never let me down.
And by faith I'll walk the road of life,
Through happiness and strife
In sure and certain hope;
I have faith.

By faith you bring us safely though the waters,
And by faith you turn our weakness
into strength.
Witnessing with saints of old
To the faithfulness of God,
With our eyes on Christ we'll follow to the end.

We have faith, mountain-moving faith,
God-believing faith that you will never let us down.
And by faith we'll walk the road of life
Through happiness and strife
In sure and certain hope;
We have faith.

We have faith in a faithful God
One whose word is true.
We have faith in a faithful God
We will hope in you.

The above reflection was written for inclusion in the programme notes for the Ordination and Commissioning Service for the 'Witnesses for Christ' session of Cadets who became Salvation Army Officers in 2009. I was an Old Testament tutor at William Booth College

(WBC) during the time that this group of people were training for ministry, and Old Testament Introduction was one of the first classes which the newly arrived Cadets faced.

Having taught at least 2 other cohorts prior to the 'Witnesses for Christ' session, I was not unused to managing the reactions of those who found formal theological study challenging. However, the reaction of some of the 'Witnesses for Christ' to some of that which was taught concerning the creation narratives in particular, was more extreme than I had previously encountered. Some of these newcomers to formal theological education experienced this basic introduction to hermeneutical approaches to the book of Genesis as a full-on assault on their faith.

I have heard it said of certain Cadets over the years, almost always with love and respect, that "*all he wants to do is love Jesus and serve him as best he can.*" This comment is almost exclusively used with reference to students who find it hard to cope with the rigours of formal theological education. It is an understandable and pastorally sensitive response on the part of those who say it, but it hints at the underlying assumption that the ordinary theology (Astley 2002:viii) of those who are untrained in a formal sense, is somehow at odds with that which is taught in the Academy, and yet it was such theology which had led those individuals to sacrifice careers and homes and familial stability to pursue the calling to which they testified. Their understanding of Biblical Hermeneutics might have been scant, but their ordinary theology, however faltering, was something to be respected for having shaped their journey to that point, and not something to be disregarded. Quite apart from anything else, if the Church is the people, then the theology of the Church is in no small part to be understood as being the theology of the people, most of whom have no formal training and who share similar perspectives to some of the Witnesses for Christ when they first arrived at WBC.

The song 'Faith' grew out of my desire to acknowledge the ordinary theology of those Cadets, whilst not undermining that which I understood to be true of Scripture from my own experience and studies.

The song begins with a personal statement of faith.

"By faith I know your word
brought forth creation
and the universe was formed
at your command."

This lyric seeks to find a common space between the rather literal reading of Genesis 1 which many of the Cadets felt was under attack, and the literary approaches which they perceived as the attackers. The lyric deliberately avoids hermeneutical judgments, although I recognise that even a

statement this broad may not encompass the full range of possible interpretations amongst Christians and itself occupies an interpretive space, however broad. My intention however, was to write a lyric which could provide opportunity for corporate proclamation of a shared faith, whilst allowing room for differences of opinion concerning the details of that faith. Both literal and literary interpreters of Genesis 1 could agree that it pointed to a creator God even if they struggled to agree on much beyond that.

"…so by faith I'll follow you
into the world that you have made…"

The song then moves from a statement of faith to a statement of intention, which speaks directly of a shared calling transcending theological debates and disagreements. Whilst the Cadets might have differed in their approaches to the text, and their understanding of God, they were in agreement when it came to acting upon those diverse and even divergent understandings. Questions over the meaning of the text and its 'right' interpretation could be put aside when it came to the enactment of a shared calling and activity - like so many different roads leading to the same destination.

"…for I know you hold the
future in your hands.

The final line of the first verse offers a theological context for the preceding line. The decision to follow God's call and leading is predicated upon a conviction that God is in some way involved in future events – either in control of them, guiding and shaping them, or in some way underpinning or working in or through them. Again, this is a statement upon which the Cadets were able to agree. It is a unifying statement, containing the potential for multiple interpretations, but which constitutes something upon which a broad range of Christians can agree.

*"**I** have faith, mountain-moving faith,*
God-believing faith that you will
*never let **me** down.*
*And by faith, **I'll** walk the road of life*
Through happiness and strife;
In sure and certain hope;
***I** have faith."*

The first chorus is deliberately written in the first person, allowing the individual to 'recalibrate' their own personal faith. This was particularly important to those Cadets who had found their first foray into the world of Biblical Studies traumatic. It enabled them to make a declaration of faith both to themselves and to the other members of their session, which served to restore something of that which they perceived to have lost during the 'shaking of their faith'.

*"By faith, you bring **us** safely through the waters. And by faith you turn **our** weakness into strength. Witnessing with saints of old To the faithfulness of God, With **our** eyes on Christ **we'll** follow to the end!"*

In verse 2 the song moves from the first person singular into a collective affirmation - a reminder that the faith of the individual finds its fullest expression within the context of the congregation. It contains a number of biblical allusions and references beyond the Genesis narrative, including Exodus 14:29, Psalm 77:16-20, Isaiah 43:2 ("through the waters"), Hebrews 11:34 ("weakness into strength"), Hebrews 12:1 (cloud of witnesses/"witnessing with saints of old") and Hebrews 12:2 ("eyes on Christ"). In constructing the lyrics around biblical allusions and references in this way I sought to create a familiar environment, using Scripture to reassure, reaffirm and rebuild the Cadets, reminding them that although the college environment might have challenged some of their prior beliefs with regard to the biblical text, the Bible was nevertheless important to those staff who it seemed might be responsible for undermining it (at least in the eyes of some of the Cadets.) The final line of the verse intentionally encourages a 'lifting of the eyes' from the conflicts and challenges surrounding the different approaches to the biblical text, to a focus on the Christ who unites all Christians.

*"**We** have faith, mountain-moving faith, God-believing faith that you will never let **us** down…"*

The second and all subsequent choruses moves from 'I have faith' to 'We have faith'. This shift seeks to connect the individual 'person of faith' with the wider community of faith, both in the present and the past (the 'Saints of old' with whom the saints today witness). This shift also serves a pastoral purpose. In my experience, it is not always easy to make a proclamation of faith. During those times, however, identification with a community of faith can remain important (and sometimes become even more so) even if the individual's own faith is wavering or even non-existent. During those times, hearing and even singing of a shared faith experience can be extremely important as a source of comfort and encouragement, as well as carrying the individual upon the faith of the community. In the specific case that led to the writing of this song, this shared proclamation of faith also served as a reminder that that which united was greater than that which divided.

The song's bridge section contains a corporate affirmation which was intended as the pinnacle of the song (something also reflected in the melody), where God is identified as the ultimate object of our shared faith and the Word of God (again, a concept open for interpretation) is affirmed as 'true'. Our faith is not in our understanding of God or in our interpretation of Scripture or in our denominational upbringing etc. but in God and his Word. The reference to the truth of God's Word is in itself somewhat provocative and invites the singer to reflect upon the nature of truth in general and biblical truth in particular, whilst again allowing room for any number of different interpretations of what the statement 'one whose word is true' might actually mean. This again gave the opportunity for people espousing different opinions to make a corporate affirmation, even if their individual interpretations of the phrase might vary.

> *"We have faith*
> *in a faithful God,*
> *One whose word is true.*
> *We have faith*
> *in a faithful God,*
> *We will hope in you."*

'Faith' as a response to a specific set of circumstances is a song which sought to find common ground amongst people of differing and at times, conflicting opinions. As it has been used more widely beyond its original context since its initial composition in 2007, I am aware that it has been appreciated for the opportunity which it affords for both personal and corporate affirmation of faith. It has also provided a form of engagement with Scripture which has opened up conversations about the passages from which the allusions originate. The song has recently been published by The Salvation Army as part of a short collection of new songs for corporate worship.

It should be noted that when Faith was written, it was not written in anything like as calculated a fashion as this reflection might suggest. The lyrics and tune came quickly and without a great deal of effort, but underpinning the entire process was a conscious desire to address the needs of the Cadets and to assist them in their transitional process as they began their studies.

IF I SUFFER © Matt Spencer 2012

Much of what is written about suffering in Scripture falls into one of two broad categories. Firstly, the noble 'suffering for one's faith' category, expressed for example in 1 Peter (2:19-21, 3:14, 3:17, 4:16, 4:19), Romans 5:3ff and Philippians 1:29. Secondly the suffering that ensues as a consequence of wrongdoing, either one's own or that of

IF I SUFFER

If I suffer, as I suffer
Let your glory be revealed.
As you hold me in the darkness
Or I'm wonderfully healed.

Jesus, if you hear me
Let me feel you,
Let me see you.
If you're near me
Let me hear you,
Let me know you.

If I wander, as I wander
Keep me mindful of your grace.
Draw me back to
Know the wonder
Of your welcoming embrace.

Bridge:
(Let me know your)
Grace and mercy
Hold and keep me
Safe within your love.
When the battle
Rages let your
Peace fall from above.

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another, such as is found in Numbers 14:33-35, Deuteronomy 26:6, Psalm 16:4 and Psalm 55:3.

Suffering of the first kind might provide an opportunity for learning and development (cf Hebrews 5:8), or may simply affirm Jesus' promise that 'in this world you will have trouble…' (John 16:33). Suffering of the second kind might be described as consequential or even punitive. In both cases, I have both experienced personally and witnessed in others, the redemptive nature of suffering, either as it produces and nurtures noble characteristics which are the fruit of the life of the believer, or as it challenges and curtails negative behaviours which had caused the sufferer to stray from the 'safe boundaries' of obedience.

The book of Job stands somewhat alone outside of either of these category definitions as testimony to that suffering which befalls humankind which is neither a consequence of sin nor the unavoidable bedfellow of faithful obedience, but which simply 'is', irrespective of the actions of the sufferer. It is this suffering which simply 'is' which served as the initial motivation for the song 'If I Suffer'.

"If I suffer, as I suffer, let your glory be revealed."

The song opens with a simple, challenging prayer that the suffering which simply 'is' might somehow lead to God-glorifying moments. Musically, the song is in the key of D minor and begins with a D minor chord, which resonates with the contingent nature of the opening words 'If I suffer'. The next chord is A minor which corresponds with the words 'as I suffer'. Despite still being a minor chord, the move to A minor hints at a chord progression towards the relative major, a hint which is further confirmed as the music moves to Bb major on 'Let your glory be re…' and resolves to F major on '…vealed'. This pattern of rise and fall, tension and resolution is repeated in the second half of the verse, again with the music mirroring the tension/resolution motif in the lyrics. The same pattern, both musically and lyrically is continued through the chorus.

These lines are not intended to be sung defiantly ('suffering will not defeat me – I have God on my side!' [cf Romans 8:18]) or despondently ('If I *must* suffer, at least let *something* good come out of it.') or transactionally ('I will suffer *in order that* God's glory can be seen'). Rather, the song is a prayer that within and perhaps even through suffering, God might somehow be glorified – whether as the believer's very act of endurance bears silent witness to the grace God gives to endure, or by some other means.

The song was written during a period of particularly intense medical issues which my son was experiencing. Well-meaning Christians had 'claimed the victory' for his healing, and yet the issues from which he was suffering seemed not to be raising any white flags in defeat. It was confirmed for me during that period, (if confirmation was needed) that the faithful Christian must not understand God as being glorified only when he 'shows his hand' and brings an end to the suffering, but that God can equally well (if not more so) be glorified through the enduring faith of the sufferer in the midst of suffering. In this way, even if God stays silent and seemingly distant from the sufferer's perspective, their continued faith in him stands as a testimony to the watching world that despite appearances, God Is.

"As you hold me in the darkness, Or I'm wonderfully healed."

The closing lines of the first verse allow for both the reality of the silent and seemingly inactive God in the 'darkness' and the reality of God's miraculous intervention in our sufferings.

"Jesus, if you hear me..."

The chorus opens with a note of doubt (once again a D minor chord) and seeks to hold this doubt in tension with faith. Quite unintentionally, the *'if'* in this line resonates somewhat with the words of the devil in Matthew 3, who, tempting Jesus in the wilderness, twice taunts Jesus with the words '*If* you are the Son of God…'. However, whilst the song seeks to allow space for doubt and genuine questioning, the 'if' of the chorus is intended to resonate more with the 'if' of Psalm 28 than the 'ifs' of Matthew 3. Psalm 28 begins with an acknowledgement of God's existence 'To you, LORD, I call;' and is followed by a description of God's importance in the Psalmist's life 'you are my Rock'. These statements are then followed by a plea 'do not turn a deaf ear to me' and a rationale 'For ***if*** you remain silent, I will be like those who go down to the pit.' Then follows another plea 'Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help…'.It is this posture of humble and somewhat tentative entreating which I sought to engender in the chorus. However, equally, during times of dire need and suffering, the chorus could sound as a challenge, being uttered as

a lament or a cry of desperation – 'Jesus, if you hear me…do something!' This almost irreverent entreaty to Jesus to 'listen up!' might not sit comfortably with our Christian sensibilities or a belief that God ought only be spoken to in polite deference, but it places the song in the spirit of the Psalter, which, according to Walter Brueggemann "can address demanding imperative to God (which we politely term petition) without much show of deference." (2007: xv)

"If I wander,
As I wander
Keep me mindful of your grace. Draw me back to know the wonder of your welcoming embrace."

Verse 2 alludes to the parable of the Prodigal Son, and as such, shifts the focus away from the suffering which 'simply is' towards the suffering which is consequential. Although the concept of suffering is not explicitly mentioned in this verse, the spectre of the suffering experienced by the Younger Son lurks in the lyrical shadows and urges the wanderer to return and leave their suffering behind. This suffering is that which ensues as a result of a deliberate move away from God. It is the suffering of the Deuteronomic blessing/curse paradigm or that which is avoided by adherence to Torah according to the so-called Psalms of Orientation (Brueggemann 2007:2ff).

"(Let me know your)
Grace and mercy
Hold and keep me
Safe within your love.
When the battle
Rages let your
Peace fall from above."

The bridge draws these two distinct concepts of suffering (that which 'simply is' and that which is consequential) together. Neither form of suffering is resistant to God's grace and mercy. The suffering which 'simply is' can be endured by the grace of God, and the same grace is available to end the suffering which is consequential, upon the prodigal's return. Musically, the bridge seeks to reflect this positive tone of God being a source of comfort, protection and rescue in times of suffering, but it ends with a suspension which leads back into the minor key as the chorus returns and brings with it the questioning plea 'Jesus, if you hear me…'. This serves as a reminder that we live in the world of the 'not yet' in which suffering is an ever-present reality with which we must contend, but which, by grace, we can endure.

WE ARE ONE © MATT SPENCER 2012

This song was commissioned by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) for Racial Justice Sunday 2012 (http://www.ctbi.org.uk/CBCA/588). The theme for the year was 'Being an Inclusive Church' and the song almost wrote itself!

Beginning with the concept of inclusivity, I quickly arrived at the conclusion that true inclusivity is contingent upon the acceptance of a notion of the oneness of essence shared by all of humankind. The song's title therefore effectively preceded the song itself.

As the song was intended primarily for use within church services on Racial Justice Sunday, I began by stating the obvious and referring specifically to the imagined circumstances of those hearing or possibly singing the song. The 'we' of the opening line is multi-functional, referring at once to both the particular congregation experiencing the song in that moment and to the wider church within the UK for whom the song was written. Right from the outset then, the song served both as statement and challenge – we, in our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural Salvation Army congregation in New Addington were joined together by God's love not only with each other within our congregation, but also with the black-majority church in Peckham, the white-majority church in Lyndhurst, the Roma church in

WE ARE ONE

We are gathered to worship;
We are joined by your love;
We belong to the family
Of our Father above.
Beautiful diversity,
Worshiping in liberty,
Yet we find unity
In your name.

(chorus)
Jesus, you have prayed
your people would be one;
We have prayed to see
your Kingdom come,
Your will be done,
here on earth as it is in heaven.
Jesus, help us be the answer
to your prayer;
May we be united as we share
Every blessing you pour out on us;
As we are one in you, Jesus.

Chosen, called and invited
From each nation and tongue.
Every culture united
By the blood of the Son.
We are one human race;
Through your love, by your grace
May we find unity
In your name.

(Bridge)
There is one church;
Christ has one body;
Here on the earth we're his hands, his feet, his lips;
Called to the world;
To go in his name.

(Outro)
May we be one (one in you Jesus)
Your will be done Lord
(one in you Jesus)
One church, one body, one people;
Beautiful diversity (May we find unity)
Help us be the answer,
(Let us be the answer to your prayer)
Your will be done. Your kingdom come.

Margate and the multitude of other churches across the country who might have made use of the song on that day. Many churches, one Church.

The chorus takes the form of a prayer and makes direct allusion to 2 other prayers from scripture. Firstly, Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-23 in which he asks that all believers might be one as he and the Father are one. Secondly, the Lord's Prayer, specifically Matthew 6:10. The song brings these two prayers into dialogue with one another, making the exegetical suggestion of a relationship between them and hinting that perhaps, in living out that which we have prayed for in the Lord's Prayer (the coming Kingdom, the will of God on earth and so on) the Church becomes the embodied answer to Jesus' prayer that his people might be one. The chorus then closes with a statement reminding the Church of its task of service and that the blessings of Christ are not intended to remain within the confines of the congregation but are to be shared with the world – and that this sacrament of the church broken and poured out can be a unifying factor for the Church.

"Chosen, called and invited
From each nation and tongue.
Every culture united by the
blood of the Son."

Verse 2 opens with three words which, in themselves, can be sources of controversy within the church. I intentionally selected words which have theological significance and which (particularly in the case of 'chosen') can be the cause of division and disagreement, in order to further highlight the message that unity will not be found in theological agreement or methodological homogeneity, but only in the person and blood of Jesus. (Space does not permit a longer reflection on these words, expanding upon their particular controversies).

"There is one church;
Christ has one body;
Here on the earth we're his hands,
his feet, his lips;
Called to the world;
To go in his name."

The bridge has the feel of a credal statement. Musically it becomes more dynamic, almost militant in nature, and in the recorded arrangement the instrumentation is deliberately polyphonic, with allusions to a number of different musical genres and cultures. This cacophonous diversity stands against the confession that 'There is one church; Christ has one body…' and so on. The lyrics claim unity, the music testifies to diversity. As in the chorus, the bridge concludes by challenging the church to reach out, step forward and speak up as a witness to the world of the oneness of the body of Christ.

"May we be one
(one in you Jesus)
Your will be done Lord
(one in you Jesus)
One church, one body,
one people;
Beautiful diversity
(May we find unity)
Help us be the answer,
(Let us be the answer to your prayer)
Your will be done.
Your kingdom come."

The triumphalism of the bridge is followed by a reflective and prayerful rendition of the chorus, which builds as the song moves towards its conclusion. The outro includes a number of prayerful utterances which reflect the overall ambition of the song – prayers for unity, obedience, action and ultimately the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth.

REFLECTION BEGETS REFLECTION

Reflecting on just a small sample of the songs I've written has revealed some insights into common themes and trends within my writing. These themes are confirmed in part by even a cursory glance at some of my other song titles, which reveal within my songs a specific focus on social justice, from a Scripture-based, person-centric, experiential and relational (both human and divine) perspective.

'Let Justice Roll', 'Let My People Go', 'Others', 'You Reign', 'From This Moment On', 'Through The Waters', 'Your Grace Is Enough', 'You Are Good', 'Spirit, Come', 'See, God Has Come', 'Taste And See', 'Speak Lord', 'One Day In Your House', 'In Quietness And Trust', 'I Was Glad', 'Can't Bring Us Down'

In seeking dialogue partners to shed light on my song-writing, I discovered someone who grew up in the very area of London where I once lived and now teach; Nineteenth Century social critic and one-time Denmark Hill resident John Ruskin. So startled was I by the similarities between his approach to understanding Scripture and faith, and my own, that the resulting highlighted passages amounted to almost an entire chapter in Zoe Bennett's 'Using the Bible in Practical Theology' (2013: 65-79)!

Bennett notes Ruskin's interrogative approach, ability to live with doubt, partiality for justice and servanthood as the heart of the gospel, preference for practical obedience as the form of faith and suspicion of the obscure, otherworldly and eschatological (2013: 69) all of which I would like to think are evident to varying degrees in my song-writing.

‘Faith’ for example was written to be a sung response to an experience of fear and uncertainty. Bennett writes; “For Ruskin, the opposite of faith is not works but fear, ‘the true use of faith is not to do away with deeds, but with fear’” (2013:68). The ultimate trajectory of faith as presented in the song ‘Faith’, is practical action. The singer is entreated not to be paralysed by fear of the new or the unknown, but, by faith ‘to walk the road of life through happiness and strife, in sure and certain hope’. ‘Faith’ is a pragmatist’s anthem, elevating orthopraxy over orthodoxy and calling the singing community to take whatever faith they may have and do something useful with it in the world. Arising, as it did, from a context of conflict and disagreement, it testifies to the common purpose of the “groping and imperfect community of interpretation” which is the church wherein “people by and large agree with each other enough so that they can disagree” (Frei 1992:56). This imperfect community of disagreement is encouraged, in singing the song ‘Faith’, to learn to allow uncertainty and action to coexist as mutual bedfellows with faith.

The melodically anthemic nature of the music in the chorus of ‘Faith’ further serves the song’s purpose of lifting the singers’ perspective above their own doubt and fear, by providing what one might refer to as ‘musical reassurance’ that faith, however fragile, is enough. Ruskin, reflecting in his autobiography recalls the experience of hearing military music coming from the palace courtyard in Turin. He writes; “…as the perfect colour and sound gradually asserted their power on me, they seemed finally to fasten me in the old article of Jewish faith, that things done delightfully and rightly, were always done by the help and in the Spirit of God.” (Quoted in Bennett 2013:69-70). That music alone reminded Ruskin of the centrality of the Spirit of God, is testimony to its capacity to illuminate and inspire in areas where words alone might engender consternation and conflict. It was a powerful melody rather than a theological debate which settled Ruskin’s soul and confirmed him in his faith. Timothy Hone writes;

> “Music is one of the ways through which we can hope to achieve some sense of inner reconciliation – a first step towards reconciliation with the world in which we live and to the God who brought it into being. For many people music is profoundly revelatory. At the same time it provides a sense of structure, a safe place in which it is acceptable to yield to the revelation.” (2000: 166-167)

Ruskin’s autobiographical recollection of that Turin courtyard suggests that music in that moment was both reconciliatory and revelatory for him, and I understand from talking with members of the cohort of Salvation Army Cadets for whom ‘Faith’ was written, that singing “We have faith in a faithful God, one whose word is true…we will hope in you” with a

melody which can only be sung with confidence, has also provided them with opportunity for both reconciliation and revelation.

One might be suspicious of the capacity of music to communicate theological truth such as Ruskin and Hone suggest. Don Saliers tackles this issue head-on, beginning with the question “Can music alone, without words, be theologically significant?” (2007: 28) Saliers contends that whilst music may not make “truth claims”, it can nevertheless enhance the meaning and communicability of the texts it accompanies, and even in the absence of lyrics (for instance an instrumental version of a song) music alone can communicate the message by association. But Saliers doesn’t limit music’s theological potency solely to its lyrical associations. Music, he suggests “often imitates and evokes how we “picture” being in the presence of things, or how we experience seeing.” (2007: 30) Understood in this way, music is undoubtedly theologically and indeed hermeneutically significant, in that it has the power to shape our “picture” of being in the presence of God or indeed how we experience seeing the biblical text. Of course, music’s power in this regard is highly subjective, since as Jeremy Begbie writes, “music of itself does not in any very obvious way ‘point’ with precision and reliability to particular extra-musical entities.” (2000: 11) Music might be used to ape certain sounds (birdsong, crashing waves, rushing wind etc.) and thus evoke particular responses by association, but its inherent capacity to communicate lies ultimately in its reception by the hearer. What evokes pride and patriotism in one person might equally engender fear and intimidation in another. The military strains which so convicted Ruskin of the reality of the presence of God might have achieved precisely the opposite effect in the ears of a confirmed atheist or someone living under an oppressive military regime. To quote Begbie again, “Music always, to some extent, embodies social and cultural reality” (2000: 13) and in Ruskin’s case, the music he heard spoke from one cultural context but was received and understood in another – his own. The music (and arguably the musicians, without whom it was mere notes on a page) was not necessarily intended to communicate the centrality of the Spirit of God, and undoubtedly there were many others listening that day who heard nothing of the sort, yet Ruskin’s experience of that music was indisputable, personal and significant.

It is clear, therefore, that any attempt to engage fully with the theological or hermeneutical approaches of a songwriter, cannot focus solely on the lyrics and ignore the complex relationship between music and lyrics or the capacity of music itself to communicate and influence interpretation. (My own reflections perhaps also reveal that awareness of the song writer’s own context can also aid such engagement). Andrew Village identifies the community within which a text is read as an “extra-textual effect…that influences the

possible outcome of reading" (2007:139). I would propose that music be similarly understood as an extra-textual influencer which utilises tempo, key, melodic structure, instrumentation, arrangement and even genre to shape the presentation and reception of a given lyric or concept. Where such lyrics are biblically based, the music must be afforded due credit for the influence it may have on a given community or individual's appropriation of the scripture presented or alluded to within the song.

Brian Wren on Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Victoria Sirota on *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, (both in Wren 2000:355ff) note the role played by music in communicating theology. In the case of *Don Giovanni*, the unremarkable nature of the music associated with the Don himself underscores the godlessness and emptiness of the man. In the case of *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, according to Sirota, R. Vaughan Williams' tune *Forest Green*, fails to engage with the "profound silence of which the lyric speaks", whereas Lewis H. Redner's tune *St Louis*, moving as it does between major and minor keys, more adequately communicates the various emotions inherent in a reflection upon the incarnation of Christ. This concept of the role of music as an interpreter of lyrics is a subject of some fascination for me. However, a full exploration of this interplay in my own music is beyond the scope of this essay to achieve and, therefore, having highlighted the issue, I will continue from this point to examine my operant hermeneutic primarily utilising my lyrics as a point of reference.

The biblical text features heavily in my song-writing, either as direct quotation or allusion. However, with the exception of one of my songs ('*See, God Has Come'* the lyrics for which are a slight variation on Isaiah 12:2 [New Living Translation] with no added interpretation or application), my songs tend to move somewhat fluidly between quoting or alluding to scripture and a contemporary, personal or corporate application of it.

The song 'In Quietness and Trust' is a prime example of this interplay between textual presentation and contemporary/personal interpretation/application. In adopting this style of writing, I am seeking to engage as a writer, and ultimately to also engage the singer, in what Gadamer identifies as the double hermeneutical tasks of 'reproductive' and 'productive' interpretation, wherein both exegesis and application contribute to the formation and reception of the lyrics (Westphal 2012:161). My approach to scripture within my song writing, might also be located within the interpretive category of the Literary/Postmodern view (Spencer 2012: 48-49), which accepts the hermeneutical triad of author-text-reader but which affords priority first to the text in its final form, then its reception by readers, both contemporary and historical, with issues pertaining to authorship taking on lesser (but not negligible) significance.

IN QUIETNESS AND TRUST
(Isaiah 30:15, Philippians 4:7, Proverbs 3:5&6, Nehemiah 8:10)
In quietness and trust is your strength.
In quietness and trust is your strength.
And if the world falls down on you,
His love and grace will see you through.

The peace of God will guard your heart.
The peace of God will guard your heart.
Don't hold your worried deep within,
Bring all your anxious thoughts to him.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart.
Trust in the Lord with all your heart.
Acknowledge him in all you do,
He'll guide your steps
your whole life through.

The joy of the Lord will be your strength.
The joy of the Lord will be your strength.
His perfect love goes on and on,
His joy within will make you strong.

Matt Spencer

Where this method has most pertinence to my own work is in the areas of *Intertext* and *Open Text*. Rejecting the text as an isolated entity, an intertextual approach recognises that "All texts – indeed, all language and communication – are influenced by other texts and voices they answer, both directly and tacitly…Relationships between texts truly function *intertextually* or *dialogically*, mutually addressing and responding to each other." (2012: 51-52) This intertextuality is something which I seek to employ in my song-writing. The texts quoted in 'In Quietness and Trust' for instance, relate to one another in the song in a way which would not have been immediately apparent in their initial scriptural context. The transition from a strength found in personal quietness and trust to a strength which comes from knowing the joy of the Lord, is achieved via the route of peace and trusting submission. The song uses the scriptural passages which begin each verse almost as stepping stones on the transformative journey which it proposes for the singers. In doing so, it reflects the schema which Walter Brueggemann identifies in his lecture series on the Psalms '*The Hard Road from Obedience to Praise*' which presents the Psalms as a

unified whole with an overarching directional trajectory (2009 St Marks Anglican Church Lecture Series DVD).

The lyrical 'stepping stones on the transformative journey' are, by virtue of being the words of a song, temporally bound by the music. Thus, the music itself frames and suggests a process by which, beginning with quietness and trust, one may move towards joyous celebration. Even the repetition of the opening line of melody forces a repetition of the lyric, thus driving home the opening sentiment of each verse. The journey must be undertaken one experience at a time, in the same way as the melody must unfold one note at a time. Thus understood, the different stages of life and faith presented in the song become significant in themselves, rather than simply being means to some greater end. Just as the song cannot be appropriately rushed, neither can the life experiences which ultimately shape who we are and how we relate to and interact with God. As Jeremy Begbie writes;

> "Music presents us with a concrete demonstration of the inseparability of time and created reality, of the truth that it need not be seen as a vice of creation that it can only reach its fulfilment, its perfection, through time…'taking time' can be good, profitable and enriching…The performance and enjoyment of music can teach us a constructive waiting and patience, a waiting which need not be empty or resigned but felicitous and abundant." (2000: 86-87).

The *Open Text* approach recognises that the text is open to as many interpretations as it has readers (although authorial considerations may place certain parameters around what might be considered 'legitimate' readings of the text). In my reflections on the song '*Faith'* I identified the way in which I selected particular scriptural allusions specifically because of their capacity for multiple interpretations, thus broadening the song's appeal and arguably its usefulness and potency amongst a diverse group of Christians with different hermeneutical approaches. Songs provide the ideal context for an Open Text approach, since congregational singing is itself a unifying activity. The presence of multiple interpretations of a text in the context of conversation can, in all but the most tolerant of groups, be a cause of conflict. Spencer writes "With all these added voices, polyphony easily becomes cacophony, and counterpoint slides into discord." (2012: 55) The beauty of congregational singing however, is that the music provides the boundaries which prevent such a descent into cacophony, whilst allowing for polyphony in terms of harmony, personal vocal expression and individual interpretation of the lyrics within the

context of a shared and unified musical experience. As John Bell writes; “We cannot all speak together, but we can all sing together.” (2000:17)

It is this notion of contextual lyrical interpretation (and therefore, given the content of my songs, scriptural interpretation) which resonates with what Bennett identifies in Ruskin’s work and thought as a ‘hermeneutic of immediacy…or analogy’ (2013:72). As Ruskin related contemporary social or political events to the biblical text, so too I seek to create, through my lyrics, an Open Text environment within which individual singers and indeed congregations might creatively imagine their present circumstances to be addressed either directly or by analogy, by scripture, and similarly scripture might appropriately and creatively be interpreted in light of present circumstances. Such a process of immediate and personal textual and lyrical appropriation allows for a single song to speak to and for a multitude of different singers (or congregations) and their experiences. This interpretive fluidity sits well within Merold Westphal’s philosophical hermeneutics, wherein “One need not reduce the gospel to a monochrome or monotone monotony out of fear of interpretive diversity. One can be fully aware of the danger of noxious weeds and noisy discords and still say with joy, “Let many flowers bloom; let many songs be sung.”” (Westphal 2012:160) Thus, in the congregational singing of one song, many songs might be sung, many meanings embraced and many statements of faith expressed. Not so much “hermeneutical anarchy” (Spencer 2012:57) as harmonious polyphony.

Whilst I consciously try to leave a degree of interpretive space within my songs in order that they might be appropriated and appreciated by people with different approaches to scripture – its origins, veracity and significance – an examination of my lyrics might reveal an underlying desire to direct the singer towards an intellectual embrace and practical outworking of social justice, which I present as biblically ordained and essentially non-negotiable for anyone seeking to take the implications of the biblical narrative seriously. Arguably, this slant to my writing may stem from my denominational context. The Salvation Army both historically and presently expresses faith in action, ‘heart to God and hand to man’ and a bias to the poor as key tenets. In several of my songs, I seek to use scripture as a liberationist might, as “an emancipation proclamation” (Spencer 2012: 56) (See ‘Let Justice Roll’ or ‘Let My People Go’ as examples) and an invocation to those singing to appropriate the words personally and to become embodiments of the sentiments on their lips. In one sense, given their scriptural origins, one cannot sing ‘Let justice roll like rivers’ or ‘Let my people go’ whilst continuing to live a lifestyle which perpetuates injustice without singing judgment upon oneself; Amos 5:21-24 makes that abundantly clear. As Walter Brueggemann reminds us, “Moses does not say, “Let my

people go." He says, rather, "Thus says YHWH, 'Let my people go'" (2013: 151). With such lyrics, these songs create a contemporary echo of the voice of God which sounded into those original situations of oppression, as it still pertains today.

In conclusion, the operant hermeneutic in my song writing understands scripture as essentially personal and relevant to everyday life; open to interpretation according to individual experiences and contexts (within certain parameters - "There is such a thing as misinterpretation" (Spencer 2012: 58), although what those parameters might be is beyond the scope of this essay to explore); and entreats the singer, using scripture as the basis for entreaty, to fight for and live out social justice. I would like to think that in common with John Ruskin's thought, my songs demonstrate both a "commitment to questioning and a commitment to the practical" (Bennett 2013: 68). For John Ruskin "The Bible was a crucial influence and a continually wielded weapon in his public fight against injustice" (2013: 65). I would hope that I employ the Bible in my songs in a similar fashion and that they in turn encourage the congregations which sing them to go and do likewise.

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APPENDIX B

MUSIC, LYRICS, EMOTION AND MEANING IN CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

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MS1441

Paper 2

AUGUST 2015

ABSTRACT

Congregational singing is central to the worship life of many churches. This paper deconstructs the notion of the song, firstly examining the constituent parts of lyrics and music before exploring their respective and collective impacts on human emotions and the construction of meaning. Whilst engaging with music and lyrics in their broader senses, the paper retains particular reference to the role of songs in the context of congregational worship, considering the significance of this 'holy alliance' between words and music in the life of the individual worshiper and of the church community.

Music, Lyrics, Emotion and Meaning in Congregational Singing

When I was young
I'd listen to the radio
Waitin' for my favourite songs,
When they played I'd sing along,
It made me smile.

Those were such happy times,
And not so long ago
How I wondered where they'd gone;
But they're back again
Just like a long lost friend
All the songs I loved so well.

Every Sha-la-la-la
Every Wo-o-wo-o
Still shines!
Every shing-a-ling-a-ling
That they're startin' to sing's so fine!
When they get to the part
Where he's breakin' her heart
It can really make me cry;
Just like before
It's yesterday once more.

Lookin' back on how it was in years gone by
And the good times that I had,
Makes today seem rather sad,
So much has changed.

It was songs of love that
I would sing to then,
And I'd memorize each word.
Those old melodies
Still sound so good to me
As they melt the years away.

All my best memories
Come back clearly to me
Some can even make me cry.
Just like before
It's yesterday once more.

Richard Lynn Carpenter, John Bettis, Hank Williams Sr
© Sweet Harmony Music Inc., Hammer And Nails Music, Sony/ATV Acuff Rose Music, Almo Music Corp.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfTnf4AiN4Y&list=RDJfTnf4AiN4Y#t=58

Songs: **An Introduction**

"I have laughed at it all week, but suddenly I am not laughing, I am crying." Sitting in a Chinese university restaurant, tears flowed as Zoë heard, not just this song, but the memories of the past, voices of the present and challenges for the future which it evoked. Transported from that campus eatery, back across thousands of miles and four decades to the English countryside, she recalled her first encounter with the song, in the car, learning to drive with her father. As the song continued to play, conversations were replayed, experiences relived and memory-fuelled reflections spoke deeply into questions of personhood, purpose and perseverance as Zoë heard so much more than the lyrics and in that instant, 'Yesterday Once More' became the soundtrack to a 'walking backwards into the future' moment.

Few things in life are more evocative than songs. Zoë's experience illustrates the power of music and in particular of songs not only to arouse memories of the past but also to affect change in the present and therefore also the future. Zoë's story helps unlock a door, revealing illusive insights into the relationship between music, lyrics, emotion and meaning. Beginning with these insights, I shall lean against the door in the hope that its rusty hinges might yield and permit a glimpse at what lies behind. This paper examines the respective and collective potency of music and lyrics whilst engaging with empirical research and considering its transferability and potential significance in the context of congregational sung worship. For the purposes of my reflections, the term 'song' refers to the combination of music and lyrics, and I will therefore explore each element in turn in order to speak of their combined power.

The lyrics of 'Yesterday Once More' may be somewhat sentimental, but they evoke memories which generate emotions arising from each particular memory's meanings and significance. Whilst lyrics alone don't make a song, joined to Richard Carpenter's mournful and reflective tune, which builds melodically and sonically into the chorus, and moves freely between major and minor chords, the resultant package is potent. Add to that Karen Carpenter's unique voice, accompanied by the knowledge of her tragic story, and the song becomes even more powerfully layered with meaning. Add all of that to the context in which the song is heard and the personal experiences of the hearer, and the song can become, as it did for Zoë, transformative.

French singer Claude Francois also recorded a version of 'Yesterday Once More', calling it 'Hier Est Près De Moi' which translates as 'Yesterday Is Close To Me'. Rather than

suggesting the experiential repetition of 'Yesterday Once More', 'Hier Est Près De Moi' suggests that the past has been pulled into closer proximity – the gap of the intervening period of time has been shortened and the past, whilst still intangible and out of reach, is somehow closer because of the song. This 'so near and yet so far'-ness which this song, and others like it creates, taps into the truth of human experience; we may, by all manner of means bring the past into closer communion with the present, but the two can never meet. It cannot ever truly be 'Yesterday Once More', we can only ever experience 'Hier Est Près De Moi', and therein lies the seed of our sadness. Of course, therein may also lie the seed of our hope as those reminiscences which such songs provoke give a renewed life to experiences and indeed people which have shaped our present by their role in our past.

Songs: **Music**, Lyrics, Meaning & Emotion

Of music, Aristotle wrote;

> *"Rhythm and melody supply imitations of anger and gentleness, and also of courage and temperance, and of all the qualities contrary to these, and of the other qualities of character, which hardly fall short of the actual affections, as we know from our own experience, for in listening to such strains our souls undergo a change…music has a power of forming the character…"* (Aristotle, Politics, Book 8, Section V. Quoted in Barenboim, Daniel, *Everything is Connected: The Power of Music* 2009:6,7)

These are bold claims on Aristotle's part, and yet it is undoubtedly a common human experience to find music, albeit in different forms, profoundly moving. To be moved is to be changed, even momentarily, and to be changed, even momentarily is to be changed irrevocably, as that moment takes its place among those experiences which form and shape who we are. Music has the capacity to be transformative.

Much of music's power to transform stems from its ability to engage with the entire person, body, mind and spirit. According to Mary Butterton *"when we play or listen to music we experience a very rich personal sensory, emotional and intellectual phenomenon, each in our unique way."* (2004:11) It is this uniquely personal aspect of our reception of music which makes it so powerful. Just as music is received personally, so too is it originated in an essentially personal manner, emanating from a composer(s) or performer(s). Thus understood, music is necessarily relational as the sounds and dynamic shapings first imagined by the composer(s)/performer(s) are received and responded to by the listener(s),

each within their own context. One woman's meat is another man's poison, and each listener will have a unique emotional, intellectual and perhaps even physical response, shaping the music's meaning for them. John Williams' theme from the film Schindler's List evokes for me not just the horror of the holocaust but the hope for humanity of the existence of those who seek to creatively stand against such injustices. As a result, I respond positively to the piece. My wife, by contrast finds no such enjoyment in the music because for her, the emotions generated by the music and its associations, render any positive responses on her part impossible. That piece of music for me means hope. For my wife, it means brutality and suffering. Both meanings flow out of our emotional and intellectual responses to the piece and what it evokes in and for us. This understanding of the role of the mind in the creation of meaning in music relates to cognitive theories of emotion. Cognitive theory predicates emotional response on the evaluation or appraisal of a given situation. As such, emotional responses to music do not arise in a vacuum but rather out of an individual's assessment of a set of circumstances. Thus my wife and I respond differently to the Schindler's List theme as a result of our differing evaluation and assessment of what the music represents.

Responses to film scores are of course conditioned in no small part by the content of the film itself and the emotions it evokes. However, there is a question which for musicologists is as important and contentious as the nature/nurture question is for psychologists, and it concerns whether music contains any intrinsic power to communicate anything specific at all, or whether music simply *is*. On one level, it is undoubtedly the case that music simply *is*. It is nothing more or less than a series of vibrations at different frequencies which impact upon the auditory system and which are understood by the brain as being music, as opposed to traffic noise or speech. However, the question remains as to how the brain differentiates between those vibrations which are music and those, such as traffic noise, which are not. This question itself is contingent upon a defined distinction between music and other forms of sound. For the purposes of these reflections, I am operating with a definition in which music is essentially intentional, resulting from some form or other of deliberate human action intended to create music. A specific example may help to clarify this definition: "Someone's playing a guitar somewhere. Did you hear it?" We pause mid-conversation, but I hear no music. "There. Didn't you hear that?" I listen again, hearing only the distant metallic "ping" of a radiator firing into life. One 'hears' a musical instrument, another, plumbing. Objectively, only one can be correct. If the sound emanated from someone playing a guitar, then one could rightly say that music had been heard. If it was a radiator, then by all cultural conventions and understandings of what constitutes music, it would be a stretch to apply that term to the sound heard in the room. Music is more than

just sound, though a sound might be described as being musical or possessing musical qualities. Music implies intentionality – even birds have been shown to sing for a reason. By contrast, cars and radiators make noise only as an indirect consequence of their design and function.

Music therefore, can be said to be intentional. However, the question remains whether music in itself can intentionally convey specific ideas or emote particular feelings. Is the theme tune to 'Desert Island Discs', for instance, relaxing only by association or because there is something in the music itself which is relaxing, without reliance upon other referents in order to evoke that particular emotion? This is an almost impossible question to answer definitively, hence its parallels with the nature-nurture debate. Convention Theories of musical reception assert that something akin to a human collective consciousness, developed over the course of time, has imbued certain musical forms with generally recognised emotional characteristics. So for instance, harp glissandi 'sound' mysterious or romantic (depending on context) and low legato strings 'sound' ominous, or rather are interpreted as such by the majority of people, at least in a given cultural context in which those conventions are recognised and shared.

Convention Theories alone however, cannot adequately explain emotional responses to music. Studies have demonstrated, for instance, that unborn babies begin to respond to different musical stimuli, reacting with an increased heart beat in response to faster tempi and a more relaxed heart beat when slower music is played (Olds 1986). This phenomenon suggests that there may be something, other than learned conventional associations, inherent in music which incites physical responses in human beings, but this too is open to debate and contention. Contour Theory, as expounded by Peter Kivy amongst others, (1989 chs. 2-8) proposes that the inherent power in music to emote, stems from its aping of human bodily expressions, in particular vocalisation and gesture. Individuals experiencing the emotion of excitement tend to speak quickly, in ascending cadences often favouring a high register. Likewise, excited body-language often involves rapid, short, articulated movements. Similarly, music associated with excitement usually exhibits rapid, ascending and articulated features such as those found in the embodied and expressed human emotion. By contrast, sadness expressed vocally and physically is often characterised by slow movements and low, quiet tones and these features are commonly heard in music associated with the same emotion. Both Contour and Convention Theories must by necessity, be located within a particular culture. Western music, for instance, can only be claimed to reflect the contours of Western vocalisation and gesture. As a result, by convention, certain Western musical forms come to be

associated with particular responses in a Western context. However, mourning, for example, in many Majority World cultures, is manifested in radically different vocalisations and gestures than in the West. Therefore, the contours of the music might be expected to follow different patterns when expressing the same emotions, thus resulting in culturally contextual conventions. This too is contingent upon the potentially flawed assumption that such theories work cross-culturally. Hindustani Ragas for instance are unscored improvisations wherein though possessing the same notes, two Ragas may be "distinctly different in their melodic characteristics." (Bhattacharjee & Srinivasan 2011:70). This similarity in notation coupled with a distinction in melodic characteristics undermines the fundamental premise of Contour Theory.

It is not only cultural limitations which call Contour Theory into question. Madell raises a number of objections to the basic assertion that music resembles human physical and vocal characteristics. This claim is refuted on the grounds that it is "extraordinarily difficult to discern" (1996:64) particular behavioural or emotional characteristics solely from the rise and fall of a melodic line, which might equally be said to represent something entirely different. Thus, this mechanical approach to understanding the relationship between music and emotion is further undermined.

Notwithstanding caveats not unrelated to Madell's concerns, Begbie operates with Contour Theory, but contends that in addition to mirroring the physical contours of human emotional responses, music has the added power of harmony which further enhances its emotive capacities. Begbie describes the musical equivalent of "gravitational pull" as chords move either towards or away from the tonic (2011:345) dissipating or generating both musical and emotional tension in the process. Asserting that "dissonance provokes a less pleasant sensation than consonance" (2011:347), Begbie claims there is a natural human desire for resolution to the tonic. This is arguably true in life as in music, suggesting a parallel between lived experience and harmonic structure akin to the parallels with vocalisation and gesture asserted by Contour Theory.

The relationship between the emotive nature of music and lived experience might be summed up in the word representation. The idea of representation in music includes the concept of imitation; for instance, a drum suggesting a knock at the door or a piccolo flute suggesting birdsong. However, musical representation may also be more abstract, evoking perhaps a particular mood, and requiring an act of imagination on the part of the listener in order to appreciate that which the composer or performer seeks to represent through the music. (Dempster 1994:416)

Whilst lived experience and imagination must certainly contribute to responses to music, the impact of music on the human physical and emotional state of human beings without such experience or capacity to imagine, has been demonstrated by Hepper (1991) and Lamont (2001). Both studies show that in the final three months of gestation, unborn babies begin to develop what might be termed 'Musical Memory'. Hepper's study involved regularly exposing foetuses to a soap opera theme during the final trimester of pregnancy. Upon being played the theme 2-4 days after birth, the babies who had in-utero exposure to it experienced a decrease in heart rate and movement and demonstrated a generally calmer state as against the control groups. Hepper concluded that at least in the short term, musical memory begins before birth. However, when the babies were re-tested at 21 days, the difference in reaction between the groups had disappeared, suggesting that at least in infants, such musical memories are relatively short lived.

Lamont's study, also with infants, contained an additional dimension. Rather than hearing a single soap opera theme, women listened to their favourite song every day for the duration of their pregnancies. At approximately one year old, their babies were played the familiar song and an unfamiliar one and were observed to attend to the familiar song for longer than to the unfamiliar one. Babies in the control groups who had not been exposed to their mother's favourite song during pregnancy, demonstrated no such preferences between the two songs. Lamont concluded that the babies had retained the musical memory, hence their contentment upon hearing the familiar song.

That familiarity breeds contentment where music is concerned was also confirmed with reference to the singing of congregational worship songs. Miller and Strongman (2002:21) studying congregational worship in a Pentecostal-Charismatic setting found that, in common with similar studies (Berlyne, 1970; Eagle, 1971; Hargreaves 1984) a worshiper's level of 'enjoyment' of a song was connected to and relied to a significant extent upon their familiarity with it. Harmonising the findings of these diverse studies, one might contend that familiarity with a particular tune or even with particular musical forms (Chinese pentatonic or Hindustanti raga music for instance tends to sit less comfortably with Western ears than music to which we are more accustomed) predisposes us to particular responses to it. These responses are to an unquantifiable extent, culturally determined and begin to take form before we are born. Thus music can be said to impact upon our physical and emotional states by virtue of a number of complimentary factors.

Of course, the other component of songs, the lyrics, can be equally emotive and are of equal importance in the creation of what might be called a 'good song'. Hymn-writer, pastor and Professor Emeritus at Columbia Theological Seminary Brian Wren notes *"…a good congregational song lyric is devout, just, frugal, beautiful, communal, purposeful and musical."* (2000: 189) Wren writes from the perspective of an informed and critical insider, using experience and observation from which to draw his conclusions concerning songs and their merits. Whilst I do not agree unreservedly with Wren's choice of essential characteristics (for instance, beauty is, after all, in the eye of the beholder and what is beautifully poetic to one might be painfully inaccessible to another) Wren's approach is helpful in illustrating the fact that in selecting songs for worship, those doing the choosing operate using certain yardsticks and standards, either according to their own proclivities or those of the community within and for which they are doing the selecting.

A couple, who have of late recommenced attending the church I lead, recently renewed their marriage vows. Selecting a congregational song for the service was challenging, as the couple had only a limited repertoire from years gone by. As we discussed options, our conversation was peppered with such comments as "we sang that at Dad's funeral", "that's Mum's favourite" and "I remember that from school". The bride recalled having a favourite song when she'd previously attended church, but resigned herself to having lost it in the recesses of her memory. Assessing the era in which she would have been singing the song, and imagining the nature of the church at that time, I correctly guessed the song as 'Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace', and the song was chosen for the service. The other options were disregarded as overly emotive or less lyrically accessible, in favour of a song whose lyrical simplicity and familiarity, put bride, groom and hopefully congregation, at ease. An understanding of and sensitivity to the emotional significance of a particular song for a particular person is of utmost importance in the appropriate selection of songs for gathered worship, especially at such significant life events as churches are so often privileged to host.

Whilst the reflections above are somewhat anecdotal, the potency of lyrical content has been demonstrated by empirical study. Guéguen, Jacob and Lamy's study *"'Love is in the air': Effects of songs with romantic lyrics on compliance with a courtship request"* contains findings which have transferable significance in the context of congregational worship singing. The study found that "Listening to romantic song lyrics, relative to neutral ones, increased the probability of accepting a request for a date some minutes later." (Psychology

of Music 38 (3): 306). Guéguen et al claim that this demonstrates for the first time that it is not just violent behaviour at one end of the scale or prosocial behaviour at the other which is influenced by music and lyrics, but more intimate behaviours are also impacted as listeners are affected and possibly primed in their responses by the lyrics and music of, in this limited study, a particular romantic song. The song not only engendered romantic feelings, but it shaped an action-based response – the acceptance of a date request.

Tobias Greitemeyer (2009), some 3 years prior to the French experiment into romantic lyrics, conducted a similar study into the question of whether exposure to media with prosocial lyrics increases prosocial thoughts and behaviour in the same way as exposure to media with violent content has been shown to increase violent thoughts and behaviour. His study involved participants listening to just 2 songs – one with prosocial lyrics and the other with so-called neutral lyrics. Greitemeyer found that listening to songs with prosocial lyrics increased helping behaviour, at least in the immediate and short term. As a prosocial lifestyle is a key characteristic of Christianity, then the shaping of such might rightly be understood as one of the roles of congregational worship songs, if evidence shows (as Greitemeyer's seems to) that to do so is a possibility.

If the findings of these studies are indeed transferable, congregational worship singing may be said to shape and impact Christian thinking and behaviour, rather than functioning solely as a means of Christians giving praise to God, complying with traditional expectations or filling time in a service.

Songs: Music, Lyrics **Meaning** & Emotion

Some time ago I attended a dance recital at my daughter's school. As I watched, I became increasingly aware of the musical pieces selected to accompany such diverse themes as 'Political Oppression in Chile', 'An Exploration of the Work of Doreen Lawrence OBE', 'Teenage Angst' and various forms of mental illness, all of which were depicted through the medium of dance. As the evening progressed, I noticed that many moves were common to a number of dances, irrespective of the dance's theme. Key to my appreciation and understanding of the dance in relation to its purported theme was the particular piece of music which had been chosen, which, without exception communicated the meaning of the dance piece. Without the music and especially the songs, many of the dances would have seemed, to me at least, little more than a series of movements, devoid of accessible meaning.

“What does that mean?” It’s a question my children ask occasionally in relation to words or concepts with which they are unfamiliar. However, such questioning is not their only route to enlightenment. Over time they have developed skills which operate subconsciously using other referents such as context, tone, facial expression, relationship to root words and so on, to arrive at an understanding of meaning. The meaning of words and concepts is mediated in a variety of ways, not only by direct instruction but through subtler means which engage our senses and indeed our emotions. Songs too play their part in this complex construction of meaning. They can both shape and express our deepest thoughts and emotions in the present and can also transport us back to those times in our lives when their initial significance was first established; what Music Psychologist John Booth Davies referred to as the ‘darling, they’re playing our tune’ theory of musical response (Davies, JB 1978, Quoted in Astley, Hone & Savage 2000:114) and what my friend experienced in that Hong Kong university restaurant.

The interplay and relationship between music, lyrics and the context in which they are received makes for a powerful mix. It is unsurprising that human beings have for millennia, harnessed the power of songs to galvanise resistance, motivate movements and communicate messages concerning those topics and issues of greatest importance – love, freedom, justice, peace and so on. The song ‘We Shall Overcome’, for instance, became an anthem among those, both black and white, struggling for equal rights in the USA. Martin Luther King Jr famously spoke of how the song was often sung through tears by those who had been imprisoned unjustly during The Struggle and by those who visited them. Decades later, on October 9th 1999, the song was once again embraced as an anthem of liberation, this time by the Gay Men’s Chorus of Los Angeles who sang it on tour in, of all places, the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow. On this occasion, the song functioned as a challenge to the prevailing ideology of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation operating in the Russian establishment. The power of the association generated by this particular song, added to its inherent musical and lyrical potency and underlined by the political and geographical context in which it was sung, made for a provocative, confident and joyfully defiant presentation in this instance. *(The song can be viewed here - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLzXIlyqtB0)* Concerning music, Meyer asserts that “Meaning and communication cannot be separated from the cultural context in which they arise.” (1956: ix) Without doubt, the contexts in which ‘We Shall Overcome’ has been sung over the years have imbued it with rich layers of meaning upon which subsequent singers have built as they have brought their own unique circumstances to bear upon the song, further shaping its future meanings.

The Church has long recognised and sought to harness the power of songs in its worship and ministry, particularly with regard to the shaping of meaning. My own denomination is no exception. In the Foreword to the 1986 edition of The Song Book of The Salvation Army, three Generals of The Salvation Army are quoted. General Jarl Wallström, the General at the time the song book was published, wrote;

> *"It is my hope and desire that the song book will serve many purposes. It will be an effective tool in outreach evangelism, being used in open-air meetings and in many types of gatherings outside our Salvation Army halls. The book will be used to convey the message of salvation and holiness in our regular meetings. The songs of praise will provide individuals and congregations with a medium for expressing their gratitude and thanksgiving to God. The song book will also be used as a manual for private devotion."*

Also included in the 1986 foreword are words extracted from the foreword to the 1953 edition of the book, in which General Albert Orsborn wrote of the songbook;

> *"The upward reaching of the soul, the downward reach of the love of God, the incense of devotion, the canticles of praise, are all here."*

And The Salvation Army's founder, William Booth wrote;

> *"Sing so as to make the world hear. The highest value of our singing after all has not been the mere gladness we have felt because of our salvation, but the joy of pouring out the praises of our God to those who have not known him, or of rousing them by our singing to new thoughts and a new life. And sing till your whole soul is lifted up to God, and then sing till you lift the eyes of those who know not God to him who is the fountain of all our joy."*

(All references from the Foreword to The Song Book of The Salvation Army 1986 Edition)

The Salvation Army, and other churches like it, has, since its inception, understood the power of songs to communicate its message and facilitate its purposes. My own ministry experience has shown me that congregations more readily recall the words of the final song than the words of the sermon, such is the power of song to communicate meaning and elicit emotional responses. All three Salvation Army Generals quoted above saw songs as

functional entities, to be utilised in the service of a particular set of goals. They were more than mere peripheral entertainment in the life of the church, they were central to it.

Songs: Music, Lyrics, Meaning & **Emotion**

Whilst still considering the role of songs in the shaping of meaning, we turn now to the place of emotion. Emotion plays a hugely significant role in an individual's capacity to derive meaning from both music and lyrics. This significance is undoubtedly magnified when music and lyrics are combined in the form of songs. The emotive potency of songs and their ability to shape how words and concepts are understood and the meanings they possess for individuals, has huge implications for congregational singing. Congregational songs often seek to apportion meaning to or suggest meanings for abstract concepts, including but not limited to the Divine. Take as an example the word Hope, which means different things to different people in different contexts. The phrase "I do hope so" rests the concept of hope on an as yet undetermined outcome. This is perhaps the most common context of the word 'hope' in everyday parlance and as a result for most people, the meaning of the concept of hope is shaped accordingly. Those writing songs for congregational use therefore, must negotiate or otherwise transcend this common meaning in order to imbue the word with its specific Christian meaning, in which hope takes on a new concreteness in relation to Christ. The songs "My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less" by Edward Mote and its contemporary offspring "Cornerstone" by Eric Liljero, Jonas Myrin and Reuben Morgan (© 2011 Hillsong Music Publishing), both seek to shape the meaning of Christian hope as distinct from the more commonly understood and non-theologically charged meaning of the word. Congregational worship songs have the task, amongst other things, of reshaping the meaning of language according to certain theological precepts and ideas.

Whilst meaning and the shaping thereof is of course important in congregational songs, perhaps of greater importance in the context of sung worship is the significance of the words and the emotional and intellectual impact which they have on the singer or listener. Russell Yee draws a distinction between a lyric's meaning and its significance (1997:7-11). According to Yee, meaning is what the lyric is intended to communicate, whereas significance is how that lyric's meaning is received and understood in a given context. Thus, in the examples cited above, hope's meaning is not only redefined, but its significance is underlined. The word "hope" in this context is expected to carry significantly greater weight than "I do hope so" conveys. The meaning of the word "hope" is shaped by the significance of the context in which it is placed in the song; "My *hope* is built on nothing less than *Jesus blood* and righteousness". In this lyrical context, any notion of hope as a vague 'fingers-

crossed' wish for a future outcome is rendered mute, as hope is contextualised and afforded new meaning and significance by the Christian understanding of the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. This lyrical meaning is then presented, both in the traditional hymn tune "Solid Rock" and the contemporary worship song 'Cornerstone' in a major key, with a simple tune set over a chordal structure which makes frequent use of the tonic, dominant and subdominant chords. In fact, in the case of the tune "Solid Rock" the entire song can be played using only these three chords. In both cases, the musical presentation is uncomplicated and assured, yielding often to the gravitational pull of the tonic and further underlining the confident hope conveyed by the lyrics.

Notwithstanding the melodic and harmonic simplicity of the tunes referred to above, they, along with all music, consist of what John Sloboda calls "the creation and resolution of motivated tension". (1985: 22) Of course, not all music is especially dramatic or intense, but all music is made up of a series of created and resolved tensions, be they rhythmic, melodic, harmonic or dynamic. Even a single note is capable of generating tension by way of the anticipation and expectation which it engenders, as demonstrated by the opening two beats of Barber's Adagio for Strings where the single opening note generates an intense expectation of what is to follow. It is these tensions and resolutions which, when appropriately married to lyrics, contribute to the potency of a song. Mediocre songs mismatch lyrical and musical tension and resolution. Effective songs create a perfect synergy between them or at times utilise juxtaposition of musical tension with lyrical resolution or vice versa in order to surprise or disarm or challenge and in so doing to evoke something deeper than either the music or the lyrics could achieve on their own. Returning briefly to the earlier example of "Yesterday Once More", the opening phrase features the synchronicity of the words "waitin' for my favourite…" with the musical arrival at a C# minor chord, the relative minor of the song's key of E major. The lyrical tension inherent in the concept of waiting [*for my favourite song*] is underscored, literally, by the musical tension created by the C# minor chord. This pattern is repeated in the second half of the verse with the lyric "how I *wondered* where they'd gone…" with the word "wondered" coinciding with the C# minor chord. In both instances, the lyrical concepts of waiting and wondering are infused with additional tension by their musical underscoring. Of course, these elements go largely unnoticed by the casual listener, who receives the song as a unified whole, but the inherent pathos which renders the song so moving is enhanced by this union of lyrical and musical tension and resolution which ebbs and flows throughout.

The interplay between lyrical and musical tension and resolution contributes to one's interpretations of the meaning and significance of the words or concepts in a song. This is

of particular importance in the context of worship songs, which seek to reinforce specific understandings of words and concepts. Returning to “My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less”, the rhyme and rhythm of the lyrics when read without reference to the music would place the emphasis on the rhyming words at the end of each eight syllable line. Thus the words “less” and “[*righteous*]ness” would become the lyrical foci of the opening lines. However, when sung to the tune, the emphasis shifts to the words “hope”, “nothing”, “Jesus” and “righteousness” as the metre imposed on the lyrics by the music offers an unequivocal interpretation of them. This song exemplifies the capacity of the union of music and lyrics to convey a message beyond that which either could communicate alone.

Reflecting again on Miller and Strongman’s 2002 study, it was noted that “The music performed at a Pentecostal-Charismatic (P-C) church is designed to charge emotionally and to elicit particular feelings.” (2002:8) Congregational worship songs, perhaps more than any other form of songs, are written with the specific intention of engaging the emotions and eliciting particular responses. I would add to this their function in assisting with memory and recall (per Lamont and Hepper), their shaping of the meaning and significance of words and concepts and (per Greitemeyer) their role in encouraging active engagement in the kind of prosocial behaviours which are consistent with Christian living. Given the intentionality inherent in congregational singing, it therefore matters greatly that song-writers and song-selectors understand and respect the interplay between music and lyrics, a congregation’s emotional responses and their understanding and reception of meaning. Miller and Strongman found that “the music used in P-C church services is a major facilitator of emotional effects on the congregants’ religious experiences.” (2002:10) As a church leader in a denomination which specifically encourages the practical outworking of faith, I am less interested in facilitating religious experiences than I am in the resultant everyday actions. In this context, songs which engender reminiscence or tap into wells of emotion are of value in congregational worship only in so much as the emotion which is evoked is permitted to be transformative.

Whilst emotion for emotion’s sake ought not to characterise congregational singing, that is not to say that emotion has no legitimate role in congregational worship. As a great many studies have demonstrated, music in general and songs in particular are powerfully emotive and human beings are emotional by nature. Our emotions therefore most certainly have a place in our worship if we are to engage our whole selves in the experience. However, in their 2006 study, Ali and Peynircioğlu found that “melodies of songs were more dominant that the lyrics in eliciting emotions” (2006:511) and this finding has profound implications for congregational singing. If the primary and prevailing emotional response of a congregation

is to the music, it would seem to be imperative that the emotions engendered by the lyrics of a given song accurately reflect those of the music if the song's meaning is to be mediated effectively to the singer/hearer and understood and responded to according to the writer's intent. Where there is lyrical and musical mismatch, the singer's emotional response is more likely to be governed by the music, which might inadvertently communicate a conflicting message to the lyrics it is designed to support. Where there is a cooperative union between music and lyrics however, congregational songs have the potential to engage the emotions, offer comfort and challenge and transform the beliefs and actions of those who sing them.

In 2015 the charity Tearfund conducted a survey aimed at finding the nation's top ten worship songs. The 500 respondents named 151 different songs, from within which ten favourites emerged. Of interest here is not so much the songs chosen as the comments of some of the respondents concerning their chosen songs.

Penelope, speaking of "In Christ Alone" writes;

> *"It is a hymn of resilience and rock-solid faith for us in times of uncertainty…"*

Rob writes, of "Blessed Be Your Name";

> *"As foster carers, the Lord gave and took away children we were looking after, but we were still able to say Blessed Be Your Name."*

Speaking of his late father singing "How Great Thou Art", Andrew writes;

> *"My dad wasn't the greatest singer and was totally tone deaf, but he loved God with all his heart and although everyone in our household blocked their ears, I'm sure God was delighting in the heartfelt praise that poured from my father… I have since experienced a life of atheism, drug abuse and at times contemplated suicide, I now know Jesus as my saviour and am able to sing this beautiful hymn with all the gusto of my late father."*

Of "Oceans: Where Feet May Fail" Miriam writes;

> *"The lyrics of the song are the words my heart sings...and they remind me to rest in God even in the most turbulence waves of life (like the sudden loss of my husband & caring for a baby alone)."*

The significance of these worship songs for the people cited above and many others cannot be underestimated. Like Zoë in the Chinese University restaurant, each of these people has experienced a transformative encounter with and through a particular song. The marriage

of music and lyrics has stirred memories and evoked emotions, and in turn, the songs themselves and the words and concepts within them have taken on new meaning and significance. Perhaps more importantly though, the songs have brought new meaning and significance to the experiences, both past and present, to which they have been connected in the minds of the hearers and singers. Painful experiences have been redeemed and positive experiences recalled as part of processes of transformation which the songs have set in motion.

Musician and neuroscientist Daniel Levitin sums up the power of good songs, and underlines a rationale for contending that they are of key importance to congregational worship.

> "The multiple reinforcing cues of a good song – rhythm, melody, contour – cause music to stick in our heads. That is the reason that many ancient myths, epics and even the Old Testament were set to music in preparation for being passed down by oral tradition across the generations. As a tool for activation of specific thoughts, music is not as good as language. As a tool for arousing feelings and emotions, music is better than language. The combination of the two – as best exemplified in a love song – is the best courtship display of all." (2006:267)

Human beings have understood the power of this relationship between music and lyrics for thousands of years. Between 200 BC and 100 AD, the song of Seikilos, widely believed to be the earliest extant completely notated musical composition, was inscribed on a tomb stone. The lyrics are quite beautiful, and demonstrate that even two millennia ago, songs were used to engage the emotions and encourage positive actions. In translation the lyrics are;

While you live, shine. Have no grief at all
Life exists only for a short while. And time demands its toll

Whilst we can do nothing to halt the passage of time or avoid the toll it demands, perhaps those songs which evoke the most powerful emotions in us can serve to momentarily press pause, allowing the past to gain ground on the present and transform the future.

All my best memories come back clearly to me, some can even make me cry.
Just like before it's yesterday once more.

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APPENDIX C

CRITICALLY DEFENDED ACCOUNT OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

MATT SPENCER

MS1441

Paper 3

AUGUST 2016

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the proposed research to be undertaken, detailing both the researcher's own personal context and that of the location to be researched. It identifies congregational singing and SingCR0nise Community Choir as two forms which singing takes within the life of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church and considers how they might be researched with a view to exploring their contributions to the mission of the church. A conceptual framework is presented and overviews of the epistemological and methodological approaches to the research are given, alongside proposed methods. Ethical considerations and limitations of the research complete the paper.

**SINGING IN THE LIFE OF A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY:
COMPARING THE INTENTION AND RECEPTION OF SINGING
AS A LITURGICAL AND MISSIONAL PRACTICE
IN NEW ADDINGTON SALVATION ARMY COMMUNITY CHURCH?**

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

This paper outlines the way I intend to explore the role of singing within my professional context. It considers singing and Mission and outlines the conceptual framework underpinning my proposed research into their interrelationship. An examination of theoretical perspectives and methodology leads into consideration of research methods. The paper then addresses ethical considerations, limitations and the all-important 'so what?' question.

2.0 The research question

Inspired by Cameron & Duce (2013: 44-46) I articulated my underlying theological concern thus: What is the lived experience of singing for members of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church and how does this relate to the church's mission and ministry? In undertaking a theological exploration of singing as experienced by participants in the church's life, I will compare the intention and reception of singing as a liturgical and missional practice. The research is thus locally located, but with the possibility of wider implications.

3.0 The context

3.1 Three Questions

To establish a context for my research, I shall engage with three related questions.

3.1.1 Why me?

My professional context leading a Salvation Army congregation and two choirs has convinced me of a relationship between singing and mission. I have twenty years' experience leading sung worship in varied contexts and have written songs used within The Salvation Army internationally. I feel well-placed to explore questions pertaining to the use of songs within the denomination. With singing playing a central role in my life and church, 'why me?' quickly became 'why not me?'.

It's the mid 1970's. Flash cards carpet the living room floor and my mum sings at the piano, her two-year-old hopping from card to card, eager to read one when the music

stops. From toddler-hood, I associated singing with learning. My earliest memories of church involve learning through Sunday School choruses. At age seven I joined *The Singing Company*, a moniker whose theological implications are unavoidable. In The Army, singing is not (just) about entertainment, learning or even worship; it's more than the soundtrack to the battle; it's a means of fighting The War. This theology is articulated in the 1893 edition of *The Musical Salvationist* (1893:161). “The great end a Brigade should set before it is that of directly spreading Salvation. The making of sweet sounds, the joining in a sort of club for musical pleasure, the banding together of a select company of Soldiers for the mere pleasure of greater social intercourse – such can never be proper objects for a Brigade.” 125 years later, this jars with my own theology of singing, but is redeemed slightly by the line which follows it; “Judge all efforts by the spiritual results”. My research will aim to do just that.

3.1.2 Why this question?

“How do you achieve such a harmonious blend between different voices in your choir? I mean, it’s not just the black and white voices, but male and female, children and adults. How do you get such a blended sound?”

Overlooking the inaccurate racial assumptions, I replied to my questioner;

“I think in choirs, as in life, when the love is right, the sound is right.”

I described how humbled I feel when members call the choir their *family* or when people who won’t countenance attending church, describe rehearsals as *worship*. Over the years I’ve witnessed singing’s role creating and nurturing community. I’ve always prioritised singers’ enjoyment over musical excellence, and my post-concert questioner heard what I’ve long pursued; a relationally harmonious choir with a resultantly blended sound. From choir to congregation, exploring singing’s contribution to mission in my own setting seems apt.

3.1.3 Why now?

After eight years leading the church in question, and broader reflection on missional effectiveness taking place within The Salvation Army, such research seems timely.

3.2 New Addington Salvation Army Community Church

Our gathered worship generally features contemporary worship songs led by an intergenerational band of musicians and vocalists. Words appear on screens, people clap and some dance. Singing is vibrant and expressive and aims to be uplifting. As leader, I try to select songs whose lyrics are accessible but not banal.

3.3 The broader context

Within The Army, singing has historically encompassed proclamation, proselytisation, pedagogy and praise. Founder, William Booth instructed Salvationists to;

> *"Sing so as to **make the world hear**. The highest value of our singing after all has not been the mere gladness we have felt because of our salvation, but the joy of pouring out the praises of our God **to those who have not known him**, or of **rousing them** by our singing to new thoughts and a new life…sing till you lift the eyes of **those who know not God** to him who is the fountain of all our joy." (**bold** added) (Salvation Army Song Book 1986: Forward)*

For Booth, singing was for the primary purpose of leading unbelievers to God. In many Army songs there is an insider-outsider dynamic evident, with the singers (insiders) communicating the ontological difference between their lives and those of the listeners (outsiders). My experiences running a community choir and operating an open policy in our worship band, lead me to believe that an orthopraxy of closedness runs counter to a broader missiology and it is timely to demonstrate the roles singing plays, particularly moving from a predominantly presentational to a participatory model. Much research has been undertaken (e.g. Judd & Pooley 2014) and many people testify to the role of singing, especially within a group context, in the amelioration of their emotional, psychological and physical well-being. This resonates with a holistic missiology and locates singing as a prime deliverer of its aims.

> *__I__ want to tell __you__ what the Lord has done,*
> *what the Lord has done for __me__.*
> *He lifted __me__ from the miry clay;*
> *O, what a happy day!*
> *__I__ want to tell __you__ what the Lord can do,*
> *What the Lord can do for __you__:*
> *He can take __your__ life, as he did __mine__,*
> *And make it anew.*
> *Chorus of song 852: Salvation Army Song Book*

4.0 Conceptual Framework

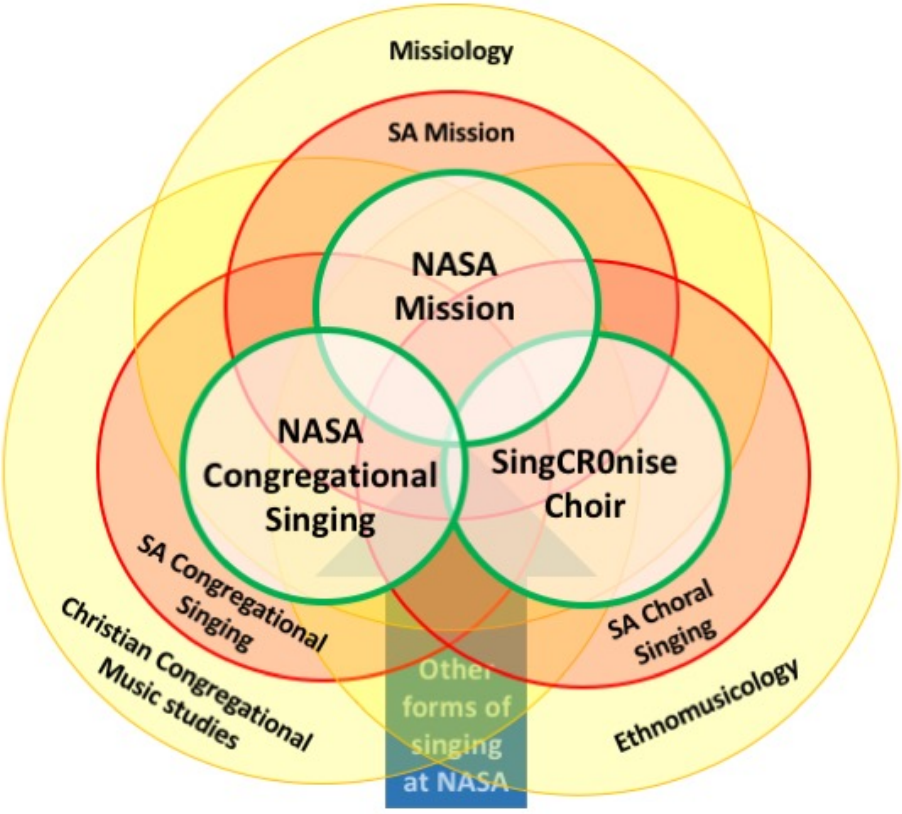
The conceptual framework centres around three areas of interrelationship.

i) The mission of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church

ii) Congregational singing within the local context

iii) SingCR0nise Community Choir

Local mission is located within the denominational context, which is located within the wider Church and ultimately the Missio Dei. This necessitates engagement with the discipline of Missiology. Similarly, local congregational singing sits within the broader context of congregational singing in The Salvation Army and beyond. Therefore, the emerging field of Christian Congregational Music Studies is invoked. SingCR0nise Community Choir is located within a broader realm of Salvation Army choirs and choral singing in general, examination of which engages with Ethnomusicology and to an extent, Musicology and Psychology of Music. The conceptual framework forms a Venn diagram, with local concerns at the centre, moving outwards towards overarching disciplines. The central point of convergence identifies primary concerns.



This conceptual framework aims to encapsulate the 'four voices' (Cameron et al 2010) of Practical Theological research. The local Operant and Espoused theologies will be revealed through data analysis including a reflexive journal. The turn to tradition will take place as the themes of mission, congregational singing and choral singing within The Salvation Army and the wider church are considered. Finally, consideration will be given to the aforementioned disciplines which inform and are informed by the local practices under scrutiny. These four voices may not always speak sequentially in linear fashion, rather, it is my hope that they will engage in critical conversation around the research question.

5.0 Theoretical Perspectives

The disciplines of Missiology, Ethnomusicology, Musicology, the Psychology of Music and the field of Christian Congregational Music Studies underpin the proposed local research, which is located within the contemporary and historical landscape of mission and singing within The Salvation Army.

5.1 Missiology

I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs. Let the oppressed see it and be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive. (Psalm 69:30-32)

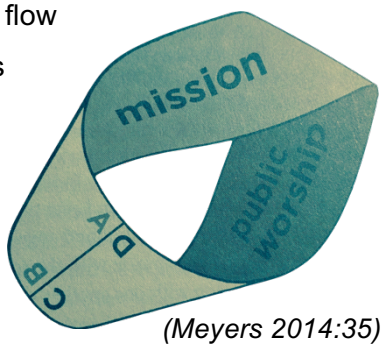
According to the Psalmist, singing praise to God gladdens the oppressed and revives seekers' hearts. Singing therefore has missiological implications.

David Bosch (2011:447) notes "Once we recognize the identification of Jesus with the poor, we cannot any longer consider our own relation to the poor as a social ethics question; it is a gospel question". I would add that the correlation between singing and the state of the oppressed expressed in Psalm 69 makes it also a worship question. Thus understood, singing in worship is undeniably liberationist and resonates with my own interpretation of mission. Paulo Freire (1972:20) identified dehumanization as the central problem of humanity. For Freire, education plays a key role in humanization. In the forward to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972:12), Shaull articulates Freire's perspective thus; "When an illiterate peasant participates in this sort of educational experience, he comes to a new awareness of self, has a new sense of dignity, and is stirred by a new hope." Where Freire sees education as the key to humanization, Tom Wright (2006:127)

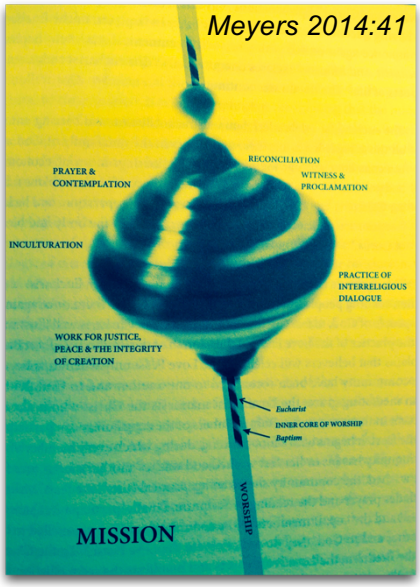
casts worship in that role, stating “worship makes you more truly human”. Freire and Wright share a contention that full humanization should be the goal of human endeavor, and I contend that in so much as singing can be both educational and worshipful, therein lies a key weapon in the fight against dehumanization, which is a central concern of mission.

Bosch (2011:400ff) describes the church as God’s vehicle for “the movement of God’s love toward people” which affects “all people in all aspects of their existence.” He cites two key definitions of mission (2011:548). Firstly, Barrett, (2004: x) who contends that “God’s mission…is to set things right in a broken, sinful world, to redeem it and to restore it to what God has always intended...” Secondly, Flett (2009:15), for whom mission is a “living, divine, and human fellowship which actively reaches out, sharing in God’s reconciliation of the world and thus with God’s own life from all eternity.” The Missio Dei and thus the mission of the church is therefore the outworking of Divine love for the sake of the world. Worship and singing in particular, can play a key part in this process (although Ruth Meyers (2014:6), mapping missiological engagement with worship notes that Bosch makes hardly a mention of it). Meyers (2014:5) seeks to bridge the gap, asking the question “What would worship be like in a congregation that came to view mission as living the gospel wherever God calls them?” This question will guide my analysis and reflections.

Noting the dualistic nature of many approaches to worship and mission, Meyers (2014:35 & 41) suggests two alternative metaphors for understanding the interrelationship of the concepts. Firstly, a Möbius strip imagines a continual dialogical flow between mission and worship, in which worship both empowers the church for mission and becomes a window to the world of God’s “reconciling mission” (Schattauer 1999:3). Thus, the “seemingly most internal of activities, the church’s worship, is ultimately directed outward to the world.” The second of Meyer’s metaphors is that of a spinning top. Worship and in particular, the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, forms the central axis, from which other elements of the missional life of the church flow and



(Meyers 2014:35)



Meyers 2014:41

around which they orbit. The trajectory of missional activity is eccentric as the central heart of worship directs mission outwards.

As helpful as Meyers' chosen metaphors might be, they reflect a tendency in the field to synonymize worship with liturgy, specific sacramental practices or Sunday services, which Meyers terms Public Worship. It is clearly an oversimplification to reduce worship in such a way and yet it is frequently done. This elevation of certain forms of worship is particularly evident among scholars from an ecclesial background in which the Eucharist is a central tenet of gathered worship. A theology of worship which extends the concept of sacramentality to the whole of life, renders redundant Meyers' terms 'missional worship' and 'worshipful mission', as mission and worship become inseparable. This perspective reflects Salvationist missiology and theology of worship. Street (1999:7) writes "God in love reaches out through his people to a suffering and needy world, a world that he loves. In mission we express in word and deed and through the totality of our lives the compassion of God for the lost." Fred Brown (1964:22) sums up this theology; "For the Salvationist, worship is bound up inextricably with life, the whole of life, and not just that part of it which is associated with obviously religious activities." The missio Dei, in which the Church participates, is the reconciliation of all things to God. Worship encompasses the Christian's whole life (Romans 12:1), and is part of the reconciliation of all things to God, therefore the life of worship is the life of mission and the life of mission is the life of worship. By extension, acts which might classically be defined as mission (works of justice, practical acts of kindness and so on) are rightly understood as acts of worship, and such acts are

SONG OF SACRAMENT
(Verses 1-3 Albert Orsborn Songbook of The Salvation Army 512
Verses 4 & 5 Matt Spencer)

My life must be Christ's broken bread,
My love his outpoured wine,
A cup o'erfilled, a table spread
Beneath His name and sign,
That other souls, refreshed and fed,
May share His life through mine.

My all is in the Master's hands,
For Him to bless and break;
Beyond the brook His winepress stands
And thence my way I take,
Resolved the whole of love's demands
To give, for His dear sake.

Lord, let me share that grace of Thine,
Wherewith Thou didst sustain
The burden of the fruitful vine,
The gift of buried grain.
Who dies with Thee, O Word Divine,
Shall rise and live again.

Lord, I would wash my brother's feet,
And meet my sister's need.
Obedient to Your command
To share Your love in deed.
My life abandoned to Your will;
A living, breathing creed.

O, let me be a sacrament,
From self and sin set free,
A holy mystery of grace,
The life of Christ in me!
Complete surrender! I am Yours!
Lord, I would faithful be

sacramental in as much as they are signs of divine grace. Thus understood, one need not seek to describe the interrelationship between mission and worship beyond a recognition that the same activities, be it feeding the homeless or singing a hymn, are simultaneously both worship and mission.

> *As followers of Jesus Christ, our vision is to see the world transformed by God's love. Our purpose is to participate in this transformation of individuals, families, our local community and beyond, as individuals and a church empowered and energised by God, for his service.*
> ***New Addington Salvation Army Mission Statement***

For my work to appropriately engage with the role of singing in the mission of the church, it is necessary to understand both mission and worship in their broadest senses. As the church seeks to participate in the outward expression of God's love, the reconciliation of relationships and the restoration of creation, all activities become shaped by and motivated towards this goal. One might contend, with Emil Brunner (1931:108) that since "the church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning" the church doesn't simply participate in mission, its very existence depends upon it.

The church's mission is expressed centrifugally (from personal and gathered experience, outwards to the world) and centripetally (in gathered worship, collective learning and hospitality) (Blauw 1962). Describing this process, Bosch (2011:548), after Barth, adopts the language of breathing. The life and mission of the church consists in both the inward reception and the outward expression of God's love, and both worship and mission must therefore be viewed "in terms of both the life of the people of God as we live with one another and the life of the people of God as we live in relationship to the world" (Greene & Robinson 2008:182). Michael Moynagh (2012:354), engaging with the interface of mission and worship, adapts the breathing metaphor thus; "Worship and mission cannot be pulled apart, just as

> ***Call to Worship***
> ***We call Salvationists worldwide to worship and proclaim the living God, and to seek in every meeting a vital encounter with the Lord of Life, using relevant cultural forms and languages.***
> *We affirm that God invites us to a meeting in which God is present, God speaks, and God acts. In our meetings we celebrate and experience the promised presence of Christ with his people. Christ crucified, risen and glorified is the focal point, the epicentre of our worship. We offer worship to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit, in our own words, in acts which engage our whole being: body, soul and mind. We sing the ancient song of creation to its Creator, we sing the new song of the redeemed to their Redeemer.*
> *We hear proclaimed the word of redemption, the call to mission and the promise of life in the Spirit.*
> ***The International Spiritual Life Commission***

breathing in cannot be separated from breathing out." Singing's role in this respiratory process will be the subject of my research.

5.2 Christian Congregational Music Studies

Singing is a common denominator across both centripetal (inhalation) and centrifugal (exhalation) understandings of mission and worship, giving voice and outward expression to experiences of God's love and serving as a conduit of such experiences.
Whilst singing must not be conflated with worship, in my church, as in many others, it plays a central role in both gathered worship, community engagement and spiritual formation. In his foreword to Robin Parry's *Worshiping Trinity*, (2005:xiii) Keith Getty writes of individuals and churches; "we are what we sing". Parry (2005:8) notes that "our spirituality is usually shaped more by the experience of communal worship than it is by preaching and teaching." This perspective is echoed by Rosalind Brown (2001:3) who writes "Whether we realize it or not, hymns affect us…long after the service is ended. Something as simple as a song sticking in our mind all day, or the cumulative effect of singing, may change our way of thinking or living. We are being formed." C. Michael Hawn (2008:14) similarly notes "The words we sing and the rituals we practice in Christian worship provide pedagogical foundations for belief." Meyers (2014:198) notes that "In missional worship, the assembly embodies and inhabits worship in such a way that texts and patterns come alive for people through speaking and singing, in symbols and actions." The formative enlivening mediated by singing and its subsequent impact upon mission will be a central concern of my research. What we sing shapes what we believe which shapes how we behave and through singing we may also experience belonging (or conversely, exclusion).

Brown (2001:4) Identifies in hymns characteristics which are true of Christian worship songs in general. These characteristics include the facilitation of participation; the teaching of truth and Christian virtues; reminders of God's past actions; the formation of a vocabulary of faith and prayer; the retelling of the Christian story; the evocation of devotion and commitment; the nurture of hope amid adversity; the prophetic call to social justice and the provision of comfort and strength. Brown (2001:12) also notes the role of hymns in the carriage of faith even for the unchurched, for whom songs learnt in childhood often assume significance during momentous life events such as births, marriages and deaths. This theme is explored by Eliyana R. Adler (2006:54ff), in her examination of singing as spiritual resistance to the holocaust. Adler cites the testimony of one youth

group member during ghettoization; “Every evening we learned a new song…We sang in Hebrew without knowing the language that well.” The songs conveyed a message beyond language. Full lyrical understanding seems not to stand in the way of songs providing the impetus for the resistance of oppression, comfort at a funeral or nostalgic feelings weddings and christenings. Brown’s examination of the lyrical content and sung context of hymns and Adler’s connection of singing to resistance and spiritual liberation, provide exemplars for my own reflections.

5.3 Ethnomusicology (Musicology & Psychology of Music)

Jeremy Begbie (2000:3) brings musicology and ethnomusicology into dialogue with Christianity, believing that “music can serve to enrich and advance theology.” He contends that with a few notable exceptions there has been an “almost complete theological disregard of music” (2000:4); a situation he seeks to address, noting in particular music’s role in illuminating doctrinal truths and Christian formation (2000:127). He establishes a foundation for discussing the reciprocal insights of theology and music, although it remains to be seen how transferable his high, conceptual reflections on classical music might be to the realities of singing in my context.

Like Begbie, Bell (2000:17) explores the relationship between music and time. He notes “music provides us with a regular pulse or beat, ensuring that we keep in time with each other…songs have for long been the means whereby people created or celebrated their identity.” Singing provides congregations with the unifiers of rhythm and melody as “music expresses words” (2000:29) and songs facilitate worship. He relates musicological insights to congregational singing, noting that such enterprises are few and far between (2000:9). My own research will adopt a similarly interdisciplinary approach, drawing also on insights from psychology.

John Sloboda (in Astley, Hone & Savage Eds. 2000:110) raises a series of questions a psychologist might ask concerning the psychology of singing in worship. These seek to ascertain amongst other things what goes on in people’s minds when they are engaging with music (and worship) and the nature of the overlap between the mental processes involved in music and worship. Sloboda explores the impact of music upon affective responses, noting the role of characteristics such as harmonic structure in evoking shared responses. His sensitivity to worship makes his reflections from the perspective of musicology and psychology particularly apt.

Equally pertinent and accessible is the work of Astley and Savage (2000:219ff), exploring such helpful subjects as music and emotion, music and the brain, the aesthetics, ethics and hermeneutics of music and music as theological metaphor and medium in the context of Christian learning.

Roberta R. King (2004) identifies an emergent, and seemingly undeveloped field of Christian ethnomusicology, distinguished from ethnomusicology by virtue of its engagement with the biblical text. She notes (2004:299) that "Careful interaction with the Scriptures is needed in order to question, shape, guide and evaluate the role of music in the missionary enterprise." King employs the tools of ethnomusicology in understanding local context with a view to the advancement of missional aims, an approach with implications in all missional contexts, including my own. A key tool of Christian ethnomusicology according to King, is the intentional pursuit of theologizing through the composition of songs. She writes; (2004:299) "the method seeks to shape a song's message in ways that penetrate the thought processes of a people." This compositional aspect of Christian ethnomusicology will feature in my own work, as a creative reflection of my embodied interdisciplinarity as church leader, choir master, song writer and researcher.

Don Saliers' *Music and Theology* (2007) articulates my own convictions concerning the interrelationship between the two elements. He writes (2007:77) "The power of music to awaken us to affective attunement to the created and redeemed order of the world is at the center of what theology has yet to explore in the whole range of music…anyone who wishes to "do theology"…will come to see that "understanding" language about God and human existence before God is often given to us most profoundly when we sing or hear." Psychiatrist Anthony Storr (1993:188) similarly hints at the transcendent, in describing music as "a source of reconciliation, exhilaration, and hope which never fails." Storr and other psychologists and musicologists speak powerfully into theological reflections, as they approach human responses to music without reference to religion, faith or God and yet utilize theologically resonant language and concepts.

It is fitting to close this section with reference to Daniel Barenboim, musician and musicologist honoured for promoting peace in the Middle East. Barenboim (2007:8) notes that all sound requires energy for its production and sustenance. Thus, "The musician who produces a sound literally brings it into the physical world." He observes how the lifespan of a single note is finite and thus music is limited in time. Whilst this is self-evidently true on one level, there is a sense in which congregational singing defies these natural laws of

music. Firstly, in congregational singing, the energy required to formulate sound is shared, and as one's energy or physical or emotional capacity to sing wanes, so another's can soar. Secondly, and perhaps most potently, the singing of songs common to the worldwide church, and indeed the very fact that churches sing at all, ensures that the sound of congregational song transcends the temporality of each singer or song and moves towards a reflection of the infinite.

As o'er each continent and island
The dawn leads on another day,
The voice of prayer is never silent,
Nor dies the strain of praise away.

The sun that bids us rest is waking
Our brethren 'neath the western sky,
And hour by hour fresh lips are making
Thy wondrous doings heard on high.

John Ellerton
'The Day Thou Gavest' verses 3 & 4
Songbook of The Salvation Army 677

5.4 Converging Disciplines

"…creative insights often come precisely at those places where disciplines overlap or challenge each other. There is, therefore, no need to be ashamed to be living at the boundaries, in however lowly a way." (Ballard & Pritchard 2006:116). My research will rely upon insights from a number of writers whose work will provide context-appropriate engagement with these diverse disciplines for a non-specialist such as me. This unashamedly interdisciplinary approach locates my work squarely within the realm of Practical Theology.

6.0 Methodology

My research will be qualitative and inductive, beginning, not with a hypothesis or theory, but an examination of singing as experienced by members of the church and choir. Whilst I might declare an underlying suspicion that singing contributes to the missional effectiveness of the church, I am seeking less to prove a hypothesis than to explore a phenomenon and will therefore adopt a grounded methodology (Esterberg 2002:7).

A variety of means will be employed in the collection of data, but before such collection is undertaken, the concepts of singing and the mission of the church will be operationalized (Gray 2014:17) so as to be effectively observed. The specific forms of singing to be assessed will be identified according to the contexts in which singing occurs, and the

mission of the church will be articulated in order to establish a lens through which singing in those contexts might be assessed.

My theoretical approach will seek to avoid positivist epistemology, in which reality consists solely in what can be encountered physically or observed and measured empirically (Gray 2014:21). Rather, giving due consideration to the ideographic nature of this particular study, (Swinton & Mowat 2006:43) my epistemological paradigm will be constructivist in nature, arising from cycles of experience, observation, reflection and interpretation (Marshall & Rossman 2011:61). This methodological approach acknowledges that each respondent's perspective, including my own, is a construction of their own experience and reflections, rather than a concrete objective reality, and meaning must be gleaned from careful and faithful listening to each articulated experience. My approach will therefore be interpretivist, with knowledge derived from a combination of my own reflections and those of others involved in the research process.

Missional objectives will need to be stated and explored, to determine the extent to which singing plays a part in their fulfilment. Anthropological methodologies will underpin much of the research, as I explore human behaviours. Within this aspect of the study, the emic and etic interpretations of the phenomenon of singing will be brought into focus and possible contrast, as the views and perspectives of congregants/choir members are reflected upon alongside academic insights (Cameron et al 2005:29).

If anthropological methodologies underpin the research, Practical Theology will overarch it. Just as the activities to be studied have theological rationales, so too will the research be theologically driven, with observation, description and reflection resulting ultimately in either deeper understanding or transformed actions as each activity is evaluated in light of its relationship to mission. Thus, the research itself will be an act of praxis theology, as the church reflects and is reflected upon. The first two of Osmer's four tasks of Practical Theology (description and interpretation) will form the primary basis of enquiry (Osmer 2008). However, normative and pragmatic questions will also be asked of the data in order to not only reflect upon the role of singing in the church's mission, but where appropriate, improve it. Thus the project will be more than theoretical exploration for its own sake.

My role within the enterprise will be observation and reflection, conduction of research, and the collation and analysis of data. In a number of instances, I will not be alone in the practice of observation, as others are invited to share their observations and reflections to contribute to the data pool. Given my role in the church, I may not always be the ideal observer, and others' perspectives may yield greater insight. Whilst over-familiarity may be a negative aspect of my position, ease of access is a benefit, as I am 'gate-keeper' to much of the research setting.

7.0 Research Methods

7.1 Background

I propose to set my research within clear contextual parameters. The Salvation Army is an international organisation, and is highly diverse in its mission and ministry. Even within the United Kingdom there exists a wide range of beliefs and practices which shape and motivate The Army's work, not least with regard to its use of music. The proposed study will not attempt to consider this breadth, but will focus on the particular context of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church to generate a rich description of the contribution of singing to local mission. Ultimately, I'm interested in the role of singing in transformation. I believe that the Christian journey begins in a moment of transformation from which point the Christian embarks upon a lifetime of being transformed and participating in transformation, processes in which, I believe, singing often has a profound role. Therefore, in exploring the role of singing in the life of my church, attention must be given to the transformative qualities of singing and songs.

It is my hope that the variety of expressions to be studied will afford the opportunity to compare and contrast the transformative capacity of singing in its varied manifestations. Begbie (2000:273) notes that music transforms "our lives in a range of unconscious and tacit ways…'inform'[ing] theology by 'forming' the theologian." Since our local mission statement expresses a desire to participate in God's work of transformation, it is salient to explore the ways in which singing contributes to that aim. In so doing, it will be incumbent upon me to identify instances in which the negative correlate of music's transformative capability, that of manipulation or coercion, might also be present within our context.

Since one of the primary aims of Practical Theology is to give voice to those whose voices are seldom heard (Cameron & Duce 2013: 38), I will endeavour to ensure that such

voices are given opportunity to respond adequately via appropriate methods. Although around 30% of our worshipping congregation is aged 16 or under, giving due consideration both to ethical and my own time constraints, I have decided not to undertake research among minors. I will however be proactive in listening to those adults who might not ordinarily put themselves or their opinions forward, whether due to lack of confidence, sporadic attendance or other reasons which might contribute to the marginalisation of their voice.

Recognising that research design "is a creative process and so likely to be messy with options discarded as well as adopted" (Cameron & Duce 2013: 33) and that the "parameters of the scope of a study, and information gathering methods and processes, are often flexible and evolving" (Kumar 2014:133) my research design is provisional. Flexibility will be key if I am to remain responsive to issues arising which highlight the need for amendments to the initial plan. That said, I currently anticipate utilising a particular mixed-methods approach which will yield 'soft' data, forming the basis of rich individual and corporate theological reflections.

7.2 Data Collection

I propose utilizing two primary means of data collection, both drawing on aspects of Graham et al's (2005:18ff) Theology by Heart method. The first will be my own reflexive journal, in which, akin to Marion Milner, I will endeavor to record my own "actions, reactions and motivations with an analytical honesty" (Graham et al 2005:31). Graham et al (2005:19&20) describe reflexivity as "an acknowledgement of the significance of the self in forming an understanding of the world." In my reflexive journaling I will seek to pursue an honest assessment of my own place within the 'world' of singing under examination, particularly in relation to my potential influence upon others' experiences of that 'world'.

In addition to general reflections, my journal will also include reflections on songs I have written, analysis of my choice of songs for gathered worship or choral singing, and other insights into my own place within the context of the research.

The second approach to data collection will continue in the vein of Theology by Heart, specifically in the creation of Living Human Documents, as respondents' silent selves are

“heard into speech” (2005:42) through creative engagement. Graham et al conclude their chapter on Theology by Heart in critical reflection on the method, critiquing primarily its reliance upon the written word. They ask whether other ‘texts’ or media might be employed in the production of Living Human Documents. My proposed method seeks to do just that, adopting and adapting the concept both in my own reflexive journal and with my respondent group.

Helen Kara, (2015) a proponent of creative methods in social scientific research, promotes the use of research methods which are philosophically and ethically integrated (2015:86ff). For my research to have integrity within the church’s mission and purpose, it must therefore be proactively inclusive (a key tenet of my purposive sampling) and must employ methods which facilitate the participation of those with lower literacy levels, or who simply communicate more effectively or comfortably without reliance upon the written word.

Kara (2015:89) describes the use of drawing in research, in particular the ‘draw and write’ technique, in which participants draw in response to a stimulus, and then write (or speak) a few words to help describe the drawing. Since not everyone is comfortable with drawing (as with writing), I propose to allow participants to develop their own mixed-methods approach to their responses. My proposed method is a three-phase development of Graham et al’s Living Human Document, incorporating the mixed-method approach promoted by Kara. In keeping with the overall tenor of the research, the three phases will be musically named; solo, duet and chorus.

7.2.1 Solo

Each purposively selected participant from the congregation or choir, will be given a blank sheet of card, coloured pencils and pens and a glue-stick. The provision of the stationery is intended to encourage creativity. Participants will be asked to produce a piece entitled ‘Songs, Singing, NASA and Me’. (NASA is the acronym for New Addington Salvation Army, and is the name by which our church is affectionately known). I will also undertake this exercise. Participants will be given at least two weeks to produce their pieces, which can include words, pictures, poems, songs, collage, mind-maps and so on, as participants wish. Participants will be encouraged to take a few days reflecting on the title before putting pen to paper.

Participants will be informed at the outset that their work will become the basis of further reflections, both by the respondent group and by me. Participants will have the choice as to whether or not to locate themselves identifiably within their work. They will be given the opportunity to view my own handling of their personal reflections throughout the research process, in order to ensure their satisfaction with my representation of their perspectives and their location within my writing. I will seek to anonymise responses unless participants specify otherwise or choose to include their name or other identifying characteristics as part of their work. The terms of participation will be laid out in a participant agreement which respondents will read and sign prior to participation.

These 'solo' pieces will function as raw data in themselves, as well as establishing themes for future conversations.

7.2.2 Duet

The 'Songs, Singing, NASA and Me' pieces will be discussed in a one to one conversation which I will have with each respondent. This will enable them to explain their piece to me and I will be able to clarify any areas about which I am unsure as well as pursuing particular themes. Conversations will be recorded and transcribed. Where participants divulge more information, particularly of a sensitive nature, during this process than in their initial 'solo' piece, clarification will be sought as to how they would like that information to be handled.

7.2.3 Chorus

Following the duet phase, all respondents' pieces will be displayed 'gallery-style', with respondents invited to view and reflect upon them. Following this informal, relaxed time of considering each other's work, participants will engage in a group discussion, in which they will be encouraged to identify common themes, contentious elements, and so on. Participants will have been made aware of this aspect of the process in the participant agreement, so will hopefully have ensured that their pieces only contain such information as they are happy to share in this context. During the 'chorus' phase, an additional, collective piece of artwork will be produced, to which all participants will be invited to contribute, articulating their shared experiences and reflections.

7.3 Data Analysis

This process will generate a large amount of data, which I propose to analyse qualitatively, on a thematic basis. However, until such time as the data is produced and reflected upon, I will remain flexible with regard to analysis, in order for appropriate approaches to arise from viewing the data itself.

7.4 Research Parameters

The proposed research parameters allow for the consideration of the role of singing within a broad range of activities. However, these will be limited to two primary contexts in the interest of retaining manageable scope.

7.4.1 Sunday Gathering

Having identified studies demonstrating the role of singing in shaping the views, actions and responses of listeners and participants (Guéguen, Jacob, and Lamy 2010 & Greitemeyer 2009), I will undertake similar research in the context of gathered worship. Greitemeyer in particular, noted a correlation between songs with pro-social lyrics and resultant pro-social behaviours. This correlation has implications for the church, which relies upon its members to deliver ministries appropriate to the needs of the community. Viewing Greitemeyer's study alongside Begbie's assertion that music shapes beliefs and actions, the relationship between the songs in gathered worship, the beliefs and values of the congregation and the missional activity of the church becomes central to my research. Informing this process will be consideration of the congregation's relationship with the Bible. Andrew Village (2007:44) identified that almost a third of Christians read the Bible only a few times a year or only at church. With roughly 1:3 Christians relying on the church to communicate and interpret scripture, the relationship between scripture and song must also come under scrutiny. This study will seek to examine the role of singing in shaping a congregation's awareness of and responses to the biblical text, which has mission at its heart (Wright: 2006:22).

Staying within the context of Sunday morning worship, it would be remiss to ignore the role of congregational singing in the creation and development of community and in individuals' physical, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing (Judd & Pooley 2014). My aim will be twofold:

i) Locating physical, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing within the context of mission.

ii) Exploring the impact of singing upon health/wellbeing and community development.

At times of spiritual difficulty, someone finding it hard to sing with conviction might be lifted by the singing of those around them. Thus, the articulated faith of the congregation encompasses the one whose faith is wavering, enabling participation in worship which might otherwise be impossible. However, congregational singing has had the potential to compound an individual's sense of isolation and frustration at such times and this aspect must also be reflected upon.

7.4.2 SingCR0nise Community Choir

SingCR0nise community choir has around 70 members, including Christians, atheists, agnostics and at least one member of another faith. Around 80% of the repertoire is Contemporary Worship or Gospel music, following feedback from a number of members (notably non-Christians) that these are preferred. Having attempted to be relevant to members from non-church backgrounds by including more familiar music, I unwittingly removed an element of value to those very people. Stacy Horn (2013:78) reflecting on membership of a choir writes; "Even though God isn't the answer for me, the music written in His name is…While it sometimes feels as if religion only separates people, the music brings us together." First-hand experience of this reality led me to reflect upon the choir's missional role. Initially my aim was to provide a space for people to explore music in the context of community, engage a dormant or undiscovered creativity, and develop relationships, combatting isolation and loneliness. Whilst these aims remain, the realisation of the significance of *Christian* songs to non-Christians, and the statement of one member that the choir functions as their church, led to reflection on the choir's purpose and its role in the delivery of missional objectives. Another member of Stacy Horn's choir articulates a feeling which I anticipate may be present in SingCR0nise. She observes (2013:79) "I am an agnostic verging on an atheist, but find that sacred music is not antithetical to my beliefs (in the way that sitting through a church service is). I've come to the conclusion that music alone (and not the liturgy) represents the essence of what I would find palatable and comforting in religion." This notion is one I will explore as I consider the choir within mission.

Another area of interest is SingCR0nise's role vis-à-vis the wider community. The choir participates in a number of community activities and due consideration will be given to their relationship to the church's mission.

One final area for reflection will be SingCR0nise's role in engaging people with other aspects of the church. Some members now participate in other church programmes, notably the pantomime, food bank and Sunday gatherings. Whilst I abhor disingenuous appropriation of the community choir model as a means of covert conversion, I am keen to explore its function as a window into the church's life, allowing participants to witness and experience elements of the church's mission, disavowing misconceptions or suspicions. In a denomination considering *open* or *closed* musical groups, this aspect of the choir's role is particularly pertinent.

8.0 Ethical Considerations

The primary ethical consideration is my position as the church/choir leader and the inherent power dynamics. I will aim to minimize power-play and empower participants to share without prejudice.

The notion of researching worship could cause unease among some. Awareness of potential sensitivities will be vital to avoid discord.

I will reflect on the ethics of composing songs for worship, which may also form part of the research process.

There may be those who question the validity of the research task and its demands. I will seek to communicate the value of the research both locally and more widely in The Salvation Army.

Research will be undertaken according to The Salvation Army's Safe and Sound Policy and the University's safeguarding policies.

9.0 Limitations

Research in a single location can only ever be indicative. However, I hope to identify themes of interest to The Salvation Army's leadership and other practitioners, and which inform my interactions with those I am involved in training for ministry at William Booth

College. Whilst it is highly unlikely, it is not impossible that The Salvation Army might change my appointment during the period in which the field work is undertaken. In the event of any such change, my response would be necessarily dependent upon work completed to that point and the feasibility of completion thereafter.

10.0 So what?

I will endeavour to ensure that my research is relevant, feasible, credible, reflexive, ethical and original, in line with the six criteria for good research identified by Cameron and Duce (2013:1ff).

I am convinced that songs and singing are vital in the shaping of the missional community I lead and those it serves. The exact relationship however is as yet, unresearched. Whilst our church is somewhat untypical of Salvation Army congregations, my research and reflections may encourage other Salvation Army churches to reflect on their own practices and we may also reassess some of our own. It is my hope that this research will itself be a part of the church's mission and that it will be transformative both locally and farther afield.

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APPENDIX i

BACKGROUND: NEW ADDINGTON SALVATION ARMY COMMUNITY CHURCH

The Salvation Army began ministering in the post-war Croydon overspill wards of New Addington and Fieldway in the late 1950's. Whilst its capacity to serve the community has varied over the decades, it has never been a large church, and by 2008, The Salvation Army's divisional (regional) leadership had reached the decision to close the corps (church) with a view to reestablishing some new form of missional outreach in 2009. My wife, Emma had taken a year's leave from full-time ministry in order to prepare our youngest child (who has a genetic condition) for starting primary school. Her scheduled return to work coincided with the period during which The Army's work in New Addington was under review, and shortly prior to the proposed closing date, Emma and I were appointed to lead the church, which was given what might be described as a stay of execution. This set of circumstances provided us and the half-dozen or so, mainly older female members, with a 'change or die' mandate, which most (if not all) of the existing congregation embraced to varying degrees of understanding and participation. During our first few months, we were joined by three or four other Salvationist families who were keen to explore new ways of being and doing church. These families brought with them the skills, resources and commitment necessary to begin the slow process of reestablishing a viable missional community which could engage with the diverse range of needs evident in the community at large.

Of the many changes which took place during those early days, two were perhaps of primary importance. Firstly, the content of the Sunday worship gathering changed dramatically and secondly the concept of worship extending beyond that gathering became a central theme of our teaching. The Sunday worship content changes primarily sought to create an environment which was more welcoming and engaging to people without experience of church, in particular younger people (the average age in New Addington ward is 35). Alongside the inclusion of videos and interactive forms of worship, singing was central to this change. Prior to our arrival, the church did not have any regular musical accompaniment, which dramatically impacted the place of singing in worship, particularly when combined with the numerically diminishing congregation. The arrival of musicians and additional singers therefore had a profound impact upon the Sunday worship gathering. Not only did the overall musicality improve, but the nature of the songs sung became more diverse, with contemporary worship songs gradually introduced alongside more traditional hymns (which themselves, took on a more contemporary 'feel' when accompanied by keyboard, guitar, bass and eventually also drums and flute). Whilst the songs themselves were not necessarily directly responsible for the period of numerical growth which ensued, it would be fair to say, not least from our experience over the past eight years in New Addington, that many of those seeking a new church and those exploring church for the first time, factor the music and in particular the singing in gathered worship, into their decision-making when it comes to choosing or attending a church. In our case, a box of musical instruments was also on hand for any children present to participate in accompanying the sung worship, and whilst chaotic and loud, this had the effect of engaging them (and therefore their parents) in worship.

The wards of New Addington and Fieldway are among the 10% and 5% respectively, most economically deprived Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the United Kingdom. According to a 2015 report by Croydon Council, compiled using data from the 2011 Census; "New Addington is an area of high unemployment with high proportions of adults with no or low qualifications." Similarly, "the Fieldway ward has high unemployment and many families are on benefits. Also Fieldway has the highest percentage (50.0%) of households with dependent children and a high proportion of young single parent families likely to be most affected by employment deprivation. Fieldway also has the highest percentage of dependent children aged 0-15 years (46.5%) that might be affected in this domain." The same report cites the levels of educational deprivation in the wards, noting "The top 5% most deprived LSOAs in this domain are predominantly located in Fieldway and New Addington... Historically, attainment at KS2 and KS4 has been lower from students from New Addington and Fieldway compared to the rest of the borough. The

underlying data also suggests that there may be relatively fewer students staying on in education after 16 years of age, particularly in the LSOAs based in New Addington." The report concludes that taking the London Borough of Croydon as a whole, "Fieldway is the most deprived overall" with New Addington only slightly less deprived at 4th of 24. (Fallon 2015: 5, 6 & 12)

It is in this context of deprivation, therefore, that New Addington Salvation Army Community Church operates. Not all members come from poorly educated or materially deprived backgrounds by any means, but the communities within which the church ministers must engage with both the physical realities and the related stigma associated with such socio-economic conditions. Music, and in particular, singing, has been central to many of the forms of outreach in which the church has engaged, which have sought to bring much-needed uplift to the community. It is this role, within this context which my research aims to explore.

APPENDIX ii

VOCALISE - MERIDIAN HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR

Since September 2014, I have run a choir at the local secondary school. The choir started as the result of a conversation with the school regarding them becoming a voucher-issuing partner with our Food Bank, during which it transpired that of the many areas in which the school was under-resourced, one was music. Given my conviction that music is vital in education at all levels, and the church's commitment to serve the local community, this was a natural partnership. I had initially intended to include Vocalise in my research, however, reflection on the time and ethical considerations inherent in such inclusion led to the conclusion that to do so would be to overstretch the scope of my research beyond my capacity.

APPENDIX iii

COMMUNITY PANTOMIME

Since 2010, the church has performed a pantomime each Christmas, with tickets issued free of charge to members of the community on a first-come, first-served basis. Approximately 1200 people watch the show over the course of a weekend. Such is the

community's affection for the pantomime, that it was cited by Croydon Council in recent consultation literature concerning the redevelopment of key community sites, in order to allay any fears of its termination as a result of the redevelopment. However, in 2011, the show very nearly didn't go on, as the community centre in which it is held inadvertently allowed their performance license to lapse, leaving the show's fate with the council's licensing department, who insisted upon its cancellation for want of an appropriate license. This crisis was concurrent with a class I was teaching at William Booth College, on The Psalms, in which students were asked to write a psalm from their own experience. I also wrote a psalm, which expressed not only my frustrations with the situation, but articulated the purpose of the pantomime with renewed clarity. The pantomime was and remains not only an act of entertainment, but an act of worship. It is an offering of love to God, via the community; an act of extravagance which, whilst potentially misunderstood and even maligned, is a gift of worship all the same (not dissimilar to the anointing of Christ with nard at Bethany Mark 14). Since acts of worship are exempt from performance licensing requirements, this seemed the natural solution to the problem. The council, however, had a far narrower definition of 'worship' which included prayer, preaching, eucharist and the singing of hymns and

A Psalm on the occasion of Croydon Council resisting NASA's Pantomime

Are you there God?
Are you listening?
Stop what you're doing and hear my cry;
Put down your lightning bolts,
Leave the stars to their shining,
Stoop down and incline your ear to my prayer.

I want nothing but to serve you;
To bring honour to your name.
Though I often fail to live up
Even to my standards,
Let alone yours,
You know my heart's deep desire is you and your kingdom.

Are you there God?
Are you listening?
Stop what you're doing and hear my cry;
Step in and vindicate your cause,
Roll up your sleeves and show your arm.
Allow your blessing to flow unhindered
through your people to your people.
For your people, Mighty One, are my people.

Do not allow bitterness, belligerence or bureaucracy to block your blessings
But as Sovereign, Mighty God,
make a way for your gift of joy to reach the ones you love.

The hearts of those who love your name are breaking
As they seek to serve and their efforts meet resistance.

Are you there God?
Are you listening?
Stop what you're doing and hear my cry;
Not for me or my sake,
Nor even for yours,
But for those I love in your name,
For those your church longs to serve.
Make a way for your gift of joy to reach the ones you love;
Allow your blessing to flow unhindered
through your people to your people,
For your people, Mighty One, are my people.

excluded pantomimes. The 2011 pantomime went ahead once a suitable loophole had been identified, but the experience reinforced the conviction within the congregation that regardless of what the council or anyone else might think, the pantomime is an act of worship. This theological interpretation has clear implications for the role of singing in the pantomime. ‘Secular’ songs are brought within the parameters of worship as they are sung within the context of what our congregation has come to understand as an act of worship, with the sole intention of bringing joy to members of a community, many of whom find Christmas to be a challenging time both financially and emotionally.

APPENDIX D

Examples of Salvation Army songs with 'Insider/Outsider' lyrics

I want to tell what God has done
Through Christ. his well-beloved Son,
How my poor heart he sought and won;
Can you wonder that I want to tell it?
I want to tell what God can do
For sinners lost like me and you,
Of sins washed white and garments new;
Can you wonder that I want to tell it?

Chorus
I want to tell you what the Lord has done,
What the Lord has done for me;
He lifted me from the miry clay;
O what a happy day!
I want to tell you what the Lord can do,
What the Lord can do for you:
He can take your life as he did mine,
And make it anew.

I want to tell of saving grace,
Of God's strong arm, his warm embrace,
Of blood that can all sins erase;
Can you wonder that I want to tell it?
I want to tell to sinners lost
That Christ has paid sin's fearful cost,
And saves unto the uttermost;
Can you wonder that I want to tell it?

What God has done, he still can do;
His power can fashion lives anew,
And all who trust him find him true;
Can you wonder that I want to tell it?
I want to tell of that glad day
For which we watch, for which we pray,
It must be near, not far away;
Can you wonder that I want to tell it?

Sidney Edward Cox (1887-1975)

In your heart of hearts are you a trifle weary,
Is there part of you your better self deplores?
Do you want the power to be a better person?
If you want it - it's yours!

Chorus
If you want it - it's yours!
If you want it - it's yours!
Do you want the power to be a better person?
If you want it - it's yours!

Is your mind mixed up and are your thoughts in turmoil?
Are you tired of fighting, are you sick of wars?
Would you like some peace instead of inner conflict?
If you want it - it's yours!

Are you somewhat sad and wish that you were happy?
Real contentment has a special set of laws;
Joy is not for sale, it's only found in Jesus;
If you want it - it's yours!

John Gowans

From The Song Book of The Salvation Army

APPENDIX E

The Salvation Army Junior Soldier's Promise

Children who join The Salvation Army as junior soldiers make the following promise:

'I know that Jesus is my Saviour from sin.

I have asked him to forgive my sins, and I will trust him to keep me good.

By his help, I will be his loving and obedient child, and will help others to follow him.

I promise to pray, to read my Bible, and to lead a life that is clean

in thought, word and deed.

I will not use anything that may injure my body or my mind,

including harmful drugs, alcohol and tobacco.'

APPENDIX F

The Soldier's Covenant

Anyone wishing to become a Soldier of The Salvation Army enters into a covenant known as the "Articles of War". The covenant is reproduced below:

- *Having accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord, and desiring to fulfil my membership of His Church on earth as a soldier of The Salvation Army, I now by God's grace enter into a sacred covenant.*
- *I believe and will live by the truths of the word of God expressed in The Salvation Army's* eleven articles of faith.
- *I will be responsive to the Holy Spirit's work and obedient to His leading in my life, growing in grace through worship, prayer, service and the reading of the Bible.*
- *I will make the values of the Kingdom of God and not the values of the world the standard for my life.*
- *I will uphold Christian integrity in every area of my life, allowing nothing in thought, word or deed that is unworthy, unclean, untrue, profane, dishonest or immoral.*
- *I will maintain Christian ideals in all my relationships with others; my family and neighbours, my colleagues and fellow salvationists, those to whom and for whom I am responsible, and the wider community.*
- *I will uphold the sanctity of marriage and of family life. I will be a faithful steward of my time and gifts, my money and possessions, my body, my mind and my spirit, knowing that I am accountable to God.*
- *I will abstain from alcoholic drink, tobacco, the non-medical use of addictive drugs, gambling, pornography, the occult and all else that could enslave the body or spirit.*
- *I will be faithful to the purposes for which God raised up The Salvation Army, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, endeavouring to win others to Him, and in His name caring for the needy and the disadvantaged.*
- *I will be actively involved, as I am able, in the life, work, worship and witness of the corps, giving as large a proportion of my income as possible to support its ministries and the worldwide work of the Army.*
- *I will be true to the principles and practices of The Salvation Army, loyal to its leaders, and I will show the spirit of salvationism whether in times of popularity or persecution.*
- *I now call upon all present to witness that I enter into this covenant and sign these articles of war of my own free will, convinced that the love of Christ, who died and now lives to save me, requires from me this devotion of my life to His service for the salvation of the whole world; and therefore do here declare my full determination, by God's help, to be a true soldier of The Salvation Army.*

APPENDIX G

THE SALVATION ARMY'S ELEVEN ARTICLES OF FAITH

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.

We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.

We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.

We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocency, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.

We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, are necessary to salvation.

We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.

We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.

We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

APPENDIX H

TURN YOUR EYES UPON JESUS

This song resonates with Robert Beckford's contention that certain songs encourage singers to 'forget what is happening around us in the world and just concentrate on Jesus'. (2004:20)

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.

Helen H. Lemmel 1922
Public Domain

APPENDIX I

THE DAY THOU GAVEST LORD IS ENDED

This song speaks of the unending song of the global church, which continues across time zones as churches gather to worship.

We thank Thee that Thy church, unsleeping,
While earth rolls onward into light,
Through all the world her watch is keeping,
And rests not now by day or night.

As o'er each continent and island
The dawn leads on another day,
The voice of prayer is never silent,
Nor dies the strain of praise away.

The sun that bids us rest is waking
Our brethren 'neath the western sky,
And hour by hour fresh lips are making
Thy wondrous doings heard on high.

John Ellerton 1870
Public Domain

APPENDIX J

THERE IS JOY IN THE SALVATION ARMY

Joy! Joy! Joy! there is joy in The Salvation Army,
Joy! Joy! Joy! in the Army of the Lord.
Sing to God, sing to God, with loud joyful songs of praise;
Beat the drums, beat the drums, while salvation music plays.
Play the music, play, sing the happy song,
Loud hosannas shout with the happy throng,
To the happy land well march along,
And be joyful all the way.

Joy! Joy! Joy! there is joy in The Salvation Army,
Joy! Joy! Joy! in the Army of the Lord.
Blood and fire, blood and fire, is the Army soldier's might;
Blood and fire, blood and fire, is our victory in the fight.
'Tis the blood and fire gives the battle cry,
'Tis the blood and fire makes the foe to fly,
'Tis the blood and fire gives the Army joy
And victory all the way.

Joy! Joy! Joy! there is joy in The Salvation Army,
Joy! Joy! Joy! in the Army of the Lord.
We will sing, we will sing, till the world is full of joy;
We will shout, we will shout, till glad voices rend the sky.
With a thousand bands and a thousand drums
We will praise the Lord in bright, happy homes,
We will sing and shout till the Master comes,
We will ever praise the Lord.

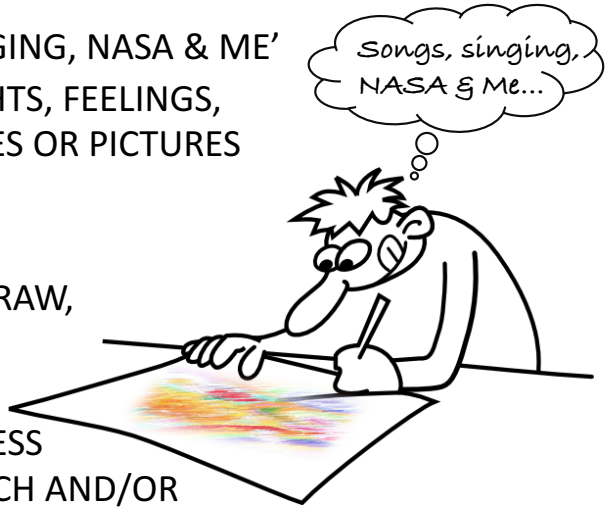
William James Pearson (1832-92)

APPENDIX K

Participants were given these instructions to help in preparing their Solo Phase art pieces.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN MATT'S RESEARCH

THINK – 'SONGS, SINGING, NASA & ME'
WHAT WORDS, THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, MEMORIES, EXPERIENCES OR PICTURES COME TO MIND?



GET CREATIVE – WRITE, DRAW, CUT OUT WORDS OR PICTURES TO STICK ON THE PAGE – ANYTHING YOU LIKE - TO EXPRESS HOW SINGING AT NASA (CHURCH AND/OR CHOIR) IMPACTS YOUR LIFE.
THERE ARE NO RULES! EXPRESS YOURSELF!

TALK – MEET WITH MATT TO CHAT ABOUT YOUR CREATIVE WORK AND HELP HIM UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY THROUGH IT.

SHARE – MEET WITH THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS TO DISCUSS EACH OTHER'S WORK* AND TO CREATE A SHARED CREATIVE PIECE TOGETHER.

**if you would prefer not to share your creative piece with others, you can still take part in this stage.*

APPENDIX L

MATT SPENCER

Anglia Ruskin University

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET GUIDANCE

Section A: The Research Project

1. **Title of project**

   Singing in the life of a missional community: The intention and reception of singing as a liturgical and missional practice in New Addington Salvation Army Community Church: A reflective inquiry.

2. **Brief summary of research.**
   This piece of research will explore the different roles that singing plays in the lives of members of New Addington Salvation Army Community Church (NASA) and SingCR0nise Community Choir. It will then attempt to understand how singing fits into the mission and purpose of NASA and SingCR0nise and the wider mission and purpose of The Salvation Army and the Church in general.

3. **Purpose of the study**

   The study forms the basis of my Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology studies at Anglia Ruskin University
   .

4. **Name of Supervisors**

   Dr Zoë Bennett – Cambridge Theological Federation/Anglia Ruskin University
   Dr Helen Cameron – The Salvation Army
   Reverend Dr John Bradbury – Westminster College, Cambridge

5. **Why have I been asked to participate?**

   You have been asked to participate because you are either a member of NASA, SingCR0nise or possibly both. You have been selected specifically as part of a wider group of participants, so that as broad a range of perspectives as possible might be gathered.

6. **How many people will be asked to participate?**

   Roughly 12-15 people in total will be invited to participate, though not all will necessarily accept the invitation.

7. **What are the likely benefits of taking part?**

   Singing plays a key role in the life of NASA and of course is central to SingCR0nise. Reflecting on the place of singing in your own life may be encouraging and even enlightening for you as you participate.

You will also have the opportunity to share with others involved in the process. You will be a part of a unique 'snapshot' of the New Addington Salvation Army community at a particular point in our journey together. This 'snapshot' may even provide information that is helpful to us as a community and perhaps even to the wider Salvation Army and beyond.

8. **Can I refuse to take part?**

Of course. The nature of this study means that not only can you refuse to take part from the outset, but as it progresses, should you feel uncomfortable at any stage, you may opt out without fear of reprisals!

9. **Has the study got ethical approval?**

The study has ethical approval from an ethics committee at Anglia Ruskin University.

10. **Has The Salvation Army given permission?**

The Salvation Army is aware of this research and has given permission for it to be undertaken.

11. **Who is funding the research?**

The research is funded by The Salvation Army.

12. **What will happen to the results of the study?**

The final thesis will be stored within appropriate repositories of doctoral research and will be available for viewing. A summary of the results will be presented to The Salvation Army's UK Territorial Leadership.

13. **Contact for further information**

Section B: Your Participation in the Research Project

1. **What will I be asked to do?**

As a participant, you will have 5 main tasks.

1. You will be asked to think about the phrase 'Songs, Singing, NASA/SingCR0nise and Me'. What thoughts come to mind when you think about that phrase? What role does singing play in your life? What songs or particular singing experiences have been significant for you – either positively or negatively? How do you feel when you sing? Do you enjoy it or find it hard? How has NASA/SingCR0nise impacted your relationship with singing? These are the kinds of questions I'd like you to be thinking about as you spend some time reflecting on the phrase 'Songs, Singing, NASA/SingCR0nise and Me.' Hopefully you'll come up with many more questions and reflections of your own too.

2. Once you've spent some time thinking (take as long as you like – allow the statement to go around and around in your head for a couple of weeks if you like) I'd like you to get creative! You will have been given a piece of card, some pens, pencils and glue and you can use these and any other resources you might like to use, to draw, write, paint, compose, collage – whatever – your responses to the 'Songs, Singing, NASA/SingCR0nise and Me' statement. Don't worry if you're not very 'arty' – you can just write words or thoughts or significant song lyrics if you like. And if you're not very 'wordy' you can use colour or pictures to illustrate how singing makes you feel, you could even cut out pictures from magazines, or take photos etc. If you're feeling really creative, you could even write poetry or songs of your own. This is YOUR piece of creative work, so it should reflect who you are. There are no right or wrong ways to do this. I'm calling this stage the 'Solo Phase', because you'll be working on your own and it reflects your own personal thoughts. *(Please write your name on the back, not on the front of the card)*

3. The next stage I'm calling the 'Duet Phase'. The Duet Phase will involve a sit-down conversation, one-to-one with me, during which we will discuss your creative piece so that you can explain it to me, I can clarify anything that is unclear to me and you can help me to understand what you're saying through your piece. This phase might even lead you to want to add to your piece as we talk – that's fine. Our conversation will be recorded so I can remember what we talk about for the next stages of my research.

4. The next stage is called the 'Chorus Phase'. This will involve you and all the other participants coming together to view each other's work. Don't worry – it's not about comparing or judging the pieces – they'll all be very different – it's a chance for everyone to chat about any common themes or maybe different responses that are evident. During this phase, all the participants will create a poster together which will incorporate elements of the discussion, bringing the different 'solo' responses together into one creative group response.

5. Your final task as a participant will be to read any sections of the research which refer to you or your work, to ensure that you are happy with how your thoughts and responses are represented.

2. **Will my participation in the study be kept confidential?**

The information that you share won't be confidential, i.e. secret and not viewed by anyone else. As part of the research project, it will be open to be viewed by whomever chooses to do so. However, your contribution will be anonymised in the final written thesis. That is to say, your name and any key identifying factors will be removed from your work. (The 'solo' and 'chorus' creative pieces will be included in the thesis). However, it is important to bear in mind that total anonymity is likely to be extremely difficult in a study of this kind, as the group being studied is relatively small and participants are known to one another and to other members of the NASA/SingCR0nise communities. Anonymity within the group would be almost impossible, unless your piece was not included in the 'chorus' phase. This is a possibility should you decide that your 'solo' piece is something which, for whatever reason, you would prefer not to share with others. When considering whether or not to participate from the outset, please bear in mind that the research design is built upon this three stage process and too many late-stage withdrawals would limit the effectiveness of the whole project.

Throughout the process, up to the point of submission of the thesis for examination, the only people with access to the data under consideration would be myself and my University appointed supervisors. However, during this process, there may be times when the research is presented at conferences or in seminar groups. Once the thesis is submitted for examination, it enters a public realm en route to its availability to whomever wishes to read it.

Should you include any photos in your creative work, if possible, please obtain the written consent of anyone pictured and include it with your creative piece.

3. **Will I be quoted?**

You might write something which illustrates a point I'm making or says it far better than I can. In this instance, you may be quoted in the final thesis. However, since participants' work will be anonymised, the quote would be attributed to whichever pseudonym has been assigned to your contribution.

4. **Will I be recorded?**

The 'duet' and 'chorus' phases will be recorded and potentially transcribed. Transcripts will be stored in a password-locked folder. Following the 'duet' phase, you will be shown a copy of the transcript of the conversation should one be made. In the event of a full transcript not being produced, you will be shown a summary of the conversation and given an opportunity to consent to it as a fair and accurate record of what took place.

5. **Will I be reimbursed travel expenses?**

Participant involvement will take place locally, therefore travel expenses are unable to be reimbursed.

6. **Are there any possible disadvantages or risks to taking part?**

There is the possibility that having started, you might decide that you don't want to continue to participate in the research, and that you might feel that this could negatively impact our relationship. Please be assured that this is a professional study and you have the right to withdraw from it at any stage without fear of negative repercussions.

You should be aware that exploring the emotive areas that singing can touch upon may raise sensitive or even distressing issues for you. In the first instance, I am available to discuss these with you, however, should you wish to speak to someone other than me, there will be a pastoral team available who are aware of this research and who will be able to offer support to you.
As mentioned earlier, there is always the risk of you being identified through your contribution to the study.

Your agreement to participate in the study does not affect your legal rights.

7. **Can I withdraw at any time, and how?**
You can withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason, either by speaking to me directly or by email or text. You will be asked whether or not you give permission for your contributions to that point to be used in the research. You therefore have the option to withdraw from the study and have your contribution removed or to withdraw, but still be happy for your contributions to that point to be used. You will be given warning of the last approximate time it will be possible to withdraw your contributions, as it will not be possible once the research has been written up for submission.

8. **What will happen to any information collected from me?**
Your 'solo' pieces will be kept at my home until they are scanned and included in the thesis. After this point, you may have them back if you wish or eventually, the originals with either be kept (with your permission) or destroyed following the final examination of the thesis. Personal identifiable information (e.g. consent forms) will be kept separately from the 'solo' pieces. Participants will be assigned a code number and identifying information will be separated from the 'solo' pieces at the earliest opportunity.

9. **Will I be given progress summaries?**
At various stages during the research, a brief summary of the research findings will be made available to participants.

10. **What if I'd like to make a complaint?**
Should you have any complaints about the study, these should be addressed to me in the first instance. If that is not appropriate, they should be addressed to my supervisor, Zoë Bennett or, failing that to Anglia Ruskin University: complaints@anglia.ac.uk
Postal address: Office of the Secretary and Clerk, Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1SQ.

MATT SPENCER

Anglia Ruskin University

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of the project:
Singing in the life of a missional community: The intention and reception of singing as a liturgical and missional practice in New Addington Salvation Army Community Church. A reflective inquiry.

Main investigator and contact details:
Matt Spencer
Email -

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet (Version 1 October 5th 2016) for the study.
   I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason.

3. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.

4 I understand what will happen to the data collected from me for the research.

5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

6. I understand that quotes from me will be used in the dissemination of the research

7. I understand that the interview will be recorded and may be transcribed.

8. I understand that my creative work may be used as part of conference or seminar presentations.

Data Protection: I agree to the University[1] processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me*

SHOULD YOU WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please speak to the researcher or email them at X stating the title of the research. You do not have to give a reason for why you would like to withdraw.

Your signature below indicates that you are happy for any data collected from you to be used in the presentation, write up and dissemination of the research, including publication.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT

[1] "The University" includes Anglia Ruskin University and its Associate Colleges.

(print)…….…..……..

Signed……..…….

Date……

Contact Number …….…….

Address ……...

……..

NAME OF PERSON WITNESSING CONSENT

(print)…….…….

Signed……...…….……..……..

Date…….……

APPENDIX M

IN QUIETNESS AND TRUST

(Based on Isaiah 30:15; Philippians 4:7; Proverbs 3:5&6 Nehemiah 8:10)

In quietness and trust is your strength.
In quietness and trust is your strength.
And if the world falls down on you
His love and grace will see you through.

The peace of God will guard your heart.
The peace of God will guard your heart.
Don't hold your worries deep within;
Bring all your anxious thoughts to him.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart.
Trust in the Lord with all your heart.
Acknowledge him in all you do.
He'll guide your steps your whole life through.

The joy of the Lord will be your strength.
The joy of the Lord will be your strength.
His perfect love goes on and on
His joy within will make you strong.

Matt Spencer

APPENDIX N

The 38 codes arising from the data, ordered by frequency of reference within their corresponding category heading.

- **BELONGING**
  - Belonging (49 references by 14 participants)
  - Fellowship (37 references by 12 participants)
  - Attractional (32 references by 11 participants)
  - Inclusion (32 references by 11 participants)
  - Participation (32 references by 10 participants)
  - Relationship (31 references by 11 participants
    (of which 13 references to the choir leader, by 7 participants)
  - Perception of The Salvation Army (8 references by 6 participants)
    (This is also cited under 'Transformation')
  - Church/Choir In Loco Ecclesia (7 references by 3 participants)
  - Children (6 references by 5 participants)

- **EMOTION**
  - Emotion (50 references by 13 participants)
  - Positive Present Experience (49 references by 15 participants)
  - Negative Memories evoked (17 references by 8 participants)
  - Positive Memories evoked (14 references by 6 participants)
  - Music evoking emotion (11 references by 7 participants)
  - Sadness (10 references by 5 participants)
  - Lyrics evoking emotion (8 references by 4 participants)
  - Love (5 references by 3 participants)
  - Joy (4 references by 2 participants)
  - Self-Giving (3 references by 2 participants)

- **SPIRITUALITY**
  - Personal Faith (48 references by 13 participants)
  - Prayer (18 references by 5 participants)
  - Bible (11 references by 5 participants)
  - Transcendence (9 references by 2 participants)
  - Holy Spirit (8 references by 1 participant)
  - Fruit of the Spirit (6 references by 2 participants)
  - Gift (3 references by 1 participant)

- **TRANSFORMATION**
    - Transformation (51 references by 12 participants)
    - Lack of Confidence (48 references by 13 participants)
    - Finding a Voice (39 references by 11 participants)
    - Empowerment (32 references by 9 participants)
    - Personal Growth (31 references by 9 participants)
    - Learning and Growing (29 references by 10 participants)
    - Freedom (21 references by 7 participants)
    - Altered Perception of The Salvation Army (8 references by 6 participants)
    - Healing (6 references by 1 participant)
    - Physical Activity (4 references by 1 participant)
    - Refreshment (2 references by 2 participants)